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VERBATIM RECORD OF THE 57th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GBEHO (Ghana)

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AGENDA ITEM 54: CHEMICAL AND BACTERIOLOGICAL (BIOLOGICAL) WEAPONS (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 54 (continued)

The CHAIRMAN: This morning the Committee will resume its consideration of agenda item 54, "Chemical and Bacteriological (Biological) Weapons".

Mr. ADELMAN (United States of America): Ypres, 22 April 1915: Just before dusk a greenish cloud of chlorine gas drifted over the allied lines causing burning, panic and for many lingering death of unspeakable agony. Most survivors of that first gas attack are now gone, yet their cries were heard and echo still through this century. Their suffering led after the war to the signature of the 1925 Geneva Gas Protocol banning the use in war of chemical and bacteriological weapons.

Lowghar Province, Afghanistan, 13 September 1982: Soviet soldiers pumped toxic gas into an underground passageway, killing 60 Afghan adults and 13 children. The victims of that attack decomposed immediately, with flesh peeling from their bones and blue-black skin. Yet, unlike the casualties of Ypres, their agonies have been ignored by a world grown used to the unspeakable.

The continuing use of chemical weapons, responsible for the death of at least 10,000 persons in Afghanistan and South East Asia, is a major humanitarian issue of our times and is in stark contrast to the progress all nations seek towards real and verifiable disarmament. Violation of the oldest arms control agreements have implications for all arms control and disarmament agreements which cannot be ignored. How, then, can we maintain the credibility of international agreements or believe pledges to respect human rights?

(Mr. Adelman, United States)

The 1925 Geneva gas protocol, one of the oldest arms control agreements still in force, prohibits the use of chemical weapons in warfare. It was followed in 1972 by the biological and toxin Weapons Convention, which forbids the production, stockpiling or transfer of biological or toxin weapons. Yet each of these has been violated by the Soviet Union. As President Reagan stated on 22 November 1982:

"The whole world remains outraged by the Soviets' and their allies' use of biological and chemical weapons against defenceless people in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Laos. This experience makes ironclad verification all the more essential for arms control."

How, despite all these agreements, has the world regressed from Ypres to South-East Asia and Afghanistan through three successively more lethal generations of chemical weapons? The gases of the First World War such as phosgene, chlorine and mustard gas gave way to nerve gases, developed but not used in the Second World War. Today, a third generation of chemical weapons in the form of lethal toxins has been developed and is in use by the Soviet Union. These new killing agents, which can be produced in large quantities, were until recently unknown to warfare.

For over five decades all these weapons have been successfully eliminated from the battlefields of the industrialized world. In the Second World War, fear of retaliation was an effective deterrent to the use of nerve gas. Yet in the third world protocols alone have not prevented the use of these deadly substances. In Ethiopia many thousands died from chemicals in the 1930s. Today there is conclusive evidence that they are again in widespread use against people of the third world.

In 1975, when reports of chemical warfare began to come from the most inaccessible corners of Laos, there was a tendency to disbelieve, even to seek explanations in nature. Yet in those poisonous vapours sprayed from aircraft, a hill tribe too remote for the outside world to notice was being exposed to the same horrors as those of trench warfare.

(Mr. Adelman, United States)

In 1976, more reports of chemical destruction came from the remote highland villages of the H'Mong. The victims were inhabitants of these villages, men, women and children, particularly the children who were the least able to resist the lethal effects of toxin agents. As time passed, the reports multiplied from many sources. There was no longer doubt that the H'Mong were being victimized, not by any identifiable nerve gas, but by chemicals until then unknown to warfare. They were the products of laboratories with long experience in the development of chemical warfare. In 1978, the same reports began to come from Kampuchea and in 1979 from Afghanistan. In 1980, the United States along with other nations took the responsible course of bringing the issue to the United Nations. The 1925 Protocol had made no provision for the investigation of complaints, verification or enforcement of compliance, and an investigation was set in motion by a resolution of the General Assembly.

While the sophistication of Soviet chemical compounds and the remoteness of the areas in which they were used continued to stand in the way of scientific analysis, evidence was none the less mounting. It came from, first, the testimony of those who saw and suffered from the attacks; secondly, the testimony of doctors, refugee workers, journalists and others who questioned survivors of chemical use; thirdly, the testimony from defectors who carried out the actual attacks; fourthly, preliminary analysis of physical samples from the attack sites; fifthly, documentary evidence from open sources and intelligence from "national technical means".

Taken together, it was possible to conclude, in the words of a United States report circulated as United Nations document A/37/157 of 24 March 1982 that:

"Lao and Vietnamese forces, operating under Soviet supervision, have, since 1975, employed lethal chemical and toxin weapons in Laos; that Vietnamese forces have since 1978 used lethal chemical and toxin agents in Kampuchea and that Soviet forces have used a variety of lethal chemical warfare agents, including nerve gases, in Afghanistan since the Soviet invasion of that country in 1979." (A/37/157 annex p. 6)

(Mr. Adelman, United States)

Now it is possible to state with certainty, on the basis of positive scientific evidence from each country, that toxin weapons of Soviet origin are in use in Afghanistan, Kampuchea and Laos. A comprehensive report on this evidence from Secretary of State George Shultz has been circulated as United Nations document A/C.1/37/10 of 1 December 1982. Secretary Shultz's report concludes:

"Reports of chemical attacks from February through October 1982 indicate that Soviet forces continue their selective use of chemicals and toxins against the resistance in Afghanistan. Moreover, new evidence collected in 1982 on Soviet and Afghan Government forces' use of chemical weapons from 1979 through 1981 reinforces the previous judgment that lethal chemical agents were used on the Afghan resistance. Physical samples from Afghanistan also provide new evidence of mycotoxin use.

"Vietnamese and Lao troops, under direct Soviet supervision, have continued to use lethal and incapacitating chemical agents and toxins against the H'Mong resistance in Laos through at least June 1982...

"Trichothecene toxins were found in the urine, blood and tissue of victims of 'yellow rain' attacks in Laos and Kampuchea and in samples of residue collected after attacks...

"...a common factor in the evidence is Soviet involvement in the use of these weapons in all three countries. Continued analysis of prior data and newly acquired information about Soviet mycotoxin research and development, chemical warfare training in Viet Nam, the presence of Soviet chemical warfare advisers in Laos and Viet Nam, and the presence of the same unusual trichothecene toxins in samples collected from all three countries reinforce our earlier conclusion about the complicity of the Soviet Union and about its extent." (A/C.1/37/10 p. 5)

So that there is no mistaking the extent of evidence or the gravity of these charges, I should like to take a moment to review the situation in each of the countries I have named. In Afghanistan, Soviet forces are known to have used lethal chemical agents against Mujahideen resistance forces and Afghan villages at least since the Soviet invasion in December 1979.

(Mr. Adelman, United States)

We now have evidence of at least 60 separate attacks through October 1982. New evidence indicates that the Soviets have continued the selective use of toxic agents in Afghanistan up to the present. For the first time, we have obtained scientific evidence of the use of mycotoxins by the Soviets through analyses of two contaminated Soviet gas masks acquired in Afghanistan, one directly from the body of a Soviet soldier. Analysis of material taken from the outside surface of one mask has shown the presence of trichothecene mycotoxin. Analysis of a hose from the second Soviet mask showed the presence of several mycotoxins. In addition, a vegetation sample from Afghanistan shows preliminary evidence of the presence of mycotoxins.

(Mr. Adelman, United States)

Our hypothesis that mycotoxins have been used in Afghanistan has now been confirmed. Reports during 1980 and 1981 described a yellow-brown mist delivered in attacks which caused blistering, nausea, vomiting and other symptoms similar to those described by "yellow rain" victims in South-East Asia. Initially it was difficult to prove that trichothecene mycotoxin was being used, but we are now in a position to do so.

These scientific findings are corroborated by testimony from Soviet and Afghan personnel directly involved in chemical attacks. A captured Soviet soldier, Anatoly Sakharov, has testified on the use of three chemical agents. Soviet chemical specialist Yuri Povarnitsyn has provided details on his mission to examine Afghan villages following a chemical attack. An Afghan pathologist has described accompanying Soviet chemical warfare personnel into contaminated areas following Soviet chemical attacks, and a number of former Afghan military officers have pinpointed storage sites for lethal agents in Afghanistan.

In Laos, reports of chemical attacks against H'mong villages and guerrilla strongholds date from mid-1975 and describe over 240 separate incidents. H'mong refugees, who have recounted the familiar details of attack by toxin weapons and exhibited the same severe medical symptoms, entered Thailand each month from January through June of this year. They brought with them more samples of "yellow rain" dropped by aircraft and helicopters on their villages and crops. Analysis of these samples, some as recent as October 1982, show that the material used in Laos contains trichothecene toxins which cause vomiting, bleeding blistering, severe skin lesions and other symptoms observed by qualified doctors. Experts have concluded that the H'mong have been exposed to a toxic agent and that no disease, plant or chemical occurring in nature could have caused such unique physical effects.

