

(Mr. Karhilo, Finland)

In Paris last January the world community, practically in its entirety, condemned once again these sinister weapons of mass destruction, and gave strengthened impetus to the on-going negotiations on the chemical weapons convention. The Paris Conference called for the redoubling of efforts in these negotiations; and redoubled they were. The Conference also called for all States to make their contribution to these negotiations. As a result new countries joined the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons as observers. Despite these positive developments one can sense widespread disappointment after the spring session of the CD as to the concrete results achieved in the aftermath of the Paris Conference. We acknowledge the fact that an effectively verifiable chemical weapons convention is both technically and politically complex and no quick breakthroughs are to be expected. During the spring session several issues which had not been discussed for some years were taken up again. This was helpful as a reminder of the wide scope of issues that still have to be addressed. Lengthy discussions were dedicated to other issues, which, although relevant to the final outcome, could now be left aside for the time being in order to have more time for tackling the major problems.

We share the concern of several other delegations that the impetus created by the Paris Conference will wither away in the absence of meaningful concrete results on the major questions. We strongly feel that the time has come for shifting the main emphasis in the negotiations to the politically problematic aspects. This would also help the technical experts to correctly focus their work on the real needs of the convention. Otherwise the technical discussions will become a never-ending story of new gaps and new theoretical possibilities to be covered. The basic information available to the negotiators is already sufficient for this shift to take place.

I will now turn to some of the issues at hand in the negotiations which we consider to be of major significance.

First, there is the issue of existing stocks of chemical weapons and their destruction. It is of cardinal importance for the credibility of the convention that all existing stocks be declared from the very beginning and that their destruction be promptly initiated. The order of destruction needs to foreclose any possibilities for proliferation of chemical weapons once the convention enters into force. It goes without saying that the verification measures covering this issue have to be the strictest possible under the convention. We have welcomed the information the two major possessors of chemical weapons have provided about their destruction programmes already under way. As was pointed out during the spring session the safe destruction of the existing stocks is both technically difficult and costly. We hope that the technology that has been developed for this purpose by the Soviet Union and the United States could be made available in due course to any interested country. This would ensure that all existing stocks were disposed of safely within the lime-limits set in the Convention.

Secondly, effective verification that no new chemical weapons will be produced once the convention enters into force is of essential importance. Unlike the arrangements for the destruction of the existing stocks, these