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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 15 July 1986, at 10.30 a.m.

President:

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(Burma)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 370th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

Allow me first to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, Mr. Timothy Renton M.P., who is addressing the Conference today. I wish to thank him for his presence in the Conference and for the interest he shows in its work, as this is the second time that he is speaking before the Conference during this annual session. I am sure that members will listen with particular attention to his statement.

In accordance with the timetable of meetings for this week, the Conference starts today its consideration of item 4 on its agenda, entitled "Chemical Weapons". In accordance with rule 30 of the rules of procedure, however, any member wishing to raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference may do so.

His Excellency the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, Mr. Timothy Renton, is the only speaker inscribed to address the Conference today and I give him the floor.

Mr. RENTON (United Kingdom): Mr. President, I am grateful to have this opportunity to return to the Conference on Disarmament so soon after my last visit in February. When I spoke then, I tried to give some indication to the Conference of the British approach to arms control and disarmament. I emphasized in particular the importance of a climate of growing, even if only partial, confidence and trust if any arms control proposal is to flourish. And I underlined the importance of verification. Verification is the heart of any disarmament issue. It is not an optional extra, but is essential if any arms control agreement is genuinely to enhance stability and security.

I also indicated in my previous speech the United Kingdom position on a range of specific disarmament issues. But I dwelt in most detail on item 4 of your agenda, Chemical Weapons. I did so then because it is the most advanced of all your subjects and the conclusion of an agreement is an imperative for us all. With your permission, I would like to return now to this subject which is that laid down in the programme of work of the Conference for this week.

I would like to begin by noting that 1 July saw the start not only of your Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament, on which I warmly congratulate you, but also of the United Kingdom's Presidency of the European Community. It is appropriate therefore that I recall the many contributions of the member States of the European Community to this Conference and the unanimous support the Community has expressed for the negotiations for a chemical-weapons treaty.

The United Kingdom views with the greatest seriousness recent instances of use of chemical weapons, including allegations concerning conflicts in not just one but many different parts of the world. We consider these deliberate breaches of the 1925 Protocol wholly unacceptable. We accordingly welcome the

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consensus arrived at in these negotiations that the chemical-weapons convention should buttress the Geneva Protocol by the conclusion of an explicit prohibition of use of chemical weapons.

The most persistent reports have been of use in the Gulf conflict. Three separate United Nations fact-finding missions -- in 1984, 1985 and 1986 -- have each concluded that chemical weapons had been used there. Following each report, such use was not only condemned by many individual States and groups of States but also collectively by the United Nations Security Council. This year, the United Nations report identified Iraqi forces as responsible, and further international condemnation followed.

Let me in particular quote from the declaration of the Twelve issued on 8 April 1986. This included the following passage:

"The Twelve have condemned without qualification any use of chemical weapons and they expressed the earnest hope that they would not be used again in this or any other conflict. However, the recent report of the mission of specialists dispatched by the Secretary-General concludes that chemical weapons on many occasions have been used by Iraqi forces against Iranian forces, most recently in the course of the present Iranian offensive into Iraqi territory. The Twelve have taken note of this report with great concern. Accordingly they emphasize the importance of the declaration of the Security Council of the United Nations of March 21, 1986, and they strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons mentioned therein. They reiterate that they attach the greatest importance to the strict compliance with the provisions of the Geneva Protocol of 1925."

There have been all too many examples on both sides of disregard for international law, not least the many attacks on innocent shipping in the Gulf. But the sheer scale of the use of chemical weapons has to be a matter of the greatest concern. We have reason to believe that as many as 10,000 people may already have been casualties of this appalling form of warfare. Worse may be to come. We believe Iraq has full-scale production facilities capable of producing many hundreds of tons of Mustard gas and of nerve agents, and that new production complexes may be under construction. Iran may in turn be taking steps to acquire its own chemical weapons. To date we are not aware of retaliation in kind. But I would urge the Iraqi Government to reflect most seriously on what might happen if there were. This senseless conflict, already so tragically wasteful to human life and human resources would take a further downward spiral.

That said, one has to look at the wider context of the Gulf conflict. Iraq has repeatedly called for a cease-fire and stands ready to co-operate in mediation efforts to bring about a lasting peace. But it faces an implacable opponent which adamantly refuses such calls for a cease-fire and rejects all offers of mediation, including that of the United Nations Secretary-General himself. The United Kingdom has been and remains fervently committed to the earliest possible end to the Gulf conflict. We have fully supported United Nations and European Community initiatives. We have played a leading role in the adoption of Security Council resolution 582, calling for an

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immediate cease-fire. The end to all fighting and the need to restrict the threat faced by neighbouring States are prime objectives. But within those overall objectives, the international community -- still less this Conference -- cannot ignore the risks posed by continued chemical-weapons use.