As in Afghanistan, physical evidence -- including blood samples and biological specimens -- has been corroborated by eyewitness accounts and testimony from many sources, including some responsible for the attacks. A complete description of chemical warfare in Laos between 1976 and 1978 was provided by a former pilot of the Lao People's Liberation Army who flew

(Mr. Adelman, United States)

aircraft equipped to dispense toxic chemical agents on H'mong villages in the Phou Bia area of northern Laos. He confirmed that the Lao People's Liberation Army, in co-operation with the Vietnamese Army, has conducted chemical warfare in Laos at least since April 1976 - that was six years ago. Since that time descriptions of the attacks have been remarkably consistent and usually involve aircraft or helicopters spraying "yellow rain" on H'mong villages and crops.

Finally, in my review of what is happening in each of the three countries, in Kampuchea we have evidence of over 140 separate chemical attacks. Since October 1978 the Government of Democratic Kampuchea has regularly accused Viet Nam and its clients in Kampuchea of using Soviet-made chemical agents against guerrilla forces and civilians alike. In the past year most of these attacks have occurred near the Thai border, facilitating collection of samples and other evidence of toxin use. Analysis of blood, tissue, urine and other samples from victims of such attacks during February and March has been performed in three countries. While results differed according to techniques used, all concluded that illness had been provoked by toxic agents.

Again in Kampuchea, the perpetrators themselves have provided details on the attacks. A Vietnamese army soldier reports that during operations in the Phnom Melai region he observed two Soviet personnel firing hand held chemical weapons. Three hundred persons died in the attack he cited. This carnage is continuing, and we have reports of chemical warfare in Kampuchea as recently as November 1982 - that is, last month.

I have attempted here to summarize our findings with respect to each country as briefly as possible. These conclusions rest on a large body of evidence assembled with the full resources of the United States Government. Hundreds of samples have now been collected from South-East Asia since mid-1979 and from Afghanistan since May 1980. Tissue specimens and body fluids from attack victims have been analysed both by the



(Mr. Adelman, United States)

United States Government laboratories and by those of independent American universities. Positive findings have also been presented before the internationally respected Society of Toxicology, the International Mycotoxin Symposium in Vienna and the Association of Analytical Chemistry. Nor are these findings limited to the United States. A comprehensive toxicological study was carried out by Dr. Bruno Schiefer of the University of Saskatchewan and submitted as United Nations document A/37/308 of 21 June 1982. An epidemiological study was initiated by the Surgeon General of the Canadian Armed Forces and made available to the Secretary-General on 25 August 1982. Research conducted in the laboratories of Thailand has also found evidence of toxic chemicals not naturally present in South-East Asia.

I should like to suggest that it is easy to discount individual bits of evidence. One can dismiss eyewitness testimony as biased or photographs as doctored or laboratory analysis as inconclusive or testimony by other persons as hearsay. But when a body of evidence accumulates, as it has in Afghanistan and South-East Asia, with the various components independently confirming chemical warfare, it is no longer possible to dismiss each individual item of evidence. Consider, for example, the composite picture that emerges from testimony and evidence of chemical warfare in Laos. A Lao pilot has testified to dropping chemical agents from a specially equipped aircraft; the H'mong victims have given their version of the aircraft and cloud of "yellow rain" falling to the ground; separate sources have confirmed the presence in the area of an aircraft of the type described by the pilot and the victims; subsequent medical examination of victims reveals symptoms caused by toxic agents; and starting in 1981 evidence from defectors and eyewitnesses was supported by blood and tissue analysis from victims showing high levels of trichothecene mycotoxin. That is the kind of composite picture one needs to look at when examining this, rather than looking at each individual piece of evidence.

Faced with massive evidence of chemical warfare, the Soviet response has been cynical denial. The Soviet Permanent Representative has attempted deliberately to obfuscate the issue by circulating to the General Assembly three documents with elaborate denials and countercharges.

(Mr. Adelman, United States)

He dismisses the excruciating deaths caused by chemical weapons of well over 6,000 Lao, 1,000 Kampucheans and more than 3,000 Afghans as "malicious fabrication", "unconfirmed hearsay" and "a noisy propaganda campaign". The Soviet Union has even claimed in documents submitted to the General Assembly that the toxin, which eyewitnesses report is distributed by Mikoyan-24 helicopters, Antonov-2 biplanes, Ilyushin-28 bombers or special artillery shells, is the result of herbicides used by the United States in Viet Nam. You may hear more of this countercharge in the next few days.

To date the Soviets have issued such denials confident in the knowledge that the chemical compounds involved would not be detected by the West. We are now, however, able to isolate the components of "yellow rain". They are trichothecene mycotoxins at strengths many times higher than found in nature. There is good evidence of the presence of commercially-produced pollen as a carrier and to help ensure the retention of toxins in the human body. There is further evidence of an added chemical to give the mixture adhesiveness. These toxins do not exist together in nature under any circumstances or separately in the strengths found in "yellow rain". They are derived from sophisticated production of lethal toxins within the Soviet Union itself.

It is a matter of record that the Soviet Union has developed a capability for multi-ton production of lethal toxins such as these. Evidence accumulated since the Second World War shows that the Soviets have made extensive preparation for large scale offensive and defensive chemical warfare. Toxic agents and delivery systems have been identified, along with production and storage areas within the Soviet Union and continuing research, development and testing of new agents at the major Soviet chemical proving grounds. Chemical warfare battalions are part of the standard table of organization for Soviet armed divisions, including those deployed in Afghanistan today. While the Soviets label these units as "defensive", I submit that the ill-equipped Mujahideen resistance forces pose no chemical warfare threat to Soviet occupation forces.

(Mr. Adelman, United States)

The Soviet response to evidence of their own brutality in Afghanistan and South-East Asia is the classic totalitarian technique of accusing others of precisely their own crimes. The Soviet Union, in submissions to the United Nations, makes the same tired charges about American use of herbicides in the Viet Nam War. The Viet Nam War ended almost 10 years ago. Let no one forget, however, that the chemicals in Agent Orange were in widespread commercial use, aimed at plants, not people. I think there is a big difference therein. More has been sprayed along United States state highways than in all of Vietnam, and they are still in commercial use on a restricted basis in the United States and elsewhere as a herbicide. There is, in any case, no connection between use of a commercial herbicide against plants and deliberate use of lethal chemicals by the Soviet Union against people.

It has been easy for some to dismiss South-East Asia and Afghanistan as remote areas, subject to strife for generations. Yet, what is occurring there may become the pattern of the future if we continue to avoid the facts, preferring not to call those responsible to account. Chemical warfare is first and foremost a global issue with greatest significance for those least able to defend against chemical and biological weapons.

Speaking before the League of Nations, Haile Selassie of Ethiopia described how "special sprayers were installed in aircraft so that they could vaporize over vast areas of territory a fine death-dealing rain. It was thus that as from the end of January 1935, soldiers, women, children, cattle, rivers, lakes, and pastures were drenched continuously with this deadly rain." Today there are again reports of chemical warfare in Ethiopia at Turukruk near the Sudanese border on 15 February and, more recently, in an attack 37 survivors of which were found by a Western-trained doctor to exhibit persuasive symptoms of nerve gas. We believe these allegations, which are, I must admit, as yet unproved, deserve investigation. They are disturbing harbingers of possible repetition elsewhere of the pattern we see today in Afghanistan and in South-East Asia. Chemical warfare, conducted by proxy in the third world, as it is today by Viet Nam in Laos and Kampuchea, is a frightening possibility.

The protocols and conventions to limit these insidious weapons are for the protection of all nations. The prohibition of the use of chemical weapons has, by reason of the practice and affirmations of States, become a part of the rules of customary international law which are binding on all States. As biologically-produced chemical substances, the toxins whose use I have described fall within the prohibitions of both the 1925 Protocol and the 1972 biological and toxin weapons Convention. Violations of these basic agreements by use of sophisticated toxins against defenseless populations of the third world is in cynical contempt of international law and, of course, of human decency.

The facts are grim. Chemical weapons provoke fear, revulsion and an unwillingness to face the reality of their use. On such matters, to paraphrase William James, the will to disbelieve is palpably strong. Yet the United Nations Group of Experts has now concluded that "... it could not disregard the circumstantial evidence suggestive of the possible use of some sort of toxic chemical substance in some instances." (A/37/259, para. 197) This qualified language is not surprising. The team was repeatedly denied access to each of the three countries I have discussed this morning - Laos, Kampuchea, and Afghanistan -- where it - the team - was supposed to investigate reports of chemical warfare. In words from their report, "... due to circumstances beyond its control, the Group was not in a position to proceed to the territories where chemical attacks had allegedly occurred and it was, therefore, unable to conduct any on-site investigations on those territories." (Ibid., para. 190)

It is, of course, disappointing that, after two years of investigation, the United Nations Group of Experts was unable to reach more definitive conclusions. None the less, the material compiled by the United Nations team and documented in their report supports our finding that trichothecene toxins have been identified in samples. Furthermore, the team notes evidence that these toxin agents have been used.

