

**Statement by the Soviet Representative (Issraelyan) to the Committee on Disarmament: Verification of a Chemical Weapons Ban, March 31, 1981**<sup>1</sup>

Comrade Chairman, we should like to devote our statement today to the issue of the prohibition of chemical weapons.

The Soviet Union has been consistently speaking in favour of outlawing and eliminating chemical warfare means. It has endeavoured to reach this objective both before the Second World War and during the post-war period. In March 1972, the USSR together with other socialist countries submitted to the Committee a draft of an international convention to this end.<sup>2</sup> In recent years the Soviet side has been conducting negotiations with the United States on this matter, and sufficiently detailed information thereon was presented to the Committee on Disarmament in 1979<sup>3</sup> and 1980.<sup>4</sup> From the very outset we have been actively participating in the multilateral negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons within the framework of the Committee on Disarmament. It appears to us that the *Ad Hoc* Working Group of the Committee on this question has achieved a certain amount of progress. Discussions held in the Group have revealed the closeness of views on some aspects of this complex problem, although so far there are more divergences in views than convergences. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that eventually the realistic approach will prevail and the work done in the Group will make a useful contribution to the process of working out the convention.

In this context, the Soviet delegation would like to emphasize that it concurs with the opinion of those delegations which deem it particularly necessary to adopt the correct approach to one of the most complex issues, namely, that of ensuring the fulfilment by the States parties to the future convention of the obligations they have assumed.

The question of verification is an important issue. It is well known that in the course of the numerous negotiations on disarmament issues during the post-war period the failure to agree on this particular question was the root cause of the lack of success in the negotiations. We are more and more often facing a situation where the question of verification acts as a brake, hampering the achievement of genuine results. This applies, *inter alia*, to measures which could substantially limit the sphere of the arms race, and in the first place the qualitative arms race, and reverse it. As a result of the artificial magnification of the verification issues, the attainment of agreements is rendered more difficult, if not impossible. Moreover, there have even been certain attempts to take advantage of the verification issues by making use of the fact that verification is linked with a multitude of complex technical, military and other questions which are

<sup>1</sup> CD/PV.119, pp. 13-17.

<sup>2</sup> *Documents on Disarmament*, 1972, pp. 120-124.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1979, pp. 532-536.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 1980, pp. 285-289.

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have been actively participating in the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons within

the Committee on Disarmament. It appears to us that the Committee on this question has

made progress. Discussions held in the Group have touched on some aspects of this complex problem,

convergences in views than divergences. We believe that eventually the realistic approach will

enable the Group to make a useful contribution to the Convention.

Our delegation would like to emphasize that it is the delegations which deem it particularly

important to reach an agreement on one of the most complex issues, disarmament by the States parties to the future

have assumed. It is an important issue. It is well known that

negotiations on disarmament issues during the past few years on this particular question was the

main theme of the negotiations. We are more and more convinced that the question of verification acts as a

barrier to the achievement of genuine results. This applies, *inter alia*, to the question of verification which tends to

essentially limit the sphere of the arms control negotiations. On the one hand, it tends to limit the sphere of the arms race, and reverse it. As a

result of the verification issues, the attainment of a comprehensive agreement is more difficult, if not impossible. Moreover, attempts to take advantage of the

fact that verification is linked with disarmament and other questions which are

difficult for the general public to understand and can therefore be presented in a light that is advantageous to a country which does not want the agreement in question.

The Soviet delegation feels it necessary to present certain general considerations on the verification issue. First of all, we wish to recall certain basic approaches and concepts relating to these matters, some of which in the past have undermined the possibility of reaching agreements in the disarmament field.

What are these concepts? First and foremost, there is the concept which could be expressed in the following words: first verification and then disarmament, that is, essentially, the establishment of verification without disarmament. This concept was widely and persistently advocated by our partners in disarmament negotiations at the end of the 1940s and in the early 1950s. Some proposals which are being advanced even now are in a certain measure an echo of this kind of approach which has turned out to be unsound and has in the past led a number of disarmament negotiations to a deadlock.

