

Canada Assesses CD's Progress Towards a CW Convention

The following are excerpts from a speech delivered by Mr. Gerald Shannon, Canada's Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament (CD), to the CD in plenary session in Geneva on August 24.

In our view, some very useful and important work has been accomplished in the summer session...

Under Ambassador Hyltenius' [Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons] overall direction:

- Working Group A has further considered ways of improving the Inspection Protocol, in particular the section on "Alleged Use" and the overlaps with the Annexes to Article VI, and has begun examining the proposal for Ad Hoc Verification;
- Working Group B has been particularly successful in finding solutions to some critical technical issues related to Articles IV, V and VI, in particular on thresholds, definitions, and dates, and elements of the question of the Order of Destruction;
- Working Group C has carefully worked out texts on Amendments, Settlement of Disputes, and Measures to Redress a Situation that seem to enjoy a high degree of general support and which offer the hope that these issues might well now be on the way to final resolution;
- the various "Friends of the Chair" on such issues as Article X, "Old Chemical Weapons," and "Jurisdiction and Control" have made very laudable efforts to develop consensus approaches to these long-outstanding issues.

Notwithstanding these advances, however, we are disappointed and disturbed that more was not achieved during this past summer, particularly given the sense of heightened expectations that seemed to prevail during the spring session...

This failure to achieve greater progress is also surprising in light of the signing, on June 1st, of the USA-USSR bilateral agreement for the cessation of

CW production and the destruction of all but 5000 agent tons of their CW stockpiles by December 31 of the year 2002. My government welcomed this agreement and hoped that it would further facilitate the early conclusion of our multilateral negotiations here in Geneva.

In saying this, I should note that my delegation is not one of those that believe that all it will take to wind up our negotiations and produce a draft Convention for signature is simple political will. Certainly that will be necessary, but there yet remain a number of major, crucial issues to be resolved. There are also important technical questions that still need to be thoroughly addressed if we are to produce a truly effective Convention.

The reasons for this limited progress seem as varied as they are elusive. Some have indeed pointed to an alleged lack of willpower. Or perhaps there is an unreadiness in some quarters to accept that we might actually be on the verge of a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons. Others might point to an insidious, dangerous degradation of the overall negotiating climate, where chemical weapons proliferation is increasing and where chemical weapons are seen by some — erroneously, we believe — as a "poor man's" weapon of mass destruction.

Quite irrespective of the current situation in the Middle East, that area has been a source of particular concern for some time because of the approach of some states in the region to chemical weapons. Chemical weapons were used there not long ago and, recently, threats to use CW have been made which then provoked counter-threats. We call upon all countries to refrain from such potentially inflammatory statements. These can only contribute to heightened tension and greater uncertainty. Canada firmly believes that chemical weapons should have no place in the armouries of modern nations, and that the only road to real security against the chemical weapons threat lies in the negotiation of a global ban of chemical

weapons on which we, in the Conference on Disarmament, are now actively engaged.

The Canadian government's position is very clear: we firmly support the goal of a total ban on chemical weapons. And we want to see this achieved as soon as is feasible — not tomorrow or next week, but also not five or ten years from now. Delay can only add to the risk of greater proliferation and greater use of chemical weapons.

We also want the Convention that realizes our goal of a total ban to be global, comprehensive, and effectively verifiable. These three terms are not just catchwords — in our view they are essential if there is to be a total ban.

By global, we mean a Convention to which all of us here (members and observers alike), and the approximately 80 other states not participating in these negotiations, will wish to become parties. We seek a Convention that has addressed the security interest of CW-possessors and non-possessors alike...

By comprehensive, we mean a Convention that bans the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons; that provides for the complete destruction of all chemical weapons stocks and all chemical weapons production facilities; and that otherwise encompasses all activities that might be relevant to its goals.

A Convention that does not unequivocally provide these results raises serious concerns in our minds. These concerns stem from our position on globality. The Convention must attract the widest possible adherence. The surest path to widest adherence is through the Convention's comprehensiveness — i.e., complete destruction of all chemical weapons stocks and all chemical weapons production facilities by the end of the envisaged ten-year destruction period as is provided for in the current rolling text. To us, this implies an undertaking at the outset of the Convention to pursue these destruction processes to their completion.