The United Nations experts do not rule out the possibility of natural contamination, although they admit it is unlikely. It has been shown scientifically, however, that this is not the case. This leaves as the explanation the only other possibility offered in the United Nations report, namely, that chemical and toxin agents are being used. We also note that the Soviet explanation for the presence of these lethal toxins in South-East Asia, as submitted in their scientific report to the United Nations, which I described just a few minutes ago, was dismissed by the United Nations Group of Experts as scientifically unsound.

It is not surprising that the United Nations report is less definitive than the reports presented here this morning and given in the past several years by the United States. The United Nations team was subject to severe restrictions of both time and resources. In two years the team was able to meet only six times and to carry out three brief trips to Pakistan and Thailand.

It is quite ironic, therefore, that the Soviet Union has chosen to emphasize the ambiguities in the United Nations report, as reflected in Pravda on 2 December 1982, even before the United Nations report was issued, let me add. What Pravda did not report is, of course, that it was the unwillingness of the Soviet Union and its clients to co-operate with the United Nations team which in effect crippled the investigation.

Let us not be misled by denials. The strength of international law, depends in large part on prompt international reaction to its violation. A treaty that when broken causes no outcry is a treaty without strength. The evidence is now in. Let it not be said of us here that the jury was indifferent. In the words of Secretary of State George Shultz:

"The world cannot be silent in the face of such human suffering and such cynical regard for international law and agreements. The use of chemical and toxin weapons must be stopped. Respect for existing agreements must be restored and the agreements themselves strengthened. Respect for the dignity of humanity must be restored. Failure to achieve these goals can only have serious implications for the security of smaller nations, like those whose people are being attacked.

(Mr. Adelman, United States)

If such basic elements of human rights can be so fundamentally ignored, how can we believe any pledges to respect human rights? All who would seek to promote human rights, and all who would seek to maintain the credibility of international agreements, have a duty to call world attention to the continuing use of chemical and toxin weapons, and to seek a halt to their use".

Eight years ago the world was deaf to reports of chemical warfare in Laos. Today, we have the first indication that the use of these noxious weapons may have spread into Africa as well - moving, thus, from Asia to Africa. We cannot afford to lose another eight years and countless lives. The international community must act now to build pressure to stop this continuing outrage.

Mr. MARTIN (New Zealand): On behalf of the delegations of Australia, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Turkey and my own delegation, I introduce draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.79, concerning the report of the Group of Experts to Investigate Reports on the Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons.

The Group of Experts was set up by the Secretary-General two years ago under resolution 35/144 C to undertake an impartial investigation of reports concerning the alleged use of chemical weapons. The first report of the Group of Experts was submitted last year. Because the Group had not completed its investigation, the Assembly asked the Secretary-General to continue the work and to report to this session. In the course of 1982, the Group of Experts held three sessions and visited Pakistan and Thailand for the purpose of on-site collection and examination of evidence. It has prepared its second report, which was issued two days ago as document A/37/259. As the Chairman has proposed that a decision should be taken on the draft resolution today, and as the report was issued so recently, it may be appropriate to try to draw together the main elements of the report. Naturally, any summary of a 100-page document must be selective and can be no substitute for a study of the whole report. This summary will concentrate on those aspects of the report that appear to be important as background to the Group's conclusions, which are set out in paragraphs 185 to 197 of the report, and to the draft resolution. Those aspects are contained, for the most part, in chapters IV, V and VI.

In chapter IV of its report, the Group examines each of the submissions presented to it in the order in which they were received. As it is for several reasons an important chapter it may be useful to summarize it in a way that brings together the Group's comments and observations on similar aspects of its work.

There are several paragraphs in which the Group explains how it approached its task. These include, in particular, paragraphs 39 to 45 and 80 to 87, which show what high evidential standards were set by the Group. It is perhaps because of the rigorous application of those standards that there has been resentment among some observers who may have believed that the function of the Group was simply to confirm the reports that gave cause for its establishment two years ago, so let me briefly set them out.

With respect to reports of the testimony of alleged victims or eyewitnesses, the Group drew attention to difficulties which it had itself encountered, including problems of interpretation, imperfect recollection of events and differing concepts of space and time among people of different cultures. The Group considered that the reliability of this sort of evidence was difficult to assess, especially when the Group itself had no opportunity to interview any of the people concerned so that it could form its own views after hearing their stories at first hand. It thought that the testimony of medical personnel was likely to be reliable, but, again, the Group preferred to have the names of the medical people and to be able to discuss the medical reports with them. As to defectors, the Group considered that it was not in a position to pass judgement on their statements. Neither did it feel able to assess the validity of information obtained by "national technical means". On the other hand, the Group thought that scientific evidence could be especially significant. It commented that a highly convincing piece of evidence would be samples which were collected at the sites of attacks and which contained chemical compounds that are exclusively used as chemical warfare agents and do not occur naturally. In addition, it would want to be able to satisfy itself as to the origin of the samples, the care with which they had been handled, and the adequacy of the analytical procedures used. And it would want to be sure that the signs and symptoms observed in alleged victims were consistent with those produced by any chemical agent that might be identified by analysis.

(Mr. Martin, New Zealand)

In the course of this year, the Group received several submissions from the United States reporting the results of analyses of blood, urine and tissue samples of people said to have been victims of chemical attacks. Samples of this sort are, of course, generally considered to be of more significance than leaf samples, for example, because it is not very likely that people will poison themselves in order merely to strengthen evidence of chemical warfare. On the American submissions, the Group agreed that the presence of toxins in the samples was consistent with previous exposure of the victims to mycotoxins of the trichothecene type. But it also commented that it was not possible, on the basis of analytical results alone, to determine whether the exposure resulted from a chemical attack or from natural causes. The Group noted, however, that samples from control individuals had also been analysed and had been found free of trichothecene mycotoxins. This, in the view of the Group, made the possibility of a natural origin of the trichothecene exposure extremely remote, though it could not be completely excluded.

Just how remote the Group considered that possibility to be is evident from paragraph 64 of its report. There, in commenting on a review by a Canadian expert of the natural occurrence of mycotoxicoses, the Group accepted that while potential producers of trichothecenes exist in Thailand and surrounding countries, there are in that area no naturally occurring diseases due to these toxins, and no detectable levels of mycotoxins in the natural environment. In this context, reference should also be made to the reported presence of synthetic substances in samples of the yellow powder from Laos, which the Group considered to be "significant" since it would clearly rule out a natural origin for the yellow substance.

All the analytical reports, however, need to be seen in the light of the Group's final evaluation of the written submissions, and in particular the comment that while:

"it would not wish to question, on an a priori basis, that the samples were collected in the areas specified in the submissions, it nevertheless had to conclude that it was impossible to ascertain beyond a reasonable doubt whether these samples were obtained from areas which were exposed to chemical attacks. Likewise, the Group arrived at similar conclusions regarding the origin of the medical samples". (A/37/259, para. 84)



Reference should also be made to a Canadian report which the Group of Experts thought to be particularly useful. This was an epidemiological investigation of several alleged chemical warfare incidents in South-East Asia, including four on which the Group of Experts offered specific comment. The first was an incident in Kampuchea. On this, the Group agreed with the Canadian team that the only group of agents which would fit the symptoms would be incapacitating agents.

A second incident was one said to have occurred in Laos in November 1981. The Canadian account was based on interviews with a number of people at the Ban Vinai refugee camp. The Group of Experts itself, at a later stage, met several H'mong who claimed to be victims of the same attack and who reported signs and symptoms resembling those described in the Canadian submission.

(Mr. Martin, New Zealand)

The conclusion of the Canadian report was that the H'mong accounts were undeniably consistent and described a campaign in which three types of chemical agent, or possibly varying concentrations of the same agent, were used to create an economic and psychological situation in which the H'mong had to leave their village if they wished to survive. The United Nations Group quotes two sentences from the Canadian report which it refers to as a good assessment of the incident:

"The effects described are compatible with the postulated use of mycotoxins but are not similar to those of any other group of chemical agents known to the team.

