SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 10 September 1986, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. LANG (Austria)

CONTENTS

Election of Vice-Presidents of the Conference and Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Committee of the Whole, the Drafting Committee and the Credentials Committee (concluded)

Review of the operation of the Convention as provided for in its article XII

(a) General debate (continued)

(b) Articles I–XV

(c) Preambular paragraphs and purposes of the Convention

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this Conference will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the Conference.
The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.


1. The PRESIDENT said that the Asian Group had nominated the representatives of Bhutan, China, Iran and Japan for election to the four vacant posts of Vice-President. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Conference wished to elect those representatives as Vice-Presidents of the Conference.

2. It was so decided.

3. The PRESIDENT noted that the Conference had completed its consideration of agenda item 6.

REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE CONVENTION AS PROVIDED FOR IN ITS ARTICLE XII (agenda item 10) (continued)

(a) GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

4. Mr. KONSTANTINOV (Bulgaria) observed that the Second Review Conference was being held at a time when there were calls on all sides from the international community urging with increasing insistence the banning of all types of weapons of mass destruction, the strengthening of the peace and security of peoples and the establishment of multilateral co-operation in which States would participate on a footing of equality. In the circumstances, it was essential that all existing disarmament agreements, including the Convention under review, should be respected and strengthened.

5. The Conference's first task was to confirm the effectiveness of the Convention and to enhance the implementation of all its provisions. The Peoples Republic of Bulgaria, for its part, had always scrupulously fulfilled all the obligations arising from the provisions of the Convention, especially those of article I. The principles enshrined in the Convention had been incorporated into its national legislation and had been reaffirmed by Mr. T. Jirkov, General-Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party and Chairman of the Council of State.

6. The Bulgarian Government noted with satisfaction that the Convention had fully attained its objective. Scientific and technical advances since its entry into force had not created any new threats to security and not a single instance of violation of the provisions of the Convention had been recorded. He rejected as entirely without foundation the doubts which had been expressed in certain quarters regarding the satisfactory application of the Convention. One delegation had actually alleged that violations had been committed, while admitting that it was not in a position to adduce any evidence in support of its allegations. It had also been suggested in some quarters that the recent advances of biotechnology and genetic engineering had already made the Convention pointless. Such manoeuvres were bound to impair the authority of the Convention although the situation demanded that all States should concentrate their efforts on strengthening it and increasing the number of States Parties.
7. Turning to the provisions of articles V, VI and VII relating to the settlement of problems that might arise with regard to the application of the Convention, he pointed out that so far no State Party had invoked the procedures provided, a fact which was in itself an indication that the Parties had had no reason to complain of violations of the provisions of the Convention. His Government considered that the procedures for consultation, complaints and assistance established by articles V, VI and VII were broadly sufficient, but was prepared to examine any constructive proposals directed towards providing additional forms of co-operation in the matter of controls likely to strengthen the confidence of Parties in the observance of the Convention.

8. The Review Conference should also endeavour to broaden international co-operation for the application of the biological sciences, in particular biotechnology and genetic engineering, in the interests of the socio-economic and scientific development of all peoples. Bulgaria, for its part, had made full use of the resources available to it to facilitate the exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information as provided in article X. The activities in question had been undertaken for purely peaceful purposes, principally through participation in co-operative programmes with the more advanced countries in that field, particularly in the framework of the CMEA. His country was interested primarily in the application to agriculture and pharmacology of discoveries in the field of bacteriology. One of its priority objectives in that respect was to create its own infrastructure for the production of equipment for biotechnology. Bulgarian experts had already participated in a seminar on biotechnology and the chemical industry recently organized at Varna by the Economic Commission for Europe. The seminar had reviewed the situation in that field in Europe and had examined the role biotechnology could play in the socio-economic development of the region.

