

(Mr. Vejvoda, Czechoslovakia)

My delegation, together with a large number of other delegations, has been constantly calling on the Conference to start drafting a convention on the prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons. We proceeded from the presumption that while differences in the approach towards some aspects of the future convention persisted common texts on less controversial parts could be helpful. But it was impossible to elaborate such texts in the past. Finally, this year, the Ad Hoc Committee on chemical weapons, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Turbanski of Poland, made a first step in this direction. Reports of the three working groups, though with some brackets and footnotes, represent a sort of common, integral text, which more clearly than the previous texts reflect the achieved level of consensus. Let me therefore congratulate Ambassador Turbanski on this positive result of his Committee. Naturally, our thanks go to all the three chairmen of the Committee's working groups -- Comrade Poptchev, Mrs. Bonnier and Mr. Elbe, for their tireless effort.

The outcome of this year's work on chemical weapons is even more encouraging if one takes into account that the recent political decisions concerning chemical weapons did not improve conditions for such negotiations; quite the contrary. By adopting a decision to produce binary chemical weapons the United States made a first step on the way which may lead to substantially complicating negotiations on chemical weapons, if not undermining them completely. As if realizing this threatening development, the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons worked more effectively, directed its attention to substantive problems and was practically free of interminable squabbles over procedural questions, which in the past took up much of its time.

As we supposed, work on the texts brought about new interesting ideas which undoubtedly have the potential to ease the movement forward on some aspects. Thus, in Working Group A, a notion of a key component of binary chemical systems of chemical warfare was introduced and met with a basically positive response. The use of this notion enables us to label in a clear way basic components of binary and multicomponent chemical weapons. We proceed from the obvious fact that a key precursor is not a chemical weapon, whereas a key component can practically be considered such a weapon. For this reason a key component should be defined and considered differently from a precursor. We welcome the fact that the notion of key component has already been accepted as one of the instruments for the solution of the problem of the CW definitions and we believe that, though for the time being it is treated by some delegations through brackets, it should be further considered once the Ad Hoc Committee resumes its work.

While we assess positively this year's results of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, we fully realize that we are still far from having achieved decisive progress in the elaboration of the convention. It is important that we do not lose the momentum gained this year. For this to be preserved, the co-operation of all is needed. Those who still consider starting a new round in the chemical arms race should realize that their plans are contrary to the willingness and readiness of the whole international community to get rid of chemical weapons.