"Without confirmatory laboratory analysis the use of mycotoxins cannot be demonstrated unequivocally." (A/37/259, para. 72)

The Canadian team applied the same epidemiological technique to two incidents which took place at Thai villages close to the border with Kampuchea. They are of particular interest because in this case too the United Nations Group was able to interview some of the people concerned. In one case, perhaps in both, a yellow substance appears to have been dropped from an aircraft. The first explanation of these happenings was that the yellow stuff was pollen, but it seemed to the Canadian team that the incidents were worth looking into, if only because it is not an everyday thing for aircraft to go around dropping pollen. What they found was that the level of illness in the two villages following the appearance of the yellow substance was "significant in epidemiological terms, implying that the substance is toxic". That is also the conclusion reached by the United Nations Group, which goes on to comment that:

"the Canadian team could not identify any factor common to all those affected except exposure to the 'yellow substance' and the Group itself could not offer any other explanation." (Ibid., para. 71)

Since the Canadian report was published it appears that trichothecene mycotoxins have been identified in samples of this yellow substance. The United Nations Group of Experts could not of course, take cognizance of these results as it had not itself collected the samples or supervised the tests.

(Mr. Martin, New Zealand)

Chapters V and VI of the Group's report are therefore of particular interest because they concern the Group's own on-site activities and examination of evidence and the results of analysis of samples collected by the Group. The term "on-site" is perhaps misleading since the Group did not succeed in gaining access to the countries in which chemical attacks were said to have occurred. On the other hand it was able to interview a number of other people who claimed to have been victims of chemical attack, and to collect evidence.

During its visit to Pakistan the Group interviewed several people said to have been victims of attacks made on underground water canals in which they had sought shelter. In the opinion of the Group the symptoms reported conformed with the use of a harassing agent of the adamsite type.

Concerning the samples obtained during the visits to Pakistan, no chemical agents were found. In this respect the Group commented that:

'When the samples were handed over, weeks or months had already elapsed since the alleged exposure, which made it likely that only persistent chemical compounds would still remain.'

During its visit to Thailand the Group looked into the H'mong incident in Laos and the incidents involved in the two Thai villages to which reference has already been made. On the medical aspects the Group observed that though the signs and symptoms reported to it might have been produced by exposure to trichothecenes or incapacitating warfare agents, it was not in a position to confirm this medically as there were no remaining signs or symptoms at the time of their interviews.

On the samples collected in Thailand in 1981, the results were inconclusive. No trichothecenes were found in blood samples, but the laboratories used were not equipped for detection in the parts-per-billion range, which appears to be important in this sort of analysis. As to the physical samples, trichothecenes were found in the control samples as well as in the original samples, and the Group had no way of determining whether this resulted from contamination in handling or from the actual presence of toxins in the control. Testing of the samples collected in Thailand a few weeks ago remains incomplete. The analyses that have been completed do not show the presence of trichothecenes. One sample from a H'mong refugee was found to contain a highly toxic substance, but the

(Mr. Martin, New Zealand)

Group could not verify the origin of the sample and felt that it could not therefore base its judgement on the results of the analysis.

What does all this add up to? Broadly speaking, that the Group of Experts agrees that there are a number of incidents for which there is strong and well supported evidence that chemical weapons were used -- evidence, in fact, which appears to allow of no other possible explanation. The evidence is, however, circumstantial, because the Group was not itself able to pursue investigations at the site of the alleged attacks or because it was not possible for it to verify that the physical or medical samples came from the places they were said to have come from, or because the results of its own testing were inconclusive. There are also of course many incidents referred to in the report for which the evidence is less strong and to which the Group has accordingly made no reference in its conclusions.

It is now time to turn to the draft resolution, which is as short as this introduction to the work of the Group of Experts has been long. The second preambular paragraph of the draft resolution states the final conclusion of the Group of Experts. Operative paragraph 1 expresses the Assembly's appreciation to the Group. It is not proposed that the Group's mandate should be extended.

The Group pursued its investigation for nearly two years. Throughout that period it worked with integrity, impartiality and objectivity. The conclusions of its report are careful and responsible. If they are incomplete, it is because the Group was unable to secure the necessary approval for all the on-site investigations it considered necessary or, in one case, timely authority for such a visit. It is appropriate that the Assembly should express its thanks to the Group and also to the Governments which have co-operated with it in one way or another. National reports, in particular from Canada and the United States, were of major importance to its work, and other Governments assisted directly or indirectly by facilitating sample analyses. Pakistan once, and Thailand twice, were hosts to the Group, which has in its report acknowledged their full and generous co-operation and assistance during its visits.

(Mr. Martin, New Zealand)

Finally, there are two general paragraphs on the subject of chemical weapons and the obligation of all States to abide by the principles and objectives of the Geneva Protocol.

In relation to operative paragraph 2, it has been suggested that the second part of that paragraph could be interpreted as implying that the allegations referred to in the second preambular paragraph have been proven and are being condemned. That of course is not what the Group of Experts said, and it is not the intention of the sponsors. The delegations which drew this matter to our attention have suggested that the difficulty could be overcome by the insertion after the word "actions" of the words "that are" so that the clause would read "and condemns all actions that are contrary to those objectives". The sponsors are happy to accept that amendment.

Accordingly I now commend the draft resolution, with this amendment, for the consideration of the Committee.

Mr. WOOLCOTT (Australia): I should like to start by welcoming the thoughtful and detailed comments made by my New Zealand colleague. As for us, a glance at a map of Asia will reveal one of the reasons why Australians are concerned at the continuing reports of the use of chemical weapons in Afghanistan and in South-East Asia. We live in that part of the world and we share its destiny. But we have more fundamental reasons for our concern. They relate to the maintenance of the rule of international law, in this case the 1925 Geneva Protocol, and a humanitarian concern for the welfare of the people of our region.

Australia, disturbed at reports of the use of chemical warfare agents in Indo-China and Afghanistan, as well as by other reports of incidents elsewhere, was one of the original sponsors of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session, which established the United Nations Group of Experts to investigate such allegations. We followed its work carefully and with considerable interest. Last year, at the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly, we also sponsored the resolution which extended the mandate of the Group so that it could complete its investigation.

We wish to thank the Chairman of the Expert Group and all the members who served in it, as well as those many Governments which co-operated with the Group in its difficult work. We have examined with great interest its detailed and painstaking report. The technical pioneering within the United Nations system which has characterized the Group's efforts is in itself notable.

Australia appreciates that such a group must be meticulous in drawing conclusions from the material which comes before it and we have read in this light the important conclusions contained in its report. We note in particular the significance of the conclusion expressed in paragraph 197 of its report that:

"...it could not disregard the circumstantial evidence suggestive of possible use of some sort of toxic chemical substance in some instances".

(A/37/259, para. 197)

This is, perhaps, a hedged conclusion, but it is one that increases, not dispels, Australia's concern at the continuing allegations of the use of chemical weapons. In this connection, I might indicate that, indeed before the submission of the Committee's report, Australia itself had noted the body of evidence that chemical agents had been used against people in Laos and Cambodia.

(Mr. Woolcott, Australia)

The report of the Group of Experts confirms us in our view that all allegations of the use of chemical warfare agents must be promptly investigated. We further hope that the publication and wide dissemination of this report and of the results of independent investigations undertaken by Canada and the United States will encourage all States to observe the 1925 Geneva Protocol strictly. Australia endorses the call in draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.79 for all States to do so.

As to further action that may be taken to strengthen the barriers against the use of chemical weapons, the report of the Group of Experts is instructive in two respects. First, the report convinces us more than ever of the need to attack the problem of chemical weapons at its source, that is, to ban the development, production, stockpiling, deployment and transfer of chemical weapons as well as their use. Secondly, the report reinforces our view that any such new chemical-weapons convention should be fully verifiable -- I repeat, fully verifiable. The days of unverifiable treaties are over, and particularly in the chemical-weapons field, verifiability will be taken as the key to negotiability.

As a result of the experience of this investigation into alleged chemical-weapons use, Australia will pursue even more energetically the negotiations in the Committee on Disarmament of a chemical-weapons convention that is as comprehensive in scope and as fully verifiable as possible.

Mr. BROSKI (Canada): Having had an opportunity to study the report on the alleged use of chemical weapons which has been circulated as document A/37/259 of 1 December 1982, the Canadian delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Group of Experts for the time and effort they have expended in carrying out and reporting on their investigations.

While we regret that the conclusions could not have been more definitive, we recognize the very real analytical problems, as well as certain other sensitivities, in arriving at conclusions on such an issue.

(Mr. Broski, Canada)

We see this document as an imperative humanitarian response to reports that have been received from many quarters concerning the possible use of chemical or toxin weapons against human victims. Such reports first came directly to the attention of my Government in January 1979 during the course of the routine examination of prospective immigrants to Canada by Canadian officials in refugee camps in South-East Asia. The Canadian Government concluded that if these allegations were found to be true, then such actions were, as expressed in the words of the third preambular paragraph of the draft resolution in document A/C.1/37/L.79, "incompatible with the accepted norms of civilization".