Close to this concept is an approach which is based on the assumption that the possibilities of verification determine the scope of an agreement in the disarmament field. What is being suggested is to move from verification to disarmament, and not the other way round — from agreement on the scope of disarmament to control. Special emphasis is laid on the extensive discussion of every possible technical detail of the verification issues even when the principal questions regarding the scope of a specific disarmament measure have not yet been defined and resolved. Thus, room is created for maneuvering in the negotiations. One issue is made dependent on another; one technical problem gives rise to many others, and instead of the substantive resolution of major issues, the negotiations become mired down in fruitless and lengthy deliberations on various technical questions.

The "arms control" concept has gained wide dissemination in the West. This concept plays a certain part in the implementation of some measures to restrain the arms race. However, the great drawback of this concept is that control over existing armaments takes the place of verification of disarmament. It would be possible, under this concept, for things to reach the point where the development of new types of weaponry could be interpreted as a positive factor. It must be observed, furthermore, that, under the pretext of arms control, attempts have repeatedly been made to damage the defence interests of the other side.

We wish particularly to speak of what might be called the "concept of distrust" which we quite frequently encounter in the Committee on Disarmament also. Under this concept, every party to a convention is regarded as a potential violator of its provisions, as one who will do everything possible to ensure that his neighbours ban and destroy their weapons while he himself keeps his so that he can use them either for deterrence or for a direct attack. On the basis of this approach, the significance of intrusive international verification is being exaggerated in every possible way and comprehensive, systematic and total international

on-site inspections are being proposed, while at the same time the effectiveness of the contemporary national means of verification is being underestimated and neglected.

Let us examine what this concept of distrust can lead to, using as an example the problem of the prohibition of chemical weapons.

As everyone knows, modern industrial chemical production is characterized by its tremendous scale. Already now in some countries the number of enterprises amounts to many thousands. Moreover, we are witnessing an extremely complex interlinkage of chemical production with other branches of industry, in particular mechanical engineering. In these conditions, if we proceed on the basis of the concept of distrust, no matter how much we expand and complicate the verification system, no matter how comprehensive we strive to render it, we shall never reach the point at which we can be sure that no uncertainties have been left concerning some important aspect or other of the activities of States related to the observance of all the provisions of a convention banning chemical weapons.

To take another example, in the debates on questions of the prohibition of chemical weapons, mention has frequently been made of such chemicals as phosgene and hydrogen cyanide, which were used to fill munitions during the First World War. Incidentally, these chemicals are also mentioned in the working paper by the Chinese delegation which was distributed today. At the same time, their production for peaceful purposes at present is measured in hundreds of thousands of tons. It appears neither possible nor advisable to restrict the use of phosgene and hydrogen cyanide for peaceful purposes. Well, do we have now to place under control the entire production of these substances? Or do we have to fill enterprises with hundreds and thousands of foreign inspectors? And once again the same question arises: guided by the concept of distrust, can we be sure that a suspect State is not using these chemicals for prohibited purposes?

One more example. Many delegations have rightly pointed to the need to destroy chemical munitions and to end their development and production. Certainly, appropriate provisions should be included in the future convention, but it is also clear that there are probably nowhere in the world metalworking industries whose sole object is to produce unfilled munitions exclusively and only for chemical weapons. What follows from this? Would we really have to place under control all metalworking enterprises?

Further, the need to verify the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles is obvious. But what kind of verification, and in what forms? Let us suppose, for example, that through the conduct of systematic international on-site inspections with the help of a whole army of inspectors we manage to confirm accurately enough that States have indeed destroyed the declared stocks of chemical weapons. But since those inspections would be based on the concept of distrust, on a presumption of the inclination of States to cheat, then we would have to be consistent and assume that States would try not to declare all the chemical weapons at their disposal. In that case, we may ask, what would be gained by such verification of the destruction of the declared stocks?