There are also wider, and equally serious implications. In the Middle East alone, there is evidence that other countries apart from Iraq are developing an offensive chemical-weapon capability. More may be forced to consider the consequences of the potential chemical threat. And world-wide, other countries may reflect that Iraq has been able to use chemical weapons without serious international cost. They too may strive for advantage by covertly building their own chemical weapons stocks. World-wide, there may be more than 20 nations which now either possess chemical weapons or are looking at the option of acquiring them.

We, and many other governments, have imposed export controls to try to inhibit parties to the Gulf conflict from manufacturing lethal chemical agents. Recently a number of States have also provided their national chemical industries with a warning list of chemicals to reduce still further the possibility of inadvertent assistance in the manufacture of chemical weapons. But while such steps help to hold the line, they will not prevent any country which is determined to flout the 1925 Geneva Protocol. It is in this context that we welcome the consensus that the problem of proliferation of these weapons must be dealt with by the chemical-weapons convention and that a chemical-weapon non-proliferation régime is not the answer. The only sure way to prevent CW use, as all of you at this Conference appreciate, is to agree a comprehensive and verifiable convention, and to ensure that all countries adhere to it.

We stand at a critical moment in the deliberations on this issue. Either we all negotiate seriously, and quickly, and agree a treaty. Or we recognize the genie is beginning to make its escape from the bottle, and we accept the consequences of living forever under its shadow.

Two weeks ago we paid tribute to those who died at the opening of one of the fiercest battles of the First World War. We recalled the events on the Somme in 1916 with sadness, but with a stern determination that they should not be repeated. For many of us, the image of those battles some 70 years ago is overlain by the awful vision of chemical warfare, of thousands dying beneath the evil clouds of phosgene and cyanide. Seventy years later, even more horrible weapons can be deployed. Surely we should not allow history to repeat itself now, in the Gulf or anywhere else.

It is with these considerations in mind that we should address what still divides us in the crucial negotiations here at Geneva. My Government has considered with great care the statement made at this Conference by Ambassador Issraelyan on 22 April. We recognize that this has built upon the statement by Mr. Gorbachev on 15 January. We believe it represents a small but welcome step forward. We are greatly encouraged that the Soviet Union is at last setting out its position in detail, although it must be said that much of this detail does no more than reflect what already seemed to be the

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consensus view at the Conference. But a serious Soviet statement deserves a serious response. The United Kingdom delegation will work to respond fully to all these points.

What must not be forgotten, however, is that Ambassador Issraelyan's statement follows years of negotiation in which Western and non-aligned delegations put forward a range of constructive and practical suggestions for advancing the negotiations, to be met largely by indifference or silence from the Soviet Union. I point in particular to the series of United Kingdom papers on the verification of non-production in the civil chemical industry, CD/353, CD/514 and CD/575. Bearing in mind the lessons of the immensely useful workshop conducted by the Netherlands Government -- and I would like to express my Government's thanks to the Netherlands Government for all the effort that must have been put into this undertaking -- we hope that the time is now ripe to incorporate this thinking and these practical lessons into article VI of our convention.

I should now like to say some words on one of the core issues of our negotiations, challenge inspection. In doing so I wish at the same time to introduce a new United Kingdom paper. It is essential that we should all understand the objective of a challenge inspection régime. Without such an understanding, we risk making our work far more difficult, and delaying that moment of success to which we all profess ourselves to be committed.

First we must distinguish between the separate roles of challenge inspection and routine inspection. In the latter case there will need to be not only a system of data exchange, but also mandatory international on-site inspection to ensure confidence in initial declarations, in the destruction of stockpiles, in the destruction of production facilities, in the non-diversion of chemicals from the civil industry into weapons production, and in the operation of the single permitted facility for defence purposes. All of that, I believe, is common ground between us, even though the details still require extensive and complex negotiation. However, these routine verification measures should, taken together, provide confidence to all parties to the convention that others are complying with their obligations in respect of declared sites, facilities and stockpiles.