For this reason, it was considered that the United Nations, representing the international community, with the assistance, where possible, of Member States, would be morally obliged on humanitarian grounds to conduct an impartial and thorough investigation into the allegations.

As is well known in this chamber, the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibits the use of chemical and bacteriological weapons in war, but lacks any verification provisions. Thus, the work accomplished by the Group of Experts both in its direct investigation and, equally important, the contribution towards the development of an impartial and credible methodology in the testing of evidence gathered, is most important and should not be lost. The establishment of an effective verification mechanism can in itself act as a deterrent to those countries which might be tempted to utilize chemical and bacteriological weapons in contravention of the Geneva Protocol if they were confident that this use would be undetected.

For these reasons, Canada remains committed to the goal of a treaty providing for a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons, the destruction of existing stocks and appropriate measures of verification. With this end in view, any activities on the part of the United Nations in fact-finding are indispensable. As is abundantly clear from the pages of the report, the investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons raises many complex and difficult technical issues. Canada is indeed grateful for and appreciative of the high professional standards and quality of work of the Group of Experts, namely, Dr. Ezz, Dr. Ambeva, Colonel Javier and Dr. Guerra. Their scrupulous methods of work and the procedures they evolved to ensure an impartial investigation, as well as their patience and energy in making a thorough examination of all evidence have impressed us, and we hope will serve as examples to guide those who follow.



(Mr. Broski, Canada)

On studying the report, the Canadian delegation believes that the weight of evidence examined by the Group supporting certain allegations should have led to more definitive conclusions. Nevertheless, this report will serve as a reference for experts to draw upon in the development of effective verification procedures as called for in a recent resolution by this Committee. In its conclusions the Group identified problems which have impeded the effectiveness of its own investigative procedures. For example, it must be said that the findings of the Group of Experts as set forth in its report might well have been more conclusive or decisive had the Group received the full co-operation of all States in the area concerned with respect to access to sites of alleged chemical-weapon attacks. Further, they commented upon the prolonged lapse of time between the alleged exposure to chemical attacks and the time when interviews and medical examinations were conducted. The identification of these and other problems will substantially assist in their development of more effective verification procedures.

I should like to conclude with a few comments about the meaning that we place on the conclusion of the report which is reflected in draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.79, of which Canada is a sponsor. While the results set forth in the report are not as conclusive as they could have been, the report has an intrinsic value and must not be ignored. As the Group of Experts stated that they:

"could not disregard the circumstantial evidence suggestive of the possible use of some sort of toxic chemical substance", (A/37/259, p.50, para. 197) we, the Member States, can do no less and we also cannot disregard the same circumstantial evidence. We must direct our future actions accordingly.

Mr. SHUSTOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian) As is well known, the Soviet Union from the very beginning was against the establishment of the so-called Group of Experts to Investigate Reports on the Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons. We considered that measure as a dubious design whose objective was to poison the international political atmosphere and to justify the plans being made by certain parties to build up their arsenals of chemical weapons. My delegation

(Mr. Shustov, USSR)

stands by that evaluation today, and so we do not intend to deal specifically and in detail with an analysis of the actual contents of the report of the Group of Experts. In our statement we wish mainly to draw attention to certain events and facts relating to the preparation of the report and reflected in it.

It seems to us that these facts shed further light on the matter of who needed to involve the United Nations in the investigation of reports of some supposed cases of the use of chemical weapons and why this is necessary. These facts will also help us to understand better the real weight and foundation of the reports.

At the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly, in 1980, those who sponsored the draft resolution on the establishment of the Group of Experts were France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Canada, Norway, Turkey, the Netherlands, Spain and New Zealand. However, even at the time it was perfectly clear to everyone that the text of the draft resolution was drawn up not in the capitals of those States but in Washington. It was none other than the United States that was the first in history to use toxic agents on a massive scale during its aggression against the Vietnamese people. It began in the mid-1970s to publicize slanderous reports about the use of chemical weapons by the Vietnamese Army against counter-revolutionary forces in Laos and Viet Nam. Clearly the underlying desire of the United States was to cover up its own dirty crimes.

We have heard the statement by the representative of the United States in which he recalled the use by Italian Fascists of toxic agents in the war against Ethiopia and plans to use chemical weapons in the mid-1970s in the southern Asian mountains. However, the United States representative tried to pass over in silence, in a rather shameful way, the massive use of chemical weapons in Viet Nam and the consequences of that use. At the end of his statement he did touch on that matter but he tried to prove that that poisoning of the population and the environment of Viet Nam by United States chemical agents was supposedly the innocent use of simple herbicides which simply harmed a few plants growing in Viet Nam. Of course,

(Mr. Shustov, USSR)

it is understandable to us that the United States representative does not want to remember that those ordinary herbicides, which, as he said, are for sale even now, took the lives of 2 million Vietnamese. We would recommend to him that he read some of the publications published in the United States itself relating to this, and then he will know what the consequences of using those simple herbicides were.

As soon as the Group of Experts was established the United States started supplying it with its own material. In the course of 1982 alone the Group had five notes verbales sent to it from the United States Mission to the United Nations containing -- or so it seemed to those who prepared the notes -- convincing evidence of cases of the use of chemical weapons and "yellow rain" and other similar sensational reports.

Wherever the United Nations experts were sent, wherever they had meetings, United States representatives followed them like shadows. In Geneva, before the Group set off for Pakistan, it met at its request with representatives of the United States office there, who explained to the Group what it should investigate and how it should investigate it in Pakistan. When it arrived in Islamabad the Group had a meeting with representatives from the Embassy, and in Peshawar it met with representatives from the United States Consulate. All this can be read in the report of the Group of Experts contained in document A/37/250, in paragraphs 88, 90 and 95.

The Americans had the same concern in looking after the Group when it was in Thailand, providing it with all sorts of dubious witnesses and samples of plants and also urine and blood samples.

(Mr. Shustov, USSR)

However, despite all these efforts, what happened was that the United States evidence seemed inconclusive to the participants in the Group of Experts, who could not fail to recognize this in their report. As Members will recall, last year's report -- in spite of all this talk by the Americans about the irrefutability of the data -- nevertheless drew no conclusions confirming the use of chemical weapons.

And what can we say about the second, which we understand is the last, report of the Group? Open it on almost any page and there will be found refutation of the evidence on which the United States based its broadly publicized slander against the Soviet Union and Viet Nam, and which, incidentally, was also provided to us today by the United States representative. Look, for example, at page 20 of the Russian text, which comments on the note verbale from the permanent representative of the United States to the United Nations, dated 22 March 1982, addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. This is what it says in the English text:

"One of the very few sources of information explicitly identified by name in the submission of the United States of America was a Dutch journalist, who allegedly not only filmed a part of a chemical attack in Afghanistan but also developed some symptoms that were attributed to exposure to chemical agents (see A/37/157, annex). In seeking further clarification and information concerning this matter, the Group learned that the symptoms were no longer present. Furthermore, the film itself, which was viewed by the Group, did not convey any relevant information. Accordingly, the Group deemed it unlikely that the journalist would be in a position to contribute to the investigation." (A/37/259, p. 17, para. 4)

The report continues:

"In the submission (A/37/157), it was alleged that chemical attacks against armed forces and civilian population had taken place in Thailand during March and May 1981. However, the Group noted that: the Royal Thai Government had stated that chemical weapons had not been used in Thailand itself." (Ibid., para. 48)

(Mr. Shustov, USSR)

Does this not expose the slander? This is an example of what the United States has been relying on as proof. If we continue with the report of the Group of Experts, paragraph 60, which deals with the answer to the United States note of 20 May 1982, states rather typically, referring to the alleged cases of the use of toxins during a chemical attack:

"... it would be impossible to decide from the analytical results whether this exposure was due to a chemical attack or could be attributed to natural causes." (Ibid., para. 60)

This is the kind of conclusion that you can find on any page of the report. Paragraphs 177, 180 and 183 state that laboratory analyses of the blood and urine samples of people that, according to United States statements, were victims of chemical attacks, did not confirm the presence of any military chemical agents.

It should be noted that these analyses were carried out in the laboratories of a number of western countries. When the Group met representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees agency, and medical staff in the hospitals in Pakistan, not one of the persons that it talked to could state that on even one occasion had they met with cases of the use of military chemical agents. Paragraphs 93 and 94 of the report contain this information. Incidentally, in Pakistan many different kinds of witnesses talked with the experts, and there were many Afghan counter-revolutionaries who claimed to have witnessed these situations. The participants of the Group described the manner in which these interviews were conducted in paragraph 100 of the report.