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Industrial chemical production is already now in some countries the many thousands. Moreover, we are linking chemical production with nuclear mechanical engineering. In these cases of the concept of distrust, no matter what the verification system, no matter how strict, we shall never reach the point at which doubts have been left concerning some States related to the observance of the ban on chemical weapons.

Debates on questions of the prohibition of chemical weapons have frequently been made of such chemicals which were used to fill munitions during the war. These chemicals are also mentioned in the Geneva Convention on the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons. The delegation which was distributed to the States for peaceful purposes at present amounts to several thousands of tons. It appears neither possible nor desirable to place under control the entire production of such chemicals. How do we have to fill enterprises with hundreds of workers? And once again the same question arises: can we be sure that a suspect State will not produce prohibited purposes?

States have rightly pointed to the need to limit their development and production of chemical weapons should be included in the future. There are probably nowhere in the world where the sole object is to produce unfilled chemical weapons. What follows from this? How do we have to place under control all metalworking

the destruction of chemical weapons and in what forms? Through the conduct of systematic international inspections with the help of a whole army of inspectors we can see that States have indeed destroyed chemical weapons. But since those inspections are carried out on a presumption of the inclination of States to be consistent and assume that they will not produce all the chemical weapons at their disposal, what would be gained by such verification? How do we have to place under control all stocks?

There is also the question as to how it would be possible to check whether or not this or that State was developing new types of chemical weapons, such as binary or multicomponent weapons. In her book entitled *The Game of Disarmament*, Alva Myrdal writes that it is virtually impossible to control binary weapons because their components are not weapons as such until they are combined. Of course, binary weapons will be subject to prohibition, but how will it be in this case? Do we have to ensure that all chemical production is the subject of on-site verification involving a countless number of inspectors? Obviously not.

Or again, for example, what about a situation where a State which is a potential violator of the convention is preparing for a chemical war by using the production capacities of its allies, which are not parties to the convention, or is using their territories for activities prohibited under the convention.

Many other examples could be given to demonstrate the unsoundness of the "concept of distrust" and of the proposals it gives rise to regarding intrusive verification.

What, then, is the position of the Soviet Union on the question of verification? We wish to stress that we are in favour of strict and effective international control. The many proposals put forward by the Soviet Union with regard to the limitation of the arms race and disarmament have always provided for some form of verification of the implementation of the measure we have proposed. We are parties to agreements which provide for both national and international measures of verification and some of them envisage a combination of these.

I should like to point out that we have no reason for trusting others any more than others trust us. The Soviet Union believes that the main function of a system for ensuring compliance with disarmament agreements—of which verification is an integral part—is to give the parties to those agreements assurance of their observance by other parties, and through the employment of certain forms of co-operation to facilitate the resolution of questions in dispute thus ensuring the implementation by the States parties in good faith of the obligations they have assumed and building confidence between them. At the same time, the elaboration of specific forms of verification and other elements of the system for ensuring compliance with the relevant agreements, so that they fulfil their ultimate purpose, should be based on a number of important political principles.

Certain basic principles underlying our approach to questions of verification may be summarized as follows: (1) the conduct of verification should in no way prejudice the sovereign rights of States or permit interference in their internal affairs; (2) verification cannot exist without disarmament but must stem from a precise and clear agreement on measures for the limitation of armaments and for disarmament; (3) the scope and forms of verification should be commensurate with the character and scope of the specific obligations established in the relevant agreement relating to the limitation of armaments and disarmament; (4) the detailed elaboration of the verification provisions is possible only after an agreement on the scope of the prohibition has been mapped out; (5) we

proceed from the assumption that a State becomes a party to a convention not in order to violate it but in order to abide strictly by the obligations it has assumed under it, and therefore that verification should not be built upon the principle of total distrust by States of one another, and should not take the form of global suspiciousness, but should simply be a link—perhaps a very important one but still only a link—in the chain of other measures ensuring confidence in the observance of the convention by all its parties; (6) international forms of verification should be limited; and lastly, (7) we also take into account the very important circumstance that in the conditions of the present-day development of science and technology, any fairly less serious violation of an agreement in the field of disarmament, including the sphere of chemical weapons, has no chance of remaining undetected for very long.

