

(Mr. Clerckx, Belgium)

In the opinion of Belgium, the complete elimination of chemical weapons, the existence of which is reported in the arsenals of several countries, and the use of which it has been necessary to deplore on several occasions, even recently, as His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran has just reminded us once again, is a matter of the highest priority. We believe that it is one of the main areas in which our negotiations can succeed, and succeed rapidly. It goes without saying, however, that a disarmament agreement will be valid only if it is scrupulously respected by its contracting parties.

If the agreement is violated, its credibility is likely to be affected. Suspicion may also spread to other agreements which have been or are about to be concluded. We are, I believe, fully alive to this danger: hence the attention we are giving to the questions of control and surveillance that arise of course in their own specific ways under any disarmament agreement.

In this regard, the future convention on chemical weapons should include adequate safeguards, since we cannot permit a situation to arise in which the renunciations to which some States would accede in good faith could one day be exploited to their detriment.

We would not wish to allow room for doubt among States parties concerning respect for the convention without provision being made for dispelling such doubt as quickly as possible through a binding investigating mechanism.

For the various chemicals likely to be used for the manufacture of chemical weapons, the systematic verification arrangements would be adapted in such a way as to encourage States parties to have confidence in the intentions of the other parties, while on the other hand preserving all opportunities for peaceful research and development and progress in the industry. In our opinion, these two concerns can be met if one is guided by what is called the "general purpose criterion", which has already proved to be an essential tool.

The objective sought by Belgium is a total and effectively verified ban on chemical weapons. It is clear that the object of the convention will not be to authorize the peaceful activities of the chemical industry but to prohibit and effectively prevent chemical production from being diverted to armaments. Chemical weapons are the result of the desire to have such weapons, coupled with the possession of chemicals or a combination of chemicals of which the characteristics and quantities are such that they can satisfy that desire.

It is the combination of these two elements, the intentional and the material which will be covered by the prohibition on development, manufacture, stockpiling, transfer and utilization.

The objective of total prohibition corresponds perfectly, in our opinion, to the criterion of equal security for all or of non-discrimination. It should be pursued for itself alone, particularly since it concerns a weapon the use of which has been renounced by all of us in acceding to the 1925 Geneva Protocol. This weapon can be legitimately possessed by some countries only as a safeguard against a violation of the commitments entered into under the Protocol.