"The Group was inconvenienced in its efforts at carrying out adequate cross-examination of the alleged victims and eyewitnesses due to intervention and promptings by leaders of political refugee organizations who were present at the interviews;" (Ibid., para. 100(a))

(Mr. Shustov, USSR)

Members can imagine what kind of promptings were given to these innocent people by the so-called leaders of political refugee organizations which are, in fact, counter-revolutionary organizations. This same kind of information is contained throughout the report. Naturally, this should make one feel a little uneasy and, indeed, those that proposed the establishment of the Group of Experts might feel a little nervous about this. In other words, I refer to the United States. As a result of this, even a few weeks before the publication of the report of the Group of Experts the United States tried to exert pressure on them quite openly. First of all, the United Nations experts were subjected to attacks in the American press. For example, in the issue of 22 November this year, The Wall Street Journal, describing the work of the Group, wrote, "To almost nobody's surprise, the international bureaucracy is proving too rigid, timid and toothless to come to grips with the matter." Literally two days later and it must be remembered that the Group was just completing its work on the report at that very time official representatives of the United States also participated in criticism of it.

As The New York Times reported on 25 November, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, Mr. Adelman, said:

"... the team's inability to reach firm conclusions gave legitimacy to nations that did not want to take a position on the issue, and called into question the American accusations." (The New York Times, 25 November 1982, p. A17)

I think this is quite clear, and on the basis of similar statements, The New York Times drew the following conclusion:

"It was the United States that pressed for the creation of the United Nations team in 1980 and the extension of its life last year. Therefore, officials here believe that the team of experts will be disbanded now that Washington regards it as impotent." (Ibid.)

(Mr. Shustov, USSR)

So that is how sentence was passed on the Group. Looking at the draft resolution distributed today and sponsored by New Zealand and other delegations, we see that in fact it proposes the virtual disbanding of the Group and invites everybody to the burial ceremony. The New York Times also stated that:

"... Washington planned to let the United Nations inquiry into the use of chemical weapons in Asia die, because the investigators had made themselves powerless to reach judgements". (Ibid.)

Naturally, when there is that kind of pressure on the Group, reflected even in the pages of the American press - we can just imagine what is said backstage during meetings between representatives of the United States and the Group.

In its report, the Group tried to be objective. There are certain points of contradiction in the report, and some representatives are now trying to play them up and use them. But that does not change the essence of the situation: the report of the experts has not confirmed the false allegations of the American side relating to cases of the use of chemical weapons. That is an irrefutable fact, and United States officials are not pleased with it.

When it saw the Group's conclusions, the United States probably decided to act on its own and to take independent action against them. Thus, a few days ago the United States published and distributed in the United Nations its own report about alleged cases of the use of chemical weapons. Like all earlier American submissions, the report is based on various false statements, rumours, false analyses and juggling of figures. In the statement made today by the representative of the United States there was not exactly an excess of references to the report of the United Nations Expert Group, but there were many references indeed to the United States report.

The Soviet delegation categorically rejects this new American document as just one more piece of slander designed to mislead the international community. It would be useful for participants in this debate to acquaint themselves with the facts, which show how in practice the United States has fabricated all its reports regarding cases of the use of chemical agents.

In this connection, we draw the attention of representatives to the recent publication in the Soviet Union of material relating to this very matter. That material is now available in this room as a press release of the USSR Mission to the

United Nations. Many examples are provided in that press release describing the absurdity and falsehood of the allegations and accusations made by the United States. For example, it analyses one of the American reports which claimed that in the water of one pond located at the site of an alleged chemical attack in South-East Asia toxic mycotoxin agents were supposedly found in a concentration of 66 milligrammes per kilogramme. If that figure is accepted, it may then be calculated that over 660 kilogrammes of mycotoxins per hectare must have been dropped or scattered. Now, one gramme of mycotoxin costs over a thousand dollars. Even if a less pure variety costing one tenth of that had been used, the cost for dropping that agent would still have been hundreds of millions of dollars per hectare. Representatives can see how absurd that is. And if those mycotoxins were dropped using missiles or shells, then every hectare would have to have been hit by hundreds of missiles. Finally, scattering 660 kilogrammes of mycotoxins per hectare would have meant that the whole environment there would have been literally covered with the mycotoxin powder.

We have been forced to note with regret that the United States and its supporters have not abandoned their attempts to involve the United Nations in spreading this chemical slander, for that was the purpose of the draft resolution submitted on France's initiative calling for the establishment by the Secretary-General of some machinery for the investigation and monitoring of compliance with the 1925 Geneva Protocol; that draft resolution is designed essentially to undermine that most important agreement. The Soviet Union has expressed its firm opposition to such a decision as being a very harmful and dangerous step.

What is the United States trying to do? We can find the answer to that question in American sources. The Christian Science Monitor of 1 December 1982 stated that:

"The Reagan Administration wants to add to the American stockpile new chemical munitions which have not been produced in the United States since 1969". Those munitions include, inter alia, binary agents. The United States is trying swiftly to establish the capability to produce them near Pine Bluff, and no later than 1983. Already the United States has stockpiled 5 million units of toxic warheads, which is enough to kill hundreds of millions of people. But that is not enough for the Pentagon and, as reported by the American press, it is seeking another \$8 billion for its programme of further chemical rearmament. The people



working on those programmes can hardly be interested in strengthening the Geneva Protocol or in serious and constructive negotiations on the complete prohibition and elimination of chemical weapons.

The slanderous falsifications alleging the use by other countries of toxic agents are being employed by their authors as a smokescreen to cover up their own most evil designs.

(Mr. Shustov, USSR)

It is our deep conviction that all those who cherish peace, international security and disarmament must categorically oppose such manoeuvres. Proceeding from this premise the Soviet delegation will vote against the New Zealand draft resolution.

Mr. VO ANH TUAN (Viet Nam) (interpretation from French): The Vietnamese delegation is one of those that have opposed the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 35/144 C and 36/96 C because it is part of the mendacious propaganda campaign against a number of Member States including Viet Nam. The second report of the Group of Experts set up under resolution 35/144 (A/37/259) proves that we are right. The initiators of the resolution have abused the feelings of horror and reprobation of Member States towards chemical weapons and have dragged the United Nations into a futile exercise that has seriously jeopardized the prestige and the strengthening of the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament. It has placed the Secretary-General himself in a delicate situation. He has had to say that the observations and conclusions contained in the report are those of the Group.

The second report of the Group of Experts has brought out certain undeniable realities. In spite of the tendentious assertions of the United States and some of its friends, the investigation of the Group of Experts did not lead to any conclusive result for the simple reason that chemical weapons have never been used in either South-East Asia or Afghanistan except for those used in enormous quantities for an extended period by the United States in its war of aggression against the peoples of the three countries of Indo-China and those weapons produced by America and used by gangs of mercenaries in Afghanistan.

According to scientists, it is impossible to hide the traces of chemical weapons and the consequences of their use for human beings and nature. That is certainly true of the chemical warfare waged by the United States in Viet Nam and other Indo-Chinese countries. One does not need a United Nations investigation to prove that two decades after their use 100,000 tons of American toxic materials containing some 100 kilogrammes of dioxins continue to leave traces and have

(Mr. Vo Anh Tuan, Viet Nam)

painful effects not only for the people of Viet Nam but also for 90,000 United States veterans. The slanderous assertions of the American authorities and some of their friends cannot wipe away those traces. Vietnamese scientific research, corroborated by research in the West, including the United States, indicate that one microvolume of dioxin may produce abortions, congenital malformations, still births, changes in chromosomes and cancer. Scientists have shown that malformations of the genetic structure in the Vietnamese population subjected to American use of chemical weapons are similar to chromosome modifications observed in the inhabitants of Hiroshima and Nagasaki who survived the American atomic bombs.

In spite of the efforts of the Group of Experts, though it was invited by the Government of so-called Democratic Kampuchea, it was not able to enter the territory of "Democratic Kampuchea" for the simple reason that that fictitious State exists only on paper.

My delegation notes with satisfaction that nearly all Member States have shown skepticism regarding the real objectives of the initiators of the two draft resolutions and have disassociated themselves from them. Since the adoption of resolution 36/96 C only three Governments have sent communications to the Secretary-General, and they include the Government of the United States and those responsible for genocide, the Pol-Potists, who have shown extraordinary activity in this dubious campaign.

The United States Secretary of State submitted to the United States group of experts two voluminous reports within a period of just a few months, not to mention several official statements by high-level personalities and a number of notes circulated by the Permanent Mission of the United States and the Pol-Pot clique regarding what they call "earlier and new proof" of the use of chemical weapons in South-East Asia and Afghanistan. On more than one occasion my delegation has stated in the First Committee and in the General Assembly the position of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam regarding a complete ban on these weapons. It has unequivocally condemned the use of these barbaric weapons as means of war and aggression against the peoples of the world.

(Mr. Vo Anh Tuan, Viet Nam)

In the interests of brevity my delegation will not repeat here statements we have already made. We shall simply reject all the lies and calumny of the representative of the United States regarding our country and make a few brief comments on documents A/37/157 and A/C.1/37/10.

