

(Mr. Pérez Novoa, Cuba)

For Cuba, a country which does not possess chemical weapons, the conclusion of a non-discriminatory convention which prohibits the development, stockpiling, acquisition, transfer and use of these weapons and makes the necessary provision for the destruction of existing stockpiles, production facilities and launching systems, is not only of crucial importance but is an essential guarantee in its perception of security. This should be a convention embracing all States which possess chemical weapons. In it all States must have equal duties and rights, whether or not they possess chemical weapons, even though, as a simple reflection of reality, those that possess them will bear certain additional obligations.

We have always held the view that we are not negotiating a treaty for horizontal non-proliferation in the field of chemical weapons, but rather a comprehensive CW disarmament treaty, and hence the text we agree should not contain any article enabling any State party, after the end of the scheduled destruction period, to have this type of weapon in its arsenals or maintain its capacity to produce them. The convention should encompass all currently existing chemical weapons, including binary and multicomponent weapons, regardless of their structure and composition, and should extend to all facilities for producing and stockpiling such weapons. The future convention should not contain any provisions that could limit or restrict international trade in chemicals for purposes not prohibited by the convention; on the contrary, it should provide certain guarantees that it will not offer a screen for discriminatory practices based on criteria foreign to its letter and spirit. Cuba shares the views already expressed in this room that, once the convention is concluded, there should not be any additional verification machinery that could in practice establish a dual legal regime to monitor trade in chemicals for purposes permitted by the convention. Along with 18 other members of this Conference, we have sponsored the proposed amendment to paragraph 2 of article XI concerning the elimination of all current discriminatory restrictions against States parties as soon as the future convention enters into force for them.

The economic and technological development of States parties should not be adversely affected under any circumstances. Likewise, the parties to the convention should have access to assistance in the eventuality that chemical weapons are used against them or in the case of the threat of the use of such weapons. We also believe that the convention should be adopted unreservedly, as this would effectively contribute to strengthening its provisions and its moral authority.

As for the essential problem of verification, which continues to be the subject of debate, we believe that the best system of verification which can be devised cannot be perfect, and hence moderation and awareness of the context within which the system agreed is to be applied must guide our deliberations in the matter. It will be necessary to strike an appropriate balance between what is required for a reliable and effective system and what can be viable without creating a financial burden which is unnecessary, costly and may even discourage universal adherence to the convention.