

(Mr. Beesley, Canada)

ways in which the basic prohibition of use might be dealt in a future convention. Annex I to the Report of the Conference on Disarmament to the General Assembly of the United Nations (CD/539) attempts to re-arrange these options in draft treaty language. These documents, and the interventions of many delegations during the informal discussions I have mentioned, have made us all much more aware of the complexities of the formulation of the prohibition of use issue and of its interrelationship with other elements of the future convention.

It is a matter of some gratification that some momentum has been developing behind the view that the formulation of the prohibition of use should be kept as simple and as unencumbered as possible by any qualifying statements or reservations. Of course, it is recognized that such an approach shifts part of the burden to other sections of the convention, such as those dealing with definitions and permitted activities. It might of course reasonably be argued that that is where such matters belong. I certainly do not wish to expand upon these issues at this time, however I would like to reiterate a point that I have made several times informally. Such progress as we have made on these questions has occurred precisely because we have sought to determine, through very informal process, the nature and extent of the area of possible common ground, as well as the areas of possible flexibility, and then have sought to clarify, define and gradually expand this area of common ground. Clearly, in order to do so, on this or any other issue, it is necessary to avoid freezing or formalizing our positions to the point where we back ourselves into opposing corners. Admittedly the question of the precise formulation of the absolute prohibition of use, and I mention this for illustrative purposes, and the question of the relationship between the convention and the 1925 Geneva Protocol, can both finally be resolved only when we are in a position to determine how other related issues are to be settled. Well then, how can we proceed without getting involved in a circular process?

I suggest that the process we should adopt not only on this issue is that we try to reach agreement in principle on a formulation, such as the short form on use, on a contingent basis, on the express understanding that the interrelated issues will be addressed one by one, with a view to reaching further agreements of principle on each of these issues. Final approval of the treaty language on each point could await agreement on the entire package. This approach could be followed on other parts of the treaty, and I suggest on other subjects. Let us therefore continue to sound each other out informally as possible in order to determine whether there may exist common ground and the areas of flexibility and then seek to expand it, leaving final texts open, if necessary, on interrelated issues. If we could follow this process and apply our experience to other questions on chemical weapons and elsewhere, I think we could make more success than might otherwise be possible.