First of all, the two reports, dated 22 March and 29 November 1982, of the American Secretary of State refer to the use of chemical weapons and toxins during the First World War and from 1975 until the present day, deliberately ignoring the period from the end of the First World War until 1975. If the American authorities have a short memory, the peoples of the world will long remember America's chemical warfare, the most barbaric in human history, which continued for more than a decade against the three peoples of Indo-China, primarily against the people of Viet Nam, causing 2 million victims and incalculable long-term consequences for individuals and the environment.

In addition, if the American Government really cares about respect for the 1925 Protocol and the Convention of 1972, why has it ignored the war crimes perpetrated against the Vietnamese people in February 1979 by the troops of aggression of our neighbour to the north, with the use of toxic gases and the poisoning of drinking water in certain areas that were invaded by those troops.

Secondly, the new conclusions of the United Nations Group of Experts have exploded like soap bubbles all the hopes of those who customarily use slander as a means of propaganda. The conclusions show once again that all the "evidence" regarding the use of chemical weapons which the American authorities have made much of exists only in their imagination and has rather precise objectives. This "evidence", more of which may be communicated to the United Nations, can be fabricated in enormous quantities by the CIA on the orders of the Government. My delegation is certainly not surprised about this, because those who in the past fabricated the infamous "Gulf of Tonkin incident" as an excuse to start the air war of destruction against North Viet Nam can now easily fabricate any fable regarding the alleged use of chemical weapons in South-East Asia in a spirit of revenge against the Vietnamese people, which, by making supreme sacrifices, have safeguarded their independence and freedom and made common cause with the peoples of Laos and Kampuchea to thwart all the manoeuvres and wars of aggression of their common foe.

(Mr. Vo Anh Tuan, Viet Nam)

Many delegations, in revealing for what it is the hostile propaganda campaign against Viet Nam and the Soviet Union and certain other countries regarding the use of chemical weapons, have rightly denounced the fact that Washington is pursuing unavowed goals which, indeed, cannot be confessed. These are to divert the attention of public opinion from its responsibility for the crimes against the peoples of Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea during its war of aggression, which, in particular, saw the massive use of chemical weapons to divert attention from plans to produce on a wide scale new forms of chemical weapons, including binary weapons and from preparations for a war in which these weapons will be used; to seek a pretext to justify its negative attitude to negotiations aimed at the conclusion of a convention on the complete prohibition of chemical weapons and to justify its attempt to undermine existing agreements on the limitation of weapons.

Our Committee is witnessing today the unceremonious burial of a stillborn child whose funeral orations are offered in the draft resolution contained in document A/C.1/37/L.79 and the praises of those who gave it birth two years ago.

Against all expectations and in spite of the continuing pressure of the United States its nervousness and its machinations, the results of the second report of the Group of Experts are not conclusive either. The promoters of this pernicious enterprise have no alternative but to allow it to die a natural death, for their blatant manoeuvres are now only too clear to the world.

This situation merely justifies the positions of many delegations, including that of Viet Nam, which clearly warned at the time of the consideration of the draft resolutions which subsequently became resolutions 35/144 C and 36/96 C that any lying slander would sooner or later fizzle out when confronted by undeniable truth.

(Mr. Vo Anh Tuan, Viet Nam)

My delegation would add that it would be naive, indeed dangerous, to believe that after the expiry of the mandate of the Group of Experts the adversaries of peace and disarmament, especially chemical disarmament, would lay down their weapons. The recent report of the Secretary of State of the United States and the draft resolution in document A/C.1/37/L.54 are proof of this. Although supported by fewer than half the States parties to the 1925 Protocol, draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.54 will take over from resolution 35/144 C, thus permitting the United States to pursue its devious manoeuvres by other means and using other machinery.

My delegation strongly denounces these ill-intentioned machinations and is of the view that the best way of sparing the peoples of the world from the horrors of chemical weapons is to contribute actively to the preparation of a convention on the complete prohibition of these weapons, to refrain from chemical rearmament, and to put an end to any campaign of slanderous propaganda against other countries, particularly against the victims of the most barbaric chemical warfare in human history.

The objectives pursued in the draft resolution contained in the document A/C.1/37/L.79 are the same as those of resolution 35/144 C and of 36/96 C. My delegation will therefore vote against this draft resolution.

Mr. SAIGNAVONGS (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (interpretation from French): My delegation has studied with interest the report in document A/37/259 of the Group of Experts mandated under General Assembly resolution 35/144 C to investigate alleged use of chemical weapons in South-East Asia, particularly in my country and in Kampuchea. Paragraph 186 of the report is particularly significant. It states:

"In its evaluation of the written submissions, the Group noted that, while alleged victims and/or eyewitnesses would be in a position to provide firsthand accounts, it could not overlook the fact that such accounts might be incomplete or distorted for various reasons. The Group therefore found it difficult to make a definitive assessment regarding the veracity of the accounts given by the alleged victims or eyewitnesses mentioned in the submissions." (A/37/259 para. 186)

The conclusion reached by the Group of Experts only corroborates my delegation's position. We have always said and repeated on many occasions in this Assembly that the whole matter has been artificially fabricated by the United States and fed by a blustering propaganda campaign and that the allegations are simply calumny. The first to be disappointed are certainly the United States leaders according to an article in The New York Times of 25 November 1982 they expressed their discontent over the Group of Experts even before its report had been published because the Group had not written what Washington would have wished it to write.

In order to prepare for the chemical arms race which it has wanted for so long, and in order to justify in the eyes of American and international public opinion its decision to manufacture a new generation of chemical weapons, called binary weapons, a budget of \$54 million has been allocated for the fiscal year 1983, and the American Administration has not hesitated to concoct fairy-tales about the so-called chemical war and has not lost a single opportunity, however inappropriate, to recite the same litany to us.

Indeed, this is the second year running that the American Administration has been trying to provide us with evidence to back up its slanderous allegations. My delegation would just like to mention two kinds of evidence upon which the American Government bases the whole edifice of its allegations, that is, on the one hand, alleged victims or eye-witnesses of alleged chemical attacks, and, on the other, "those who engaged in chemical warfare or were in a position to observe those who did". (A/37/157, annex, p. 6) Those are the words used by the United States in its report.

(Mr. Saignavongs, Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

With regard to the statements made by those two categories of persons, the Group of Experts concluded that it could not exclude the possibility that those statements might be incomplete or distorted, for in the case of the first category, there could have been a desire to "promote allegations that chemical warfare agents were being used", and in the case of the second category it was very difficult "to assess the veracity of statements from defectors, who sometimes may simply want to attract benevolent attention by telling what they believe their interrogators want to hear." (A/37/259, paras. 40 and 42)

What was not known was that refugees of that kind were going to resettle in the United States later, and if they were to be eligible for admission they had to make statements pleasing to the United States. With regard to the interviews with doctors and medical personnel, who are respected and regarded as having integrity, it should be noted that they said they had never encountered any case of the actual use of chemical warfare agents.

The United States referred to evidence by two H'mong refugees regarding a skin condition which supposedly was the result of a chemical attack two weeks earlier. However, the report of the Thai dermatological institute that examined and analysed the condition said that it was a fungus infection of at least three months' duration. Thus, each time the United States Administration provided us with evidence it collapsed like a house of cards when it was examined by impartial experts. In that regard, experts of the Australian Government are even more categorical. For example, the Canberra Age of 22 June 1982, under the headline "Tests show no proof of Soviet chemical warfare", stated inter alia as follows: (spoke in English)

"Australian Government experts have found no evidence to support United States charges that the Soviet Union and its allies in Indochina have been engaged in chemical warfare. Official Australian sources disclose that tests carried out recently by defence scientists at the material research laboratories in Melbourne failed to find traces of chemical agents. The tests were conducted on leaves, soil and other material



(Mr. Saignavongs, Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

said to have been contaminated by toxic chemicals. The samples reportedly came from Laos where, Washington says, most of the chemical attacks have occurred.

(continued in French)

In the case of samples of powders that were supposedly collected in Laos, the Group of Experts expressed doubt about the origin of the samples and the impartiality of those who submitted them. In this connection, my delegation would ask the following question: Last year, the United States Government sent its agents to my country to search for the bodies of Americans who had perished there or were missing since the time of the war of aggression. One might ask oneself whether it did not send other agents to spread these chemical substances. As in criminal law, when a witness for the prosecution gives too many details about the offence, he may well become the chief suspect. In every case it is the mountain that gives birth to a mouse, for the simple reason that it is difficult, if not impossible, to produce evidence to back up facts that simply do not exist. What we have been told is simply too good to be true.