Past experience shows that the settlement of verification issues has always depended on whether or not the various parties have the political will to conclude the relevant agreement. In spite of the difficulties involved in the solution of the complex technical problems of verification, it has proved possible for treaties to be concluded between the USSR and the United States of America on, for example, the limitation of strategic armaments and on nuclear explosions for peaceful purposes, which contain appropriate provisions relating to verification.

We resolutely oppose the elaboration of verification measures in isolation from the specific contents of this or that measure pertaining to the limitation of armaments or disarmament, its nature and significance in a broader context of disarmament, in isolation from the possible existence of other international norms or agreements ensuring the observance of the measure in question, and without seeing in due proportion the danger of non-compliance with this measure as compared with the negative consequences of superfluous interference in the peaceful activities of States and of the disclosure of commercial and technical secrets in certain spheres of industry. In other words, we are against giving absolute pre-eminence to verification and carrying it to absurd lengths; we are in favour of reasonable, balanced verification on the scale that is truly necessary—no more, no less.

This is not merely our own point of view. As a result of the discussions held last year in the *Ad Hoc* Working Group on Chemical Weapons, agreement has been reached on a balanced approach to questions of verifying compliance with obligations under a convention on the prohibition of such weapons. The statements at the plenary meetings of the Committee on Disarmament and the papers presented by a number of States also contain quite a number of interesting thoughts on this subject. They were expressed, in particular, by the delegations of Brazil, Netherlands, France, Canada, Belgium and a number of others.

We believe that we should listen to the voice of all those who are in favour of well-founded moderation in the approach to the scope, forms, nature and methods of verification, and of ensuring that verification is a means of guaranteeing compliance with the convention and not an end in itself.

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The Soviet Union delegation, for its part, intends to be guided by this precise approach, remembering that it alone leads to a success.

**Statement by the French Representative (de la Gorce) to the Committee on Disarmament: Chemical Weapons [Extract], April 2, 1981<sup>1</sup>**

My delegation would like today to present its views on the state of our work on chemical weapons, and also briefly to recall its position on the question of nuclear disarmament, in connection with the discussions we are holding on this subject at informal meetings.

My Government attaches considerable importance to the question of chemical disarmament. Chemical weapons are a real menace, both because of their lethal power and because it is relatively easy to manufacture and use them.

It was for that reason that my delegation, at our first session, urged that the Committee should initiate negotiations on chemical disarmament and adopt the method which seemed to us the most suitable, namely, the establishment of a working group.

We are pleased to note the progress that has been made by the Working Group on Chemical Weapons and wish to pay tribute to its successive chairmen, Ambassador Okawa and Ambassador Lidgard, for their very efficient guidance of its work. The group has made the best possible use of the opportunities offered it by its mandate, which we would have preferred to be broader and which should undoubtedly be reconsidered when the time comes for the Group to embark on a more advanced stage in the negotiation process.

The latest discussions have brought out the many points of agreement that exist as regards definitions. They have also revealed the divergencies of opinion that remain as regards the scope of the convention and verification.

The first thing to be defined is the scope of the convention, since verification problems depend directly on it.

Some delegations have expressed a desire for the scope to be extended to include a prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, as prescribed in the Geneva Protocol of 1925.<sup>2</sup>

In our view, it is essential to maintain the necessary distinction between two different areas and between the legal instruments of which they are

<sup>1</sup> CD/PV.120, pp. 24-27.

<sup>2</sup> The protocol is printed in *Documents on Disarmament, 1969*, pp. 764-765.