

concerning research facilities, biological products and the occurrence of rare diseases. In order to elaborate precise procedures for such exchanges, an *ad hoc* Group of scientific and technical experts from the states parties, met in Geneva from 31 March to 15 April 1987. The first such exchange of information began in the fall of 1987 and has been repeated each year thereafter.

A ban on chemical weapons has been on the UN agenda since 1968. Yet progress has materialized only recently. In 1980, the forty-nation Conference on Disarmament (CD) established the *ad hoc* Working Group on Chemical Weapons. By 1983, this Group had developed a consensus document identifying elements of a comprehensive treaty, and had outlined areas of agreement and disagreement.

An important step in the CD negotiations on chemical weapons was taken by the United States in 1984 when it tabled a draft treaty providing for verification by challenge inspections (i.e., short-notice, mandatory inspections of plants suspected of cheating). That year also saw general agreement that the destruction of existing chemical weapon stockpiles should be subject to systematic international inspection, although disagreement persisted over the particular inspection procedures to be used.

Concern over chemical weapons has been fed by recent allegations of their use. Since 1980, the UN Secretary-General has conducted several inquiries to ascertain the truth of such charges. A series of UN reports, beginning in 1984, confirmed that chemical weapons had been used in the Gulf War by Iraq against Iran. On 1 March 1988, Iraq was again reported to have used chemical weapons -- this time against its own Kurdish population. A UN investigation of the alleged attacks was undertaken between 17 March and 4 April 1988. On 26 April, the UN Secretary-General presented a report on the use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war to the Security Council. Although the report indicated the use of both mustard and nerve gas in the conflict, it did not identify the countries responsible for such action.

In the meantime, after a hiatus of eighteen years, the United States renewed its production of chemical weapons in December 1987. Such plans gained momentum in the wake of US statements alleging continued Soviet production of chemical weapons. In the fall of 1987, for instance, Ambassador Max Friedersdorf, chief US delegate to the CD's Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, cited US estimates indicating that there were fourteen to twenty chemical weapon-production sites on Soviet territory whose whereabouts Moscow refused to disclose.

At the same time, there is evidence of the development and production of chemical weapons in the Third World. On 25 October 1988, US Director of Central Intelligence William Webster announced that Libya was building a chemical warfare complex at Rabta, about eighty kilometres southwest of Tripoli. According to US State Department officials, the plant, once completed, would be capable of producing nerve gas as well as large quantities of mustard gas. While Libya denied the charges, and maintained that the facility was a pharmaceutical plant that it would "open to the world when completed," US accusations and presentation of evidence to the contrary mounted during subsequent months. Such evidence also indicated that the technology used in the development of the Libyan facility was acquired from companies in both West