

(Ambassador Houlliez, Belgium)

weapons, an event which will have a profound influence on our future activities in the area of chemical weapons, an influence already stressed by the Co-ordinator of the Group of 21.

I should like to indicate first and foremost that the Group I represent here fully shares the views just expressed on the importance to be given to work to be accomplished in 1989 by the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, and principally on the priority and urgency of this task. For years the delegations which are members of the Western Group have constantly and unequivocally proclaimed their desire to see the very early drawing up of a convention on the total, universal and verifiable prohibition of chemical weapons. They have made significant contributions to the drawing up of the "rolling text", from which we hope a convention will emerge as soon as possible, a convention meeting the hopes, the goals and the requirements that the international community has set itself. Need I mention the contribution that the Western Group made, with many others of course, to the drawing up and adoption by consensus of the recent resolutions of the forty-third United Nations General Assembly on chemical weapons, very properly cited by the Co-ordinator of the neutral and non-aligned States?

It was President Reagan who in New York launched the idea of a special conference on chemical weapons. This proposal, positively welcomed by all United Nations Member countries, ultimately crystallized in the invitations issued by the President of the French Republic, Mr. Mitterrand, to a conference in Paris whose audience and importance need not be stressed in this forum, and one in which all the participants made a distinguished contribution to the success of this initiative.

In Paris the countries belonging to the Western Group confirmed, through their very active participation in the deliberations and in the production of the Final Declaration, the vital interest they attach not only to the Geneva Protocol of 1925 but also, and especially, to the earliest possible conclusion of a convention on the complete, universal and verifiable elimination of chemical weapons. Today, we solemnly reiterate here that, as in the past, and with a keen awareness of what is at stake, we shall continue to do our very utmost to reach the goal set in Paris for the search for solutions to still outstanding problems with key elements of our work, which will continue to be manifest throughout our debate.

Within the context of the direction laid down and the political impetus given at the Paris Conference, we have the desire and the political will to resume our work as rapidly as possible, and with that enthusiasm without which no objective can be reached. This impetus is to be found in the Final Declaration of Paris when it calls on us to redouble our efforts, "as a matter of urgency, to resolve expeditiously the remaining issues and to conclude the convention at the earliest date". We fully support these objectives, whose adoption by consensus was the result of an enormous effort at conciliation and a rapprochement which, happily, is now manifest in many aspects of international relations. The achievement of these objectives will be facilitated by an attitude enabling us to tackle the real problems as soon as possible without pointless procrastination, without wasting any time on procedural debate.