None the less we must recognize that concern may still be aroused about activities by States parties which cannot be resolved by routine inspection measures. We believe that States parties should therefore have the ability to resolve such matters by bilateral or multilateral co-operation; the convention, in other words, must have a fact-finding procedure which can invoke the authority of the Executive Council. We are encouraged by the degree of consensus which has already emerged within the Conference on this type of co-operation, and which has been reflected in article IX of the draft convention, CD/636. Nothing I shall subsequently say today is designed to cast doubt on that degree of consensus, or to suggest that it reflects anything but a valuable achievement. We ourselves will work hard to build upon it, and we look to others with confidence to join us in that effort.

However, the convention will not be a secure and complete achievement, a truly lasting monument to arms control in which all who have participated in

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its negotiation can take justifiable pride, unless it is supplemented by one vital, additional measure: a stringent régime providing for inspection on challenge in exceptional circumstances. Such a régime, as has been said before by British Ministers and others, must act as the safety net to the convention, providing the mechanism of last resort whereby all States to the convention can feel truly assured that their security has been lastingly enhanced.

Challenge inspection must perform two roles, and the provisions governing it must make allowance for both. In the first case, its function is to prevent any breaches of the convention occurring in the first place. In other words, it must act as a major deterrent to any contemplated violation of obligations under the convention. It must make the probability that such violations would be discovered so likely that any States parties which might be so tempted would be discouraged from considering such acts. Such States would also, under a challenge inspection régime, have to take account of the likely reaction of other States, were they to attempt to conceal breaches by refusing a challenge inspection. It therefore follows that such an inspection régime must be as stringent as possible, but that the right in the convention to request such an inspection on challenge might -- we would strongly hope -- never have to be invoked.

The second function of the régime is, of course, to provide the basis for an inspection should that be required. Here again, the most stringent provisions will be required, in order to fulfil the fundamental objective of challenge inspection. A weak and inadequate régime would be a recipe for a weak and inadequate convention, one which I trust no participant in the present negotiations would find acceptable.

Over the past two years a range of proposals have been made at this conference for implementing in treaty form the sort of ideas I have elaborated. The British Government first tabled its own proposals in February 1984 in the paper CD/431. Subsequently, we have seen other comprehensive proposals, notably those contained in the valuable United States draft treaty CD/500 and in the interesting paper from Pakistan CD/664. We have also taken account of the valuable discussions which have been going on in one of the working groups of the overall Committee which we have the privilege to chair this year, and I pay tribute at this point to the able work of Mr. Wisnoemoerti of Indonesia in this field. None the less we feel that there remains a clear and enduring difference of approach between many delegations here.

The purpose of the paper I am introducing today is to try to accommodate the concerns expressed by the various parties to the negotiations, and to establish a new basis for consensus which could then provide one of the several, solid pillars on which a successful convention must be based.

In summary our proposals envisage that each State party to the convention would have the right, in exceptional circumstances, directly to request a challenge inspection of another. The challenged State would then be under an obligation to demonstrate to others, and especially the challenging State, that it remained in compliance. It would be required to meet its obligation

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quickly and, it would be expected, by enabling a comprehensive investigation of the issue relating to compliance. However, in very limited circumstances there would be a right of refusal of direct inspection. In those circumstances a challenged State would propose alternative measures which would then enable the matter under consideration to be resolved.

I do not propose to go into further detail now on the specific provisions included in the new United Kingdom paper. These are spelled out at length in the paper itself and its accompanying annex. I trust that other delegations will find in them an acceptable response to their own preoccupations, and a sound foundation for consensus. I should however like to enlarge on three specific points.

First, our approach is based on the principle that in accepting any international agreement, a State voluntarily accepts certain obligations which implicitly affect its right to take sovereign action. A vital further principle follows from this. In order to provide confidence in any agreement it is in a nation's own interests to demonstrate to others that it is fulfilling the obligations it has assumed. I wish to underline that point. Were it not to do so, other States would be less ready to accept similar limitations on their own sovereign rights. On this basis, should any party request clarification or resolution of any matter causing doubts about compliance, each State party receiving such a request should be obliged to provide satisfaction to other States parties, and especially the requesting party, that it remains in full compliance with its obligations assumed under the chemical weapons convention.

Second, our proposal specifies a time-limit of 10 days for the provision of satisfaction. This is essential for two reasons. Confidence in the convention would rapidly be jeopardized if it was open to the requested State to draw out the time-scale by procedural delays. Once a suspicion of non-compliance had been aroused, it would have to be scotched urgently. The 10-day time-scale is also dictated by the risks that breaches could be subsequently concealed. For example, stocks of chemical weapons kept clandestinely could be rapidly moved to another site within a short time after a challenge. We therefore consider it wrong in all cases to demand prior multilateral consideration before initiation of an inspection, but of course the requesting State could exercise this option if it so wished.

