

(Mr. Issraelyan, USSR)

However, since the entry into force of the Geneva Protocol, poisonous chemical substances have been most widely used -- on a truly massive scale -- by the American armed forces in their aggression against Viet Nam. About 100,000 tons of various chemical and poisonous agents were used against the people of Viet Nam, including several hundred kilogrammes of the most terrible poison -- dioxin. A few dozen grammes of this agent dissolved in water are enough to eliminate the entire population of a city with several millions of inhabitants. Not only did these actions of the United States damage almost half the cultivable lands and tropical forests of Viet Nam, but in addition many hundreds of thousands of people became their victims. Those who survived have experienced the same genetic changes as the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

A few days ago the Vice-President of the United States pointed out in this room that apart from the provisions of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, "there is an even broader moral prohibition against the use of these weapons". It is pertinent to ask how, in the light of this statement, we should qualify the actions of the American troops in Viet Nam for more than a decade. Some may tell us that this is a matter of past history and that it is not worth while dwelling upon it now when we are conducting business-like negotiations aimed at the elaboration of a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons. We do not share this opinion, because the use of American chemical weapons in Viet Nam is by no means a closed question. In this connection we would like to draw your attention to the symposium held in Ho Chi Minh City which was devoted to the study of the consequences of the use of chemical weapons in Viet Nam. We believe that all participants in the negotiations should seriously and carefully study the documents on that symposium.

There is another aspect to the question of strengthening the regime of the non-use of chemical weapons. A good half of the States parties to the 1925 Geneva Protocol, when adhering to it, made reservations in which they reserved their right to consider themselves free of their commitments in the event of the use of chemical weapons against them. At the same time, however, some States -- the present members of NATO -- have since broadened their reservations to such an extent as to exclude a number of categories of chemicals completely from the prohibition as regards themselves. For example, the Governments of the United Kingdom and Canada have in