

(Mr. Kahiluoto, Finland)

The Geneva Protocol of 1925 bans the use of chemical weapons in war. Yet this fundamental norm of international law is being violated. In the Iran-Iraq conflict, the use of chemical weapons by Iraq has been demonstrated by the team of experts repeatedly dispatched to the area by the United Nations Secretary-General. Persistent reports that chemical weapons may also have been used elsewhere add to our deep concern.

Finland condemns the use of chemical weapons. Their use in the Gulf war threatens to undermine seriously the authority of the Geneva Protocol to the detriment of the security of each and every one of us.

Such a serious breach of international law underlines the urgent need to terminate the Iran-Iraq conflict by peaceful means as soon as possible. Finland supports the efforts by the United Nations Security Council to bring this about and urges the two belligerents to co-operate with the Council to this effect.

Finland has consistently supported a complete and verifiable prohibition of chemical weapons on a global basis. At this Conference, we have sought to contribute to the achievement of this goal primarily through our technical expertise on verification of various aspects of the future convention. I shall return to this contribution in somewhat greater detail later on in my statement.

We have noted with satisfaction the considerable progress made in the negotiations on a chemical weapons convention lately, particularly towards the end of last year and this year. We are grateful to the Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee, Ambassador Ekéus of Sweden, for the firm guidance he has given and continues to give to this important and highly complex negotiation.

Despite progress, a number of difficult problems remain to be solved. Some are simply difficult in technical terms. Others require difficult political decisions. We are encouraged by the fact that both major military alliances have, in their recent statements, reiterated their determination to achieve early agreement on a chemical weapons convention.

Let me briefly mention three outstanding issues relating to the convention which we consider to be of major significance.

First, there is the issue of existing stocks and their destruction. There is by now widespread agreement that all chemical weapon stocks and their locations should be declared very soon -- 30 days -- after the convention enters into force for the State party concerned. We welcome this progress. In our view, it is of cardinal importance to the credibility of the convention that all existing stocks be declared from the very beginning, and that their destruction be promptly initiated according to an order of destruction yet to be agreed upon. In our view, such an order of destruction needs to foreclose any possibility for proliferation of chemical weapons once the convention enters into force.