Third, in our earlier United Kingdom paper of 1984 we recognized that in some very exceptional circumstances, which must be avoided if at all possible, a very limited right of refusal of direct inspection might form part of a challenge inspection régime. Such a right would have to be very restricted. Above all, it must not be allowed to detract from, or to weaken the fundamental obligation to demonstrate compliance. In such exceptional circumstances a State would have the right to propose alternative measures which would then enable the matter under consideration to be resolved. Were such alternative measures to fail in that endeavour, the State under challenge would still be obliged to find other ways to demonstrate its compliance. Otherwise, it would be failing in its fundamental obligations under the convention.

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Finally, I must address the response from other delegations. I am aware that there has been considerable debate, both in the Working Groups of the Committee and in private discussion, about ways in which a consensus on challenge inspection can be established. Recently I had the pleasure of discussing these issues in London with the distinguished Ambassador from the Soviet Union, Mr. Issraelyan. I should like to emphasize that this latest British initiative represents a genuine and serious attempt to establish a basis for acceptable compromise between the various views which have already been expressed.

Were it now not to meet with a genuine and serious response, particularly from those in the past who have been content to do little else but criticize the efforts of others, then my Government and no doubt those of other participants would have to draw some rather sombre conclusions not only about the future prospect of these negotiations but about the commitment of other countries to their success. We have heard a lot about words and deeds. We have heard perhaps more words than we have seen deeds. I believe that the British Government has demonstrated, with its new paper, that it intends to match its rhetoric with indisputable evidence of its intentions. We now look to others to do the same.

I turn now to the current moves by the United States to modernize its chemical weapons capability. I would like to take this opportunity to put the views of Her Majesty's Government firmly on the record.

Let me first remind the Conference of the facts. The United Kingdom unilaterally abandoned its chemical warfare capability in the 1950s. The United States has imposed a unilateral moratorium on production of chemical weapons since 1969. The Soviet Union has responded by building up a truly massive stockpile of chemical weapons, possibly approaching in total all chemical weapons produced by all other nations ever since chemical warfare first began. We, and all our NATO allies, want a ban. It is my hope that the new British ideas will unblock one of the major remaining obstacles. But it is, alas, a fact that we have not yet reached the end of our journey. So long as Europe is faced with the potential threat posed by the massive Soviet chemical superiority, it would be irresponsible of NATO not to consider ways of countering that threat.

That said, the United States move to restore its deterrent capability in this area, which NATO has adopted as part of its normal force goal procedures, does not mean that new United States weapons will be available in the near future. The United States Congress has decreed that final assembly of the new munitions shall not take place before 1 December 1987. Thus we look to the Soviet Union to ensure that such a step is no longer necessary. It is up to the leadership in Moscow to decide whether negotiations can succeed in removing all chemical weapons, or whether by their own actions they will call forth a legitimate and proportionate response from the West. Conversely, the prospect of United States modernization should underline to all the advantages of a total ban.

NATO has made it absolutely clear that a negotiated ban is preferable. We have no wish to see the United States resume production if the better

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option -- a negotiated ban -- can be achieved. It would only be with much regret that we would have to envisage such a prospect. However, were the Soviet Union to force this upon us, it must be emphasized that the new munitions would still be safer to store, the stockpiles smaller, the United States stocks currently held in Europe would be withdrawn over time, and the overall United States capability would remain considerably less than the massive threat now presented by the Soviet Union.

Let me end with one further point. We are very conscious of the pressures on many delegations to attend other important arms control discussions outside the Conference on Disarmament itself. Yet my Government is concerned that, because of these pressures, for some six months of each year the Conference is in recess. I have already set out the great importance we attach to the negotiations. I would therefore ask all delegations to consider what can be done between August and next February, when this Conference will be in recess. I assume there will, as in previous years, be some formal work in January. But I hope considerably more will be possible. I know that Ambassador Cromartie is consulting other delegations about two periods of further work this year. I very much hope others will be able to respond positively.

President Reagan, General Secretary Gorbachev and the British Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, have all underlined their commitment to making progress on a chemical weapons ban. There is an imperative on us all to succeed. Let us renew our efforts. Let us set ourselves the goal of completing our work within the next year. Let us aim to present a complete chemical weapons convention to the United Nations General Assembly in 1987.

The PRESIDENT: I thank His Excellency the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom for his important statement and for the kind words addressed to the President. I now give the floor to the representative of the USSR, Ambassador Issraelyan.

