

April 23, 1985

AMBASSADOR BEESLEY (CANADA)

May I begin, once again, by addressing you as my comrade in arms control, and say again what a pleasure it is to serve under your Presidency.

I must associate myself with all of those speakers, including yourself, who have expressed their condolences to the delegation of Brazil at the loss of President Neves: one of those rare personages, a truly historic figure, who has left not only his country but the international community with an enduring legacy through his personal example and his own achievements in pursuit of his ideals. I would ask my Brazilian colleagues to pass on to his government and his people these expressions of condolence by Canada.

I should note with gratification the presence of the UN Under-Secretary General for Disarmament, Mr. Jan Martenson, and say to him as I have on other occasion, that we always welcome his presence with us here in the Conference on Disarmament.

I am taking the floor today, having spoken relatively recently, in order to re-emphasize the urgency and importance we attach to achieving concrete results in our negotiations on a chemical weapons convention. We have heard an extremely useful report from our excellent Chairman, Ambassador Turbanski, and I congratulate him on that report. I noted, however, that he shares a concern, which I suspect is general in this Conference, over the pace of our work, in spite of his own best efforts and those of his colleagues who share his task in assisting us with our negotiations. I want merely to underline some points that I think differentiate our negotiations on that question from others, equally important but not quite so special in certain respects, which I shall now indicate.

Firstly, what we are seeking to achieve is a disarmament treaty, - not a mere arms control treaty but a disarmament treaty, and this makes our objective one of fundamental importance.

Secondly, the treaty we are collectively attempting to achieve would be a genuine non-proliferation treaty, and that I think adds to its significance.

Thirdly, because of the nature of the treaty we are attempting to achieve, it would have to be a comprehensive

treaty, and that of course entails even more effort on our part than would otherwise be the case.

Fourthly, what we are seeking is a law-making treaty, a very significant legal instrument which would have legal implications, I would hope, in its own right, and not merely with respect to the obligations it might lay down for its immediate parties.

Taking into account all these factors, it seems hardly necessary to emphasize the far-reaching importance of this convention, and yet we seem unable to make the kind of progress which we all desire. It is after all of importance in yet another way, going well beyond its symbolic significance, in that the position of every State, whether large or small, powerful or less powerful, can ultimately make or break that treaty. It follows of course that breaches of such a treaty would be breaches that would not only affect us individually, but would affect the whole rule of law itself.

We know that we have already in existence the 1925 Geneva Protocol; I am one of those who insist that our law-making efforts do not in any way derogate from the significance of the Geneva Protocol, and I am satisfied that it is possible for us to so draft our proposed convention that we reinforce the Geneva Protocol and in no sense weaken it. I agree of course with the distinguished representative of

France, who has emphasized this very point, that it would be of very limited utility if we produce a convention that leaves open the possibility that renunciation of its obligations would also thereby remove any pre-existing obligations under the 1925 Geneva Protocol. This is a problem which I think can be addressed and resolved with a little patience and skill.

In sum, we see our efforts directed towards the achievement of a comprehensive convention on chemical weapons as not merely one of the many subjects on which we are attempting to make progress, - and I certainly disassociate myself from any suggestion that it is the only issue on which we should be working, - but I would say that if we cannot make progress on that subject, then our failure would call into question the whole basis of our Conference. It would raise questions in the minds of many as to whether we have the capability, the capacity and the will to negotiate a genuine disarmament convention. References have been made to recent events that re-emphasize the urgency of our task.

It has also been suggested, I think only informally, that we would do well to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, and I would like to associate myself with those suggestions. But, I think that if we do not give some very careful consideration to our own working methods, we are in danger of working along the lines so eloquently

expressed by our Chairman, Ambassador Turbanski, and only gradually making progress, but in the meantime events occur outside this forum and we cannot afford a leisurely pace. That is really the message I take from the report we heard this morning. So my suggestion is one that we would all address to ourselves, that during our recess we think very seriously about how to improve our own working methods - a point that I had discussed in my last intervention. I will not say more than that at the moment because I have reason to know that our Chairman will be giving thought to that very question and I look forward to the opportunity, along with those who will not be going to New York for the UNDC, to consult with him on how to ensure that we achieve the maximum benefit from both the recess and also of course our resumed session.

We have heard some references to events of forty years ago. I do not wish to keep delegations here any longer by making a lengthy statement on these events, but I would like to quote very briefly from a statement by the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark, in the General Assembly last September 25, when he said "the present moment, the eve of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations, is a fitting one for each member state to examine its commitment to the UN Charter. This anniversary must mark a renewal for the future, not just a celebration of the past." I think that it

is particularly timely and appropriate for us to take note of that kind of statement when we recall the terrible events that led to the creation of the United Nations. I think it is essential also to recognize the relationship between that bloody war and the reconciliation it led to, resulting, initially in the creation of the United Nations. That, perhaps is the message I would want to leave with my colleagues; the message of the importance of reconstruction and reconciliation. If we have not learned that from the second world war, then we are not capable of learning from the most terrible kinds of tragedies imaginable. I am also one of those who see a real relationship between that war and the need for arms control and disarmament - the objectives of this very conference - so I do not take issue with those who so suggest.

Turning from that question, I would not want to end without saying one or two words to my friend and colleague, the distinguished representative of France. He represents for those of us who have had the privilege of working with him, a kind of model of behaviour, but more significantly, a model of the negotiating skill that we should all be bringing to bear in this forum if we are to achieve our common objectives. He is not only an eminently civilized man from whom we can all learn a good deal, but he has never lost sight of his fundamental purpose, which is to attempt to play a part in negotiating

concrete results, as distinct from simply ensuring that we present our positions skillfully and adequately, and I would like to join with those others who have spoken in saying that although our friend and colleague, François de la Gorce, will be leaving us for a time, already I look forward to seeing him return in June, and we say au revoir and not adieu.