9. The Second Review Conference should give the necessary impetus to the conclusion of other agreements in the field of disarmament, in particular an agreement banning chemical weapons. Referring to the provisions of article IX of the Convention, he drew attention to the important developments which had taken place since the First Review Conference in the negotiations for an agreement on effective measures to ban such weapons. The concrete negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament at its 1986 session had been increasingly directed towards the final objective of formulating a complete draft convention for the prohibition of chemical weapons. In that connection, the concrete initiatives taken by the Soviet Union and the statement made on 15 January 1986 by Mr. Gorbachev were highly important. Negotiations had reached a critical phase and all States should show the political will to abstain from any action which might prevent the speedy attainment of the desired objective. In particular, it was essential to eschew the production and deployment of binary and other types of chemical weapons. Bulgaria had made its own modest contribution to the progress of the negotiations and to the achievement of the final objective by joining with Romania in proposing the establishment of a chemical-weapon-free zone in the region to all the Balkan countries.

10. In conclusion, he assured the President of the Conference that his delegation would spare no effort to ensure that the work of the Conference proceeded in a constructive climate.
11. Mr. LACLETA (Spain) associated himself with the statement made by the United Kingdom representative on behalf of the European Economic Community, of which Spain was a member. He noted that the Convention was still the only disarmament agreement in force which prohibited the production of a whole category of weapons and provided for the destruction of existing weapons. The 1925 Protocol had prohibited only certain weapons and the Parties had reserved the option to use them in retaliation if attacked by an enemy using such weapons. The Protocol did not prohibit either production or stockpiling.

12. In view of the more comprehensive character of the Convention, a Party which scrupulously observed it might unfortunately find itself at the mercy of a State violating its provisions. It was therefore highly important to strengthen the Convention and ensure its rigorous application so as to remove any doubts that might arise. In his Government's view the Convention's weak point was that it was very difficult to verify its application because of the progress of biotechnology and genetic engineering.

13. The complaints procedure provided in article VI had not been used but, as other delegations had pointed out, there might have been instances of non-observance of the Convention. If violations were found to have actually taken place, a resumption of the arms race and a spiral of accusations and further violations might well ensue. Those dangers could only be averted by co-operation in good faith between all the States Parties on the basis of strict application of article V. His delegation would carefully consider any proposals for measures to strengthen the Convention and enhance confidence in it. Approval of a final document embodying such measures would, he believed, seal the success of the Conference.

14. Mr. ANDRES (Switzerland) said that his country's policy and actions had continued to be in conformity with the obligations it had assumed in ratifying the Convention. Switzerland did not possess or produce biological weapons and it conducted no research in that field. The Swiss army's specialized biological laboratories were concerned solely with the defence of the population. All the research on micro-organisms and toxins undertaken by the Swiss chemical industry was solely directed towards problems connected with therapeutic, prophylactic and other peaceful purposes.

15. His Government was gratified by the substantial increase in the number of States Parties to the Convention and hoped that all members of the international community would ratify it soon. The background papers prepared by the Secretariat showed that although not perfect, the Convention had proved useful in practice. The fact remained, however, that as it did not provide for genuine international control procedures each Party had to rely on the assurances of the others regarding observance of the Convention. According to experts, however, there were many possibilities for clandestine violations on a small scale and present trends in scientific and technical development were bound to increase them. The satisfactory operation of the Convention accordingly rested essentially on a climate of mutual trust. In that connection, review conferences were of crucial importance and should be convened at regular intervals. It was desirable that any problems concerning observance of the provisions of the Convention should be discussed frankly and that there should be the broadest possible exchange of views to ascertain whether allegations by States Parties were well-founded. Scientific and
technical developments and their impact on the Convention should also be discussed openly because secrecy and the monopolization of discoveries were not calculated to create a climate of mutual confidence. His delegation also believed the Conference should consider the possibility of instituting measures capable of gradually dispelling any doubts and suspicions that might exist in some quarters. His Government did not believe there was any need to amend the Convention. In the present circumstances revision would inevitably weaken its authority.

16. Chemical weapons were particularly odious and the fact that they appeared to have been used in recent conflicts was a matter of concern to the Swiss Government. The 1925 Geneva Protocol retained all its force and it was important that its provisions should be scrupulously observed by all States.

