

(Mr. Vejvoda, Czechoslovakia)

Undoubtedly one of the long-standing priority items on our agenda is the ban on chemical weapons. An impressive amount of the time and energy of delegations has gone into discussing and drafting a CW convention which would do away with existing CW and ensure that none are produced in the future. Also this year, the Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee, Ambassador Sujka of Poland, and the three co-ordinators of the working groups have spared no effort in their striving to further advance the elaboration of the CW convention. I am personally very happy that one of the three co-ordinators is a member of my delegation.

The closure of this year's session is not far away, and one might attempt some evaluation of what has happened in the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. However, right from the beginning it is obvious that this evaluation will not be an easy task. Some positive as well as negative tendencies have emerged during this year's negotiations on the CW convention, and it is difficult to foresee which of them will have a greater effect on the future course of negotiations.

Let me start with what we see as negative, since I would prefer to close this statement on as optimistic a tone as possible. In the more distant as well as the quite recent past, there seemed to be consensus that the convention should quite unambiguously ban all chemical weapons and ensure, in a most effective way, the immediate cessation of their production and their complete destruction. Furthermore, there seemed to be general agreement that effective measures were needed in order to prevent the creation of chemical weapons under the guise of peaceful, civilian chemistry. Do we still have consensus on these basic goals and objectives of the CW convention? We would like to believe so, but some doubts have appeared too.

Firstly, some proposals advanced recently create the impression that we are negotiating a convention which might, in the long run, lead to the elimination of chemical weapons, but that in the mean time States parties could improve their existing chemical weapon stockpiles and continue their production, and that those States which do not possess chemical weapons could, upon their adherence to the convention, decide to start building their own chemical weapon potential. We consider this approach to be contrary to the elementary logic and purpose of the convention we have been negotiating for years, if not decades. There is no place in it for provisions permitting the production, further qualitative improvement and proliferation of CW. There is no guarantee that during the destruction period, before all CW stockpiles are eliminated, States parties that profited from such benevolent provisions might not, for a variety of reasons, decide to withdraw from the convention. Such developments could have adverse effects on international security and on the confidence of States parties in the convention. During the process of gradual destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles, security must be assured by agreed measures of an obligatory nature, rather than by individual and unpredictable decisions of States parties to have or not to have chemical weapons, to continue production or to cease it, to modernize chemical weapons or to refrain from doing so.

For years we have heard about the need for stringent verification of the chemical weapons convention. One would therefore presume that when it comes to the elaboration of specific verification measures for specific provisions