

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 28 MARCH 1988 FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT, TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF A STATEMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS DATED 16 MARCH 1988

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR dated 16 March 1988.

I should be grateful if you would arrange for this statement to be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and as a working paper of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons.

(Signed) Y. NAZARKIN
Representative of the USSR
to the Conference on Disarmament

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE USSR

At the meeting of the Conference on Disarmament on 8 March 1988, a statement by the Group of Non-Aligned and Neutral States (the Group of 21) on the question of prohibiting chemical weapons was made public. It contains an appeal to the participants in the negotiations to intensify them with a view to the conclusion, at the earliest possible date, of a convention on the complete and effective prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and use of all chemical weapons and on their destruction.

This action, taken at a time when the negotiations have entered the most responsible, final stage, is convincing evidence of the broad support throughout the world for the aim of liberating humanity completely from the threat of chemical weapons. It is a source of particular satisfaction that, in its statement, the Group of 21 emphasizes the inadmissibility and danger of protracting the negotiations and the importance of all participants in those negotiations doing their utmost to achieve rapid progress. People in the Soviet Union fully support the position of the non-aligned and neutral countries that all chemical weapons, not some, should be destroyed; that all chemical weapons production facilities, not some, should be destroyed; and that all, not some, production of chemical weapons should be prohibited.

This formulation of the matter in the statement of the Group of 21 is particularly appropriate and timely in that "ideas" have lately been going the rounds in NATO circles about departing from the agreed aim of the universal and complete prohibition of chemical weapons and replacing the drafting of an all-embracing convention on the subject by piecemeal measures to regulate chemical armaments that would allow the development, production and stockpiling of new types of such weapons to continue. Directly linked with such attitudes are the proposals put forward by someone or other in the negotiations that the production of chemical weapons should be left out of the ban in the convention. It is impossible not to see that there is also an altogether definite connection between those "ideas" and the recent start of production of binary chemical weapons in the United States. This arouses legitimate anxiety about the prospects of reaching agreement on chemical disarmament.

The Soviet Union, fully supporting the statement of the Group of 21, confirms its determination to do everything in its power to ensure that a convention on the universal and complete prohibition and destruction of all chemical weapons, without any exceptions whatsoever and under the most effective supervision, becomes a political reality within the shortest possible time. All the prerequisites for the conclusion of such a convention are now met, and procrastination in this matter cannot be justified from either the political or the moral point of view.