17. His Government also attached much importance to the conclusion of a Convention on the complete prohibition of chemical weapons and hoped that the current negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament would soon be crowned with success. Such a Convention would not, however, be acceptable without an effective international control system and safeguards against the breach of commercial and industrial secrets. Costly precautionary measures to provide protection against chemical weapons would otherwise continue to be necessary and would be more difficult to justify to the public because of the false sense of security created by a ban. There would also be a strong temptation to stay outside an imperfect convention in order to maintain the option of retaining chemical weapons for defensive purposes. It was desirable also that the new convention should establish the same rights and obligations for all States. The principle of the equality of States should be observed in the field of disarmament. In the case of chemical weapons there would be no justification for the discrimination among States embodied in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

18. It should be noted that the Swiss chemical industry did not manufacture chemical weapons, that Switzerland did not possess any such weapons and that the Swiss army's equipment would be used only to protect the country against the effects of toxic chemical substances if they were used in the event of a conflict.

19. He hoped that the Review Conference would proceed in a constructive atmosphere and would produce concrete results that would strengthen the authority of the Convention in a realistic but effective manner.

20. Mr. CAMPOA (Argentina) said that his country attached great importance to the Convention as a first stage in the elimination of a whole category of weapons which, by their very nature, were primarily targeted at civilian populations. The Convention was the first instrument to contain a genuine element of disarmament, since in addition to the prohibition on the development and production of bacteriological and toxin weapons it provided for the destruction of existing stocks. It ought also to facilitate the realization of an agreement on the prohibition of chemical weapons. His Government had always believed that chemical, bacteriological and toxin weapons should be regarded as a single category.
21. The current Conference should evaluate objectively the way in which the States Parties had complied with all their obligations under the Convention and indicate any measures that might be necessary to ensure more scrupulous and effective respect for both the letter and the spirit of those obligations. The Conference also provided an opportunity to determine whether the implementation of the Convention had played an effective role in halting the arms race or whether, on the contrary, the current unsatisfactory position in regard to disarmament made the full and complete implementation of the Convention's provisions more difficult.

22. It should be noted that, in its Final Declaration, the First Review Conference had concluded that the provisions of article I of the Convention had proved sufficiently comprehensive to cover recent scientific and technological developments relevant to the Convention. In his delegation's view, the latest developments on the international scene had reaffirmed that conclusion, but it considered that it would nevertheless be advisable to develop a strictly impartial, objective and international method of verification which would guarantee the equal rights and obligations of all States Parties as well as their right to participate. National and international measures would have to be combined and problems solved at the appropriate level, with a view to avoiding any political clash between States. That was the only way it would be possible to move forward any preliminary investigations that proved necessary without a permanent member of the Security Council being able to use its right of veto to prevent investigation of a complaint against it or one of its allies.

23. However, it would not be enough simply to develop detailed verification and control procedures. Efforts must also be made to facilitate the widest possible exchange of scientific and technical equipment, raw materials and information. The best means of building international confidence in that field, as in others relating to high technology, would be to set up a dynamic and non-discriminatory system of exchanges of scientific and technological information and to promote international co-operation. In the field of biotechnology which, by its very nature, influenced all the other sectors, increasingly rapid scientific and technological advances made it necessary to have wider access to the results of research... States would not otherwise be able to strengthen their technological capacity and answer the needs arising in the fields of health and food production, both of which were priority areas for the developing countries.

24. Bacteriology and microbiology had both peaceful and military applications, a duality inherent in any technology. The possibility of military applications must not be allowed to serve as a pretext for restrictions that would hamper the transfer of technology and international co-operation in that field. It would be inappropriate to place obstacles in the way of using a technology that was capable of promoting economic and social development in accordance with the needs, priorities and interests of each State. His delegation hoped that, in its Final Declaration, the Second Review Conference would recognize the urgent need to set up a system of co-operation that would enable all States to profit from the application of scientific progress, on an equal footing and with no monopolistic or protectionist restrictions, and that would facilitate the transfer of information, equipment, raw materials and knowledge to the benefit of the developing countries.
25. Mr. TURBANSKI (Poland) said that his delegation expected a great deal from the Conference, which it hoped would be the occasion of a constructive discussion and result in strengthening the Convention. It was, however, concerned by the discriminatory attitude adopted by the Western countries towards the socialist countries, an attitude that had been demonstrated at the first few meetings over the question of the just and equitable distribution of posts at the Conference. Nor could it be indifferent to the attempts of certain delegations to raise the question of alleged violations of the Convention. The allegations were totally groundless, based as they were on hearsay and antiquated and unconfirmed reports. He recalled that very detailed explanations had been given at the time in that respect. Such allegations could only be intended to undermine confidence in the Convention, thus jeopardizing its effectiveness. The Conference must eschew any action that might prevent it from being a success.

