

(Mr. Morel, France)

Second observation: we already know, but in a very unclear way, in the absence of declarations on the part of the major chemical-weapon States, that the capacities are very unequally distributed and that a single European State alone possesses considerable resources. Whatever the order and volume of destruction of stockpiles, the linear or stage-by-stage schedules which have been contemplated so far would in fact lead, in the early years of the convention, to an oligopolistic situation in stock-holding until the end of the 10-year period, with small stockpiles cut down to insignificant volumes in the very first years.

In our view, this pattern cannot be considered a temporary drawback. Ten years is a very long period for the security of a State. For the sake of the credibility of the convention, and thus in order to ensure full accession by all States, we cannot go from everything to nothing because of an uncertain and profoundly inequitable mechanism.

Nor can one rule out the risk of delay due to technical reasons, or a crisis in the implementation of the agreed timetable for destruction of stocks during this 10-year period. Everything must be done to avoid this, but we cannot altogether set aside the possibilities that could arise. Here again one or two States might be in a position to deal with such a situation, whereas all the others would be taken unawares. In order to remedy this major drawback of lack of balance in the implementation of the destruction programme, and to ensure the fairness and therefore the full credibility of the convention, there is a need to establish a security balance which will enable all States that feel it is necessary to have a minimum chemical weapon capacity. Obviously this would not involve a sort of quantitative levelling out, but, for the period required, 10 years, guarding against any attempt to use or threaten the use of chemical weapons, thus affording a serious guarantee of a smooth transition from the present situation to the final régime of elimination and total prohibition.

Other approaches to the transition could in theory be contemplated to ensure security balance. They are set out in the French document. One would consist of a prior Soviet-United States agreement which would enter into force immediately to bring the stocks held by the most heavily armed Powers into line with those of the others, the entry into force of the convention being delayed correspondingly. The other possibility would be to arrange the 10-year period in such a way that the first half would apply only to the United States and the USSR.

For practical as well as political reasons, the drawbacks of these options are clearly greater than the advantages, if only because they delay the entry into force of the convention at a time when the possibility of chemical weapons becoming commonplace must be seriously considered. We therefore set them aside, and cast our vote for the full application of the convention and recognition of the right to maintain limited security stocks during the 10-year period.

Now to the security stocks themselves. In the document before the Conference today, France suggests that a distinction should be drawn, in the declaration made on the thirtieth day after the entry into force of the convention, between stockpiles other than security stocks, which fall under