

...
(Mr. Raimond, France)

The work of this Conference with a view to elaborating an international convention on the prohibition of the manufacture of chemical weapons and the elimination of stocks is certainly one of the most delicate tasks to which it has addressed itself.

The effort made has enabled us to find some significant points of convergence on the shape and a number of important elements of the future convention. It remains true that as the work progresses the real difficulties come to light. This stems from the natural course of negotiations in such a complex field, but it also means that a number of choices have to be made.

First, do we want a convention which, like the one on biological weapons, simply postulates that chemical weapons should be banned, without really doing anything about the effectiveness of such a prohibition and its verification?

Or do we consider that these are weapons whose military effectiveness unfortunately has less and less to be demonstrated and which therefore are likely to become commonplace? Results achieved step by step, and limited not geographically (because the ease with which such arms can be transported would make such an approach utterly meaningless) but in terms of stockpiles, would surely already be a considerable achievement.

Secondly, do we want verification measures to be aimed at putting permanent pressure on any possible cheating, or are we prepared to settle for imperfect verification because nobody will ever know whether clandestine stocks have been reconstituted or hidden?

Third, what links should be established between the future convention and the provisions of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 concerning the use of chemical weapons?

Fourth, should we concentrate our efforts mainly on conventional chemical weapons, those which could be described as "bottom of the range" and accessible to most countries with industrial facilities? Or on the contrary, do we mean to give priority to the most modern chemical warfare agents or even prevent the appearances of future technologies in these areas? Is such an ambition even realistic?

These discussions underly the work of your Conference. They explain their complexity and therefore their inevitable slowness.

(continued)