26. The Conference's main task was to strengthen and confirm the continued viability of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction. As the first real disarmament measure, it was a great achievement of the world community and a reason for special satisfaction on the part of Poland. It had been Poland which, during the drafting of the Geneva Protocol in 1925, had proposed that the list of the forbidden means of war should include bacteriological weapons. As a result of that initiative, the Geneva Protocol included such a specific prohibition. During the post-war period, Poland had taken an active part in all multilateral negotiations aimed at the elimination of bacteriological and chemical weapons. In 1968, it had suggested that a report should be prepared under United Nations auspices on the consequences of the possible use of such weapons. That report, presented by the Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1969, had shown that bacteriological and chemical weapons were among the most abominable instruments of war. It had been favourably received in what was then the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, and in the United Nations General Assembly, as a significant contribution to the negotiations for a complete ban on those weapons.

27. The 1972 Convention on the prohibition of biological and toxin weapons was a logical continuation of the work begun with the Geneva Protocol and constituted a second important stage. Poland unreservedly supported the Convention while at the same time being actively engaged in the search for an agreement on the prohibition and destruction of chemical weapons, thus completing the process initiated 60 years earlier by the Geneva Protocol.

28. Poland noted with satisfaction the States Parties reaffirmation of their endorsement of the Convention and their intention to exclude completely the possibility of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins being used for weapons purposes. It also welcomed the assurances given or repeated by a number of Governments regarding their compliance with the provisions of the Convention. Such statements contributed greatly to confidence-building among the States Parties. Poland for its part had complied fully with the spirit and the letter of the Convention. It had never possessed and had no intention of acquiring any bacteriological (biological) or toxin weapons. Its legislation was in accordance with the obligations deriving from the Convention. It had taken part in and was ready to participate further in the development of mutually advantageous co-operation directed towards the peaceful application of the achievements of the biological sciences.
29. Since the First Review Conference, the number of States Parties to the Convention had increased substantially and currently included all the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Furthermore, during the 11 years of the Convention's existence as an international instrument with binding force, no Party had found it necessary to set in motion the procedures in article VI concerning complaints by a State Party regarding violations by another Party of obligations under the Convention. Those two circumstances should be welcomed.

30. His delegation had studied with interest the background papers submitted by the Depository and other Governments on new scientific and technological developments relating to biological and toxin weapons. It shared their common conclusion that although the potential to produce biological agents and toxins for military purposes had increased, the Convention adequately covered all recent advances in science and technology with possible military applications and remained an effective and reliable barrier to the misuse of those achievements for military purposes.

31. Poland welcomed the recent progress in negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons and on their destruction, and noted in particular the proposals of the Soviet Union, which had contributed significantly to the acceleration of those negotiations. It associated itself with those speakers who had expressed the hope that agreement would ultimately be reached on that topic. It would be an important step that would contribute to the full implementation and strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention. In sum, Poland considered that, since its entry into force, the Convention had served its essential purposes well: it had prohibited the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons and it had helped greatly to stimulate the negotiations that should lead to the banning of chemical weapons.

