

STATEMENT MADE BY AMBASSADOR HENNING WEGENER, CHAIRMAN OF THE AD HOC
WORKING GROUP ON RADIOLOGICAL WEAPONS, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SUBMISSION
TO THE COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT OF THE REPORT OF THE GROUP

The Working Group had chosen to make use of its time for substantive negotiations as late into last week as possible. As a consequence, only one meeting was available for discussion and adoption of the report. This has placed a considerable burden upon the Secretariat who had to put in extra hours to reproduce the report from a somewhat heterogeneous collection of oral and handwritten amendments designed to supplement the original draft. The members of the Secretariat have done an excellent job under these difficult circumstances, and I should like to thank them on behalf of the Working Group.

However, it was unavoidable in this situation, that a small number of errors or ambiguities have crept into the printed text. With your permission, I should therefore like to read this limited number of amendments, which have become necessary, none of which changes the general thrust and structure of the report, but which will help to clarify it. None of the amendments adds to the text a sentence or thought that was not already part of the Working Group's decision to adopt the report. I then refer to CD/284, and, in the English version to CD/284*. I quote from the English text, on page 2, in the penultimate line we should strike out the words at the end of the line, "radiation from the decay of". On page 3, in paragraph 16, in the seventh line after the sentence ending with "from attack", kindly insert the following additional sentence: "Some delegations expressly reserved their position as to the competence of the Committee to deal with this matter". On page 5, in the last sentence of paragraph 27, there is a mere printing error, please replace words "points of view" by "differences". And on the last page, it has become necessary to clarify that some of the sentences written here are quotations from what delegations said. In paragraph 32 therefore, in the second sentence, the words "in their view" should be put in, the sentence should then read, "Since a basic objective was, in their view, ..." on to "prevent". The following sentence should be prefaced "they also believed", the sentence then to read, "They also believed mass destruction would result from attacks, etc." In paragraph 34, the second sentence, the words "in their view" should be put in, the sentence then to read, "a partial ban could, in their view, legitimize, etc." In paragraph 33, in the fourth line, the term "thermal effect" for mere technical reasons of correctness, should be replaced by "thermal power".

As delegations will recognize, while taking note of the contents of the Report, the record of the Working Group is far from brilliant. While a promising start was made in early March with a practicable procedural decision that did much to unblock a deadlock situation, the sense of urgency which General Assembly Resolution 36/97 B had initially instilled into the Group and which raised hope that convincing progress could be made at least on the "traditional" RW subject matter, rapidly vanished, and the Working Group is now still faced with some of the same problems that made its work difficult in the preceding year. The willingness of delegations to consider compromise formulation, and to join in a common effort to reach consensus results, faded away at least when the time came

to draft this Report. Instead of proudly going on record with the measure of progress achieved, delegations preferred to restate their earlier positions, in a clear attempt to keep their stance intact for the next round of negotiations. Some delegations even used the opportunity to phrase their demands with new vigour, although it must have been abundantly clear to them their proposals harboured no promise of adoption by the Working Group. The Chairman, in various instances, attempted to put forward texts which in his view took a maximum number of positions into account, but he generally remained unsuccessful. When he, in the closing stages of the session offered to submit an integral draft text of a future I/W treaty, covering the "traditional I/W subject matter, a draft which, in his perception could have served as a suitable for compromise on which all delegations could eventually agree, he was given to understand that such an initiative was unwelcome, he thus abstained from circulating the text.

The several parallel meetings on questions relating to the prohibition of attacks on nuclear facilities, provided an opportunity for discussion in depth of some highly relevant issues. A number of delegations contributed to an elucidation of the technical problems involved, and it is fair to say that the Working Group as a whole gained considerable insights into the problems at hand. However, major divergencies as to the scope of possible prohibition appeared at an early point, and proved to be so considerable as to impede further progress even on the level of initial discussion.

While the Working Group's Session has certainly contributed to providing a clearer perspective to all delegations on the issues and on certain options for solution, the field is still wide open. Once again, the Working Group, dealing with a subject matter of only limited significance for the global disarmament process, has been unable to live up fully to its responsibilities. That constitutes a serious challenge for the forthcoming summer session. It will still be my privilege to preside over the work at that time. When work is resumed, I will urge all delegations to renew their efforts to come to grips with the still unresolved problems, and I would already ask them now to clear their minds and to use the intermediate period for reflection about how some of the outstanding problems of principle can be tackled without undue loss of time.

While the Spring Session was disappointing in its results, I yet have to acknowledge that many delegations, and many colleagues personally, offered the Chairman an exceptionally fine co-operation and bore with him in the search for results and compromise. I should like to express my gratitude to them, just as I thank the Secretariat and the interpreters for their fine work.

Should a mode be adopted according to which all the introductory statements by Working Groups' Chairmen be circulated, I would not want to be excluded, however, I would think that in my special case a rendering in the verbatim record would be sufficient.