

(Mr. Velayati, Islamic Republic of Iran)

... This is particularly significant in our region. It may seem today that Europe is the centre of the world. Well, this may be a valid assessment in a narrow time span. But history has largely been developed, shaped or affected by events in the Middle East. After all, this is a region that has given birth to three of the greatest prophets of God. The area from the Persian Gulf to the North of Africa can rightly be called the mirror of history and the mirror of the world.

This is most valid in regard to the CW convention. As the victim of the most extensive and horrendous chemical attacks we have a heartfelt desire for a ban on these weapons. We have suffered the catastrophic effects of chemical weapons on our military personnel as well as our civilians. We have also been a first-hand witness to the holocaust in Halabja which, on its second anniversary, still brings people to shivers, tears, anger and outrage. Thus, to us, there is not just an obligation, but a deep moral and inner urge for the abolishment and complete eradication of these barbarous weapons.

Yet, against this background, our country is faced with a complex paradox. In our immediate vicinity, we have a country that has waged a devastating war against us and, through it, has used chemical weapons at will. Even now, after the cease-fire, it is engaged in an extensive and ambitious programme of development and stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons. This is aside from potential threats from some other countries in the region, which are continuously arming themselves with advanced and sophisticated weaponry.

Under these conditions, we have two options. One is to follow logic and reason and convert capabilities and expertise in the field of chemical weapons acquired during the course of the war into practice as a deterrent vis-à-vis immediate and potential threats. The other is to follow our urge and set our hopes on a still ambiguous convention, and be prepared for a possible risk, or perhaps serious jeopardy, to our security. Despite the odds, we have decided to follow our urge, but we need assurances.

We do not intend to set pre-conditions. But there are necessities arising from the merits of the situation. Let us not forget that the Iraqi use of chemical weapons, followed by a chemical and missile build-up in the area, was a prime factor in giving momentum to the CW convention. Therefore for the success of the convention, there has to be genuine adherence to and full implementation of the convention in our region.

To be frank, if the convention were ready today, the chances of its success in our region would be somewhere near zero. Without undermining the importance of the understandings at the level of major CW-producing countries,

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