32. Nevertheless, his delegation shared some of the concern that had been expressed by other delegations and it hoped that the current Conference would give rise to a constructive exchange of views and that it would adopt a final document aimed at enhancing the Convention. One of the first things that should be done was to call upon all States which were not yet parties to the Convention and the Geneva Protocol to accede to those instruments. The Conference might also clearly reaffirm that the prohibition of bacteriological and toxin weapons in the Convention applied to all bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins currently being produced or to be developed in the future which could be used for hostile purposes. It should also be stressed and generally accepted that recent achievements in genetics, molecular biology and biotechnology not only did not undermine the comprehensive prohibitions in the Convention but on the contrary further enhanced their general value and importance. At the national level, adequate domestic legislation and regulatory measures should be adopted to prevent the misuse of bacteriological agents by individuals, groups or organizations. It would perhaps be advisable to include a warning in textbooks on genetics, microbiology and related sciences that the production and possession of bacteriological (biological) agents and toxins for any warlike purpose was a violation of international and domestic law and liable to lead to prosecution. Such a measure would promote the purposes of the Convention and would contribute to United Nations efforts on behalf of education for peace. There was also a need to reflect seriously on the risks inherent in the
current stage of development of the biological sciences and to define the
necessary safeguards and guidelines for biological research in order to
prevent possible accidents. Lastly, agreement should be reached on ways and
means of international co-operation if there should be an accident.

33. International co-operation in the field of the biological sciences was
still far from satisfactory. The exchange of information amongst States
Parties should be facilitated, there should be more tangible and direct
coopperation, free from any political or protectionist restrictions, and
technical assistance should be expanded, especially to developing countries.
It would then be seen that, in addition to its undeniable positive impact on
international security, the Convention could also serve to promote development
and contribute to the increase of agricultural production as well as improved
health protection and nutrition in many parts of the world.

34. In his delegation's opinion, the machinery for consultation and
co-operation among the States Parties provided for in article V was
sufficiently flexible to ensure the effective implementation of the
Convention. Poland was, however, ready to consider any realistic and
constructive ideas based on the existing text of the Convention which would
lead to the improvement of that machinery, although it emphasized that one of
the best means of eliminating suspicion and ensuring that all States Parties
complied with their obligations under the Convention would be the further
development of scientific and technological co-operation among States.

35. The Review Conference also provided a useful opportunity for reflection
on the meaning of the Convention. The Convention was a significant
achievement, which had proved first of all that multilateral efforts based on
real political will could lead to genuine disarmament measures. It proved
also that such measures did increase the security of each and every nation.
Nobody could deny that all States would feel less secure if the Convention had
not been signed. The present generation could be proud of great scientific
achievements. It was, however, the duty of disarmament negotiators to make
every effort to prevent the use of those achievements for hostile purposes.
What society most needed was the demilitarization of science. That was
essential if the development of civilization was not to lead to its
destruction.

36. Unfortunately there was a growing trend towards use of the basic and
applied sciences for military purposes, as was shown by the growth of the
military share in research and development expenditure. The Convention proved
however that the misuse of scientific advances could be restrained and
confirmed the wisdom of preventive action in that respect. The Convention was
a good example which should be followed in other scientific fields, on earth
and in outer space.

37. Finally, despite the commitment of States Parties under the preamble to
achieve effective progress towards general and complete disarmament, the
Convention was still one of the very few multilateral arms limitation
agreements concluded over the last 15 years. That was a sad fact which should
be pondered by participants in the Conference.
38. Mr. HAYES (Ireland) said that the Convention was the first real measure of disarmament to have been negotiated by the community of nations. It was the only agreement in force in which the Parties were required to forego possession as well as use of an entire category of weapons. The Convention had been subscribed to by 103 nations and his Government urged other nations to do so.

39. During the six years since the First Review Conference, there had been rapid technological and scientific developments. The Conference should therefore carefully and objectively examine how to promote improved implementation of all the provisions of the Convention in a new context. In that connection the United Kingdom representative had already outlined the general principles underlying the attitudes of the 12 member States of the European Community at the Conference. He endorsed the United Kingdom representative's remarks and wished to focus on a few issues of particular concern to his country.

40. He pointed out that article I permitted the development, production and stockpiling of biological agents or toxins for "prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes". The Convention had, however, been drawn up before the development of genetic engineering, a field in which advances had been unexpectedly rapid. Although his Government believed that recent developments in that field continued to fall within the scope of article I, it recognized that they had led to fears of misuse which, whether justified or not, must be taken into consideration by the Conference.

