

(Mr. Alfarargi, Egypt)

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If we can conclude that there has been clear progress in the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons, we cannot be similarly confident if asked about the date of completion of such negotiations and the preparation of the draft convention. Some of the plenary statements which we have heard during the recent period give the impression that a convention is very near, while some other statements refer to the fact that we still have a long way to go before reaching our objective. If this variance in estimation proves anything, it shows that these negotiations are tied to considerations in many instances beyond the control of the Conference. It follows that we do not believe in the usefulness of holding a special session of the Conference to activate the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons, as long as the negotiations are subject to considerations that are political rather than technical. If the aim is to activate the work of the Conference, then a special session could be held or the ordinary session could be extended to deal with all the items on the agenda while concentrating on those given high priority by the international community.

It may be appropriate to comment in this context on the subject of mandatory challenge inspection, as long as there is quasi-unanimity on its being a corner-stone in reaching a convention. Adhesion to treaties is an act of sovereignty decided by every State in accordance with its supreme interests. And withdrawal from treaties in the field of disarmament is an accepted principle when the supreme interests of a State are jeopardized. It follows that any State having chemical weapons, or having the intention to acquire such weapons with the intent of using them, will not adhere to the convention. It is true that this will render it liable to moral pressure, but at least it will be freed from the legal responsibility that results from contravening the convention. That is why we do not understand why those considering the subject of mandatory challenge inspection concentrate on the aspect of verification of compliance while ignoring the aspect of abuse of mandatory challenge inspection and its threat to national security and the production of chemical weapons for peaceful purposes. That is why we support the inclusion of detailed provisions on challenge inspection, ensuring that this method of verification would not be abused and that compensation would be forthcoming for any damage resulting therefrom.