Mr. ISSRAEYLAN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (translated from Russian): May I first of all welcome the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, Mr. Tim Renton, whom I have had the pleasure of meeting on several occasions, including recently in London. We shall, of course, carefully study his statement of today and reply to it in a suitable manner.

In its brief statement today the Soviet delegation wishes to address agenda item 4, prohibition of chemical weapons. I must say right away that we intend to deal with the substance of this major issue in due course in a separate statement. Today we intend to refer to the organization of our work on agenda item 4. There is clearly no need to refer to the importance of the prohibition of chemical weapons, which is the only issue on which substantive negotiations are taking place in the Conference. We are all aware of the hopes which have been aroused throughout the world for a successful conclusion to the negotiations and the elimination of this barbarous weapon of mass destruction.

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The Soviet Union has recently had the opportunity to conduct a useful dialogue with other States on the issue of the prohibition of chemical weapons. The main impression we have received is a declared readiness and interest for speeding up the negotiations with a view to their successful completion. If we approach the organization of the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons guided by the criterion of efficiency, we cannot but draw the conclusion that there are many shortcomings in the organization of our work.

The Soviet delegation considers it its duty to voice its concern on the following points:

Firstly, with regard to the date for the completion of the work of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, we are quite unable to understand why the substantive work of the working groups must end in three weeks' time, on 6 August, when there are a further 20 days until the end of the session of Conference. We cannot agree with this approach, and urge that the subsidiary bodies, or working groups, should pursue their active work at least until, for example, 20 August. It is sometimes argued that the secretariat will not have time to prepare the final documents and their translation into all the official languages of the Conference. However, this cannot be a justification for breaking off the negotiations. We request the secretariat to prepare the report of the Conference to the United Nations General Assembly in such a way that the section on chemical weapons would be the last rather than the first section.

Secondly, with regard to work in the intersessional period, we are in favour of a more efficient and rational use of the intersessional period in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. We should not allow the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons to be interrupted for virtually half a year, from August of this year to February of next year. That may suit some people, but those who are really striving for the earliest conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons cannot be convinced by such arguments against work in the intersessional period as the need for a respite, or to rest, or to attend the General Assembly in New York and so forth. We are altogether in favour of conducting negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons, taking into account the progress achieved on substantive issues, on a permanent and uninterrupted basis until the conclusion of the convention. One proposal which was made by the Minister of State, I think, can be supported immediately, in any event by the Soviet delegation, which would be ready to make every effort to submit to the next, forty-second, session of the General Assembly in 1987 a draft convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons. We therefore propose that agreement should be reached as rapidly as possible on dates for negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons in what remains of 1986 and January 1987.

Finally, there is a third question relating to participation in the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons. The prohibition of chemical weapons is a universal problem. It affects the interests of all States, whether or not they possess chemical weapons. And all States members of the Conference should take an active part in the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons. In fact, however, even in the regular

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session of the Conference, by no means all 40 States participate in these negotiations. We regret this, as we cannot imagine a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons which would have been prepared without taking account of the positions and interests of all delegations. Of course, we understand the problems faced by our colleagues from a number of countries, and hope that their objective information on the present state of affairs, i.e. that now already very important decisions are being taken on key issues of the future convention, will encourage their capitals to do everything they can to ensure the direct and active participation of all States members of the Conference in the negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons.

The Soviet delegation is convinced that the task facing the Conference in the field of chemical weapons really requires joint and tireless work, without unjustified "time-outs".

Mr. KHORAMIAN (Islamic Republic of Iran) (translated from French): I shall be extremely brief. I do not intend to take up the Conference's time, and furthermore this is not the place to talk about the war between Iran and Iraq, to which the representative of the United Kingdom has just alluded. I wish to recall that the Iraqi régime, in launching its troops against its Iranian neighbour on 22 September 1980, has undeniably committed crimes against my country by using chemical gases. Furthermore, it is somewhat strange that, as the the representative of the United Kingdom said, the Iraqi régime is talking about peace. The conclusion must be drawn that punishment of the aggressor is a duty; the credibility of existing international law is at stake. Real peace can be envisaged only at this price.

The PRESIDENT: That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor?

We have a long list of speakers for the plenary meeting on Thursday morning, when we should also hold an informal meeting to continue our discussion on the substance of item 2 on the agenda, entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament". This being the case, may I suggest that we start that plenary meeting at 10 a.m. sharp. If I hear no objection, we shall proceed accordingly. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 17 July at 10 a.m. The plenary meeting stands adjourned.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.