

(Mr. Sadleir, Australia)

deployed in Europe. The asymmetry of deployments is, unfortunately, such that we read reports of plans to add to the stockpiles and systems of chemical weapons there. How much better if the reports were instead of plans for symmetry involving a unilateral reduction of chemical weapon readiness. Since, moreover, chemical weapons are specially effective against the unprotected, there is a constant temptation to use them against less equipped adversaries. This, very likely, lies behind reports from South East Asia and Afghanistan of the use of chemical agents in conflicts there. The reports are a cause for serious distress. The ban for which we call should resolve the ambiguities and close the loopholes which mar related prohibitions, namely, the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972. Such a ban should, above all, be fully verifiable. Progress here in the next months towards a ban on chemical weapons is one of the achievements which could, in one stroke, both justify the existence of this Committee and constitute a tonic for the world.

Another area where progress is possible is the effort to assure non-nuclear weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. This item, the third on the Committee's agenda, was the first to be entrusted to an Ad Hoc Working Group. Although movement has been slow, a real opportunity exists now for acceleration. At the thirty-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly, the delegation of Pakistan introduced a resolution, adopted as resolution 36/95, with 145 favourable votes and no negative votes, which indicates how this important issue may be managed. My delegation will co-operate with others in efforts to ensure a successful outcome on this matter. It would be appropriate if the nuclear-weapon States, whose positions, as set out at the first special session on disarmament, gave impetus to our efforts in this area, were able to advance it for recognition by the second special session.

Turning to the comprehensive programme on disarmament, I should like simply to state our belief that the time has come to start serious drafting. The Working Group spent three rewarding weeks in January thoroughly studying all major issues at stake in the projected programme. However, time is short, the general debate has nearly run its course and intensive drafting is now required. We therefore welcome the establishment of open-ended drafting groups, under the able guidance of Ambassadors de la Gorce of France and de Souza e Silva of Brazil, on those sections of the programme dealing with objectives and priorities. The establishment of the drafting groups reflects, we believe, recognition that, in this case, a working group is too cumbersome an instrument for speedily advancing the Committee's work. We suggest, accordingly, that perhaps only one formal meeting a week of the Ad Hoc Working Group on a Comprehensive Programme of Disarmament would be sufficient and that the other working period allotted to the CPD should be set aside for drafting or informal consultations.

As to radiological weapons, I say only that the Australian delegation sought last year to play a helpful role in bridging the differences that have so far prevented the Committee from bringing this limited disarmament measure to a conclusion. It is a role which, on behalf of my delegation, I pledge ourselves to maintain this year.

Australia, in part because of geographical circumstance, has long been involved in the adventure of exploring outer space. It is a source of concern to us that that new frontier of man should not be abused. It was for this reason that Australia, at the recent General Assembly, co-sponsored resolution 36/97 C. We consider that, in this first half of its 1982 session, the Committee could best advance its work on the issue of outer space by engaging in a broad exchange of views on the question in all its aspects. This would enable the Committee to take, at a later stage, a more informed approach in dealing substantively with the topic.