41. Moreover, over a number of years, allegations of non-compliance had raised serious doubts about the credibility of the Convention. His delegation believed that unless means were found to deal objectively with such allegations, erosion of the authority of the Convention might well be inevitable. It would be recalled that at the First Review Conference much attention had been paid to the question of better compliance measures in the Convention. The measures considered included possible amendments such as the establishment of a consultative committee that might undertake on-site inspections. With other countries Ireland had in the past advocated a special conference to establish flexible, objective and non-discriminatory procedures to deal with issues concerning compliance. The Second Review Conference was not the forum to amend the convention but it might pave the way towards a special conference at which such issues could be addressed.

42. Among the valuable suggestions already made regarding ways of restoring confidence in the Convention and ensuring compliance, one deserving special attention was the proposal that all States Parties should declare the number and location of high-containment laboratories under their jurisdiction, such as those working with highly virulent microbes. Other suggestions made by delegations or by interested non-governmental organizations also deserved the most careful consideration. He hoped that the Conference's final declaration would not only reaffirm the Convention's validity but would also reflect the States Parties common commitment to undertake measures to promote confidence in the application of its provisions.

43. Mr. KOCHUBEI (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the Convention had operated with success for over 10 years. It was an important multilateral agreement and a barrier to bacteriological warfare. It was thus
the first genuine measure of disarmament in history. The Convention proved that disarmament was possible provided States had the political will to achieve it. The Convention was in itself the product of the efforts of progressive forces.

44. The initiative taken by the USSR and the other socialist States to promote disarmament within the United Nations, particularly in the Conference on Disarmament, should be recalled. On 15 January 1986 the USSR had introduced a declaration directed towards ridding the planet of weapons of massive destruction by the year 2000. On 18 August 1986, Mr. Gorbachev had also proposed to extend his country's unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests until 1 January 1987. Those actions were proof of the seriousness and sincerity of the USSR's efforts to achieve disarmament. It was therefore more regrettable that the United States did not follow that example. By continuing tests in Nevada the United States was preventing progress in disarmament in the realm of deeds rather than of propaganda. At the forty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the USSR was going to present a global programme for international security with the support of the other socialist States. The programme would be designed to realize humanity's age-old dream of beating swords into ploughshares.

45. Since its entry into force, the Convention had shown itself to be a viable agreement. During the years that had elapsed since the First Review Conference, there had been 16 new accessions, bringing the total number of States Parties to 103. The new accessions included those of permanent members of the Security Council. It its final document, the Second Conference should appeal to other countries to accede to the Convention.

46. His delegation noted with satisfaction that no State had invoked the complaints procedure provided in the Convention. For its part his country fully respected its commitments. In particular, in accordance with article X, it was participating in the application of biology for peaceful purposes, in industry, agriculture, animal husbandry, environmental protection etc. A scientific programme initiated in Ukraine by the Institute of Microbiology and Virology of the Academy of Sciences dealt with the contamination of foodstuffs and animal feed. Since 1981 his country had organized seminars on the peaceful applications of biology for foreign students under programmes sponsored by UNDP, FAO and WHO. His country was anxious that the Second Conference should facilitate the expansion of co-operation between States in the peaceful uses of biology.

47. Article IX called for negotiations with a view to prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical weapons. The socialist countries had always called for the prohibition of such weapons and had supported a programme for their elimination by the end of the present century. More recently, on 24 April 1986 the USSR had proposed a programme of control measures concerning the destruction of chemical weapons and the installations in which they were made. In an interview on 8 September 1986, with the Czech newspaper Rude Pravo, Mr. Gorbachev had expressed the hope that an agreement on the prohibition of chemical weapons would be concluded at an early date. Unfortunately, the United States was simultaneously intensifying its chemical weapons programme, notably by developing binary weapons, an action completely contrary to the content of the Geneva agreements
between the Soviet Union and United States of America. In that context he expressed the hope that the final document of the Second Conference would urge States to abstain from any act hampering the preparation and ratification of a convention banning chemical weapons.

43. He deplored the allegations made by certain States parties concerning alleged violations of the Convention. Such allegations were made solely for propaganda purposes. They weakened the Convention and were a regrettable example of the policy of confrontation followed by the Western countries. In a complex international situation, everything should be done to strengthen the authority of the Convention. For its part his Government would contribute constructively to the achievement of the Convention's goals and to the success of the Conference.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.