

(Mr. Sujka, Poland)

particularly pleased to see in its new version the deletion of the phrase "except for its final drafting". In our Group's opinion, this is a significant improvement enabling us to enter the decisive stage of our negotiations on the comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons to meet the expectations of the world community for the final elaboration of the convention at the earliest date, as so clearly expressed in the Final Declaration of the Paris Conference, as well as during the Government-Industry Conference held in Canberra and in two unanimous resolutions of the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

Our Group supported deeper changes in the mandate along the lines proposed by the Group of 21. We attach special importance to the inclusion of a reference to the prohibition of use of chemical weapons, to be consistent with the scope of the future convention and with the language used in General Assembly resolutions 44/115 A and B and in the Final Declaration of the Paris Conference. Nevertheless, the most important task ahead of us is to start effective work on the convention without delay. This is why we have joined the consensus in accepting the mandate in its present form, which is, in any case, a very good and important improvement. We would like to express our thanks to you, Mr. President, for your able efforts to bring us to this compromise. However, we do hope that the course of negotiations on the chemical weapons convention will bring us during this session to the moment when we will be able once again to address the question of further changes in the mandate.

Mr. LEDOGAR (United States of America): I would like to join the other speakers in congratulating Ambassador Hyltenius on his being appointed to the post as Chairman of the CW Ad hoc Group. He and his very able delegation will have a big task ahead of them this year as our work on CW accelerates.

I would like to say a few words first about the reservation on the final drafting. In support of President Bush's initiatives on chemical weapons and his personal commitment to the early achievement of the chemical weapons convention, the United States has joined the consensus to accept the amendment to the Ad hoc Committee's mandate, dropping the phrase "except for final drafting". I must point out, however, that this amendment to drop the caveat will in no way change the United States' requirement for full debate of the remaining substantive issues. Thus, we wish to clarify that elimination of the caveat against final drafting does not mean that we have now entered the final stage of the CW negotiations. The United States believes that there is considerable work remaining before reaching this stage of final drafting. It is our understanding that final drafting would only start after the substantive issues in the negotiations have been resolved. Having said this, I would like to underscore the United States' readiness and the readiness of my delegation to help resolve those remaining issues.