

(Mr. Jessel, France)

I hope to have another opportunity to take stock of the results and prospects of our present session and I would like to devote my statement today to our negotiations on chemical weapons. I should like to say at the outset that I do not share the opinion of those who consider that these negotiations are only a secondary matter. On the contrary, this is a problem and these are negotiations to which we attach great importance and it is our impression that many people around this table share that attitude. In addition, our role as a depositary of the Geneva Protocol of 1925 induces us to give this problem particular attention and vigilance. For this reason we continue to denounce all violations of that Protocol wherever they occur and by whomever they are perpetrated. For this reason we are anxious to help with everything that can further progress in the current negotiations.

For this reason too, we are happy to note that the Ad Hoc Committee and its working groups have done a serious job in a constructive spirit, as the report adopted yesterday by the Committee shows. The Workshop on verification organized by the Netherlands in June gave a first-hand view of the complexity of the problems which confront us and contributed to the serious atmosphere and realism of our work this summer. For that reason, I am happy to join those who have already expressed their deep gratitude to the Netherlands authorities for having organized that very useful meeting and organized it so well.

We welcome the decision taken, as last year, to continue consultations between sessions in order to make progress on the matters remaining pending. France had been making similar proposals for a long time; it even hoped that more would be done, but the agreement now reached is satisfactory.

It is true, after all, that a whole series of problems still require considerable work for the various viewpoints to be brought closer together. That is why, in particular, agreement has not yet been possible on the question which is at the heart of our negotiations, that of verification of compliance with the Convention. Within our Conference, and outside it too,