On the other hand there is evidence of the use of chemical weapons - known as "Agent Blue", "Agent Orange", and "Agent White", all containing a high level of dioxin - by the United States during its war of aggression in Indo-China, particularly between 1966 and 1972. That is evidence that the United States can never cover up or cause to disappear. Agents Orange and White were used for defoliation of vegetation, whilst Agent Blue was used to destroy seeds in the ground. A publication of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute entitled 'Warfare in a fragile world', which appeared in 1980, described these in great detail.

The Pentagon, in a document entitled 'The Air Force and Herbicides in South-East Asia 1961-1971', published recently, also reported this. However, the most devastating evidence for the United States Administration is represented by the thousands of United States veterans affected by these toxic agents during the campaign in Indo-China.

(Mr. Saignavongs, Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

The United States chemical war also caused victims among the Australian soldiers who were fighting alongside the Americans. One of those victims -- and this was the most important case -- was a Major George Lugg, a biochemist and specialist in herbicides who was working for the United States in Viet Nam in a programme experimenting with herbicides on dense vegetation. His evidence was recorded in a series of articles that appeared in the newspaper The Australian on 26 and 29 March 1982.

Thus, whatever manoeuvres the United States Administration resorts to, it will not be able to deceive anyone, certainly not its own veterans who are, along with the three peoples of Indo-China, the real victims of the United States chemical war.

Consequently, it would seem to be high time for the United States authorities to stop this sterile exercise and begin, seriously and responsibly, bilateral and multilateral negotiations on the prohibition of the development, manufacture and stockpiling of all chemical weapons and on the destruction of such weapons.

My delegation, along with several other delegations, voted against resolutions 35/144 C and 36/96 C, because they were tendentious and ill intentioned. My country is small and has nothing to hide, but we cannot accept that a Power, in a spirit of vengeance and bent on discrediting my country in the eyes of world public opinion for the simple reason that its political views are not to the liking of that Power, could use the United Nations in such an improper way.

(Mr. Saignavongs, Lao People's  
Democratic Republic)

My Government's hands are clean, our conscience is clear, unlike the United States Government which poses as a defender of human rights and claims to be the leader of the civilized world, and yet it still has on its conscience the memory of those who died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the systematic destruction of the three countries of Indo-China, without mentioning the massacres of the Palestinian and Lebanese civilians, using American weapons and with American support.

For the reasons that I have given, my delegation will vote against draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.79.

Mr. ARUMUGAI (Singapore): Sir, as this is the first time my delegation has spoken in this Committee, allow me to take this opportunity to extend our congratulations to you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I should also like to extend to you my delegation's appreciation of the excellent and objective manner in which you have handled the difficult work of the Committee.

In speaking on this item, let me say from the outset that my country is resolutely opposed to the production of chemical weapons by any State and to the use of chemical weapons in any part of the world.

My delegation has examined, over a period of time, various reports and submissions to the United Nations on the question of the use of chemical weapons in Afghanistan and Kampuchea. We believe that the evidence presented in some of these reports, including some of the evidence and submissions examined by the United Nations Group of Experts this year, does indeed point to the use of chemical weapons in Afghanistan and Kampuchea. We regret that the United Nations Group of Experts had to work under serious external constraints this year and did not receive the co-operation necessary from the Governments most directly involved in this issue.

(Mr. Arumugam, Singapore)

We are not entirely satisfied with the report of the Group but some of its findings and observations are noteworthy and of significance. The United Nations Group of Experts examined this year the note verbale dated 21 June 1982 from the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, together with the annexed report concerning the possible use of chemical warfare in South-East Asia. It is significant, in our view, that the Group of Experts was in agreement with some of the key conclusions of the Canadian report. The Group, for instance, agreed with the conclusion of the Canadian submission that many of the symptoms described were consistent with a type of mycotoxicosis caused by macrocyclic trichothecenes, which in man is associated with the inhalation of toxins and their absorption through the skin. Furthermore the Group of Experts also agreed with the Canadian submission concerning the question of the natural occurrence of mycotoxicosis in Thailand. The Canadian report concluded that potential producers of trichothecenes exist in South-East Asia, but that neither naturally-occurring diseases due to these toxins occur, nor that there are any detectable levels of mycotoxins in the natural environment. The report of the Group of Experts states explicitly on page 20 that this conclusion was probably valid for Thailand and the surrounding countries.

The findings of the United Nations Group of Experts concerning what it refers to as well-supported allegations of chemical attacks on the Karez in Afghanistan, that is an underground water canal, are also extremely revealing. The Group concludes on page 33 of its report that based on the accounts it had received, it was of the opinion that attacks on the Karez were not carried out by the use of high explosives or incendiary weapons but are consistent with the use of some form of harassing agent. The report adds that except for prolonged unconsciousness that was reported in some cases, the symptoms reported were similar to what would be expected from the use of a harassing agent in a confined space. These other symptoms that were reported included eye infections, respiratory difficulties, skin irritations and vomiting. The reported chemical agent used was described as a greenish liquid that reacted rapidly with water, resulting in the evolution of a gas.

(Mr. Arumugam, Singapore)

In the light of the evidence presented in the report, we can now understand why the occupying authorities in Afghanistan and Kampuchea, where chemical weapons have reportedly been used, have not permitted the United Nations Group of Experts to investigate and to conduct on-site verification, or otherwise, of the reports which it had received. Given these constraints, the conclusion of the Group in its report this year, that it could not disregard the circumstantial evidence suggestive of the possible use of some sort of toxic chemical substance in the regions concerned is all the more revealing and significant.

Mr. WAGENMAKERS (Netherlands): Today the First Committee is called upon to consider the report of the Group of Experts appointed by the Secretary-General to investigate the report on the alleged use of chemical weapons. I note in passing that the United States Department of State has recently issued an important report containing an update on chemical warfare in South-East Asia and Afghanistan, that is now distributed as document A/C.1/37/10, which my authorities will study carefully.

We listened with interest to what the representative of the United States had to say in this regard this morning.

The report under consideration, document A/37/259, is an impressive one. First of all, it displays the meticulous way the Group went about the execution of its task. This is an important fact to note, since it provides the scientific background against which the Group's final conclusions should be read.

With respect to substance the delegation of the Netherlands wishes to make the following general observation. The Group's mandate was limited to the alleged use of chemical weapons. For this very reason the reader will find that the Group had, so to say, to dismiss certain reports that should, in all likelihood, be ascribed to high explosive or incendiary "conventional" munitions.

At this point, I should like to dwell briefly and to restate the fundamental position of the Government of the Netherlands that any use of force in international relations should be condemned in all circumstances, except in self-defence, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter. We are distressed by the suffering caused by so-called conventional conflicts in all regions of the world. In all such cases we recognize that for those who were victimized there is no ultimate justification for bloodshed.

Why, then, is it that the General Assembly is concerning itself in particular with the alleged use of chemical weapons? The only legitimate answer - however unsatisfactory it may be - to that question is that the international community decided more than 50 years ago to outlaw the use of chemical and biological weapons as incompatible with the accepted norms of civilization. The community of nations has adopted two international instruments of importance and relevance to the subject matter: the Geneva Protocol of 1925 and the 1972 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. It can readily be regretted that, in doing so, international law has taken care of only one family of weaponry within the larger category of weapons of mass destruction. A modest attempt to restrain the use of barely less terrifying weaponry of the conventional type was made subsequently through the adoption of a United Nations Convention containing protocols on particularly cruel weaponry such as incendiary weapons. That Convention, however, is not yet in force and does not yet enjoy the undisputed authority of the rule of law that the prohibition of the use of chemical or biological weapons enjoys.

Thus, we may legitimately be selective in concentrating our concern here and now on chemical and biological weapons, for it serves the purpose of upholding the small amount of agreement that has so far been achieved in the field of arms limitation and disarmament. It is for this reason that we cannot be accused of acting in a discriminatory manner when we focus on reports of the use of chemical weapons.

The delegation of the Netherlands would at the same time like to stress that it by no means feels reassured when it reads in the report that certain phenomena have to be explained by the use of so-called conventional weapons, and that it feels even less at ease when certain consistent statements of witnesses - such as those on the "rapid decomposition of bodies" as cited in paragraphs 131 and 132 of the report - cannot easily be reconciled with the use of any known chemical agent at all.

The report is most affirmative on two allegations, in respect of which the circumstantial evidence could not be disregarded by the Group. One of these concerns the possible use of harassing agents in the underground water canals in Afghanistan. Details are given in paragraphs 119 to 122 of the report. Further

details can be found in the report of the United States Department of State. The concentrations used were apparently sufficiently high to inflict lethal effects on a number of victims under the circumstances prevailing. Notwithstanding the strong circumstantial evidence, the Group stops just short of declaring the case proven, because, while it can avail itself of witnesses, and whereas the accused has no alibi, the chemical agent used has not reached the Group in any palpable form.

The other example concerns the evidence suggestive of the possible use of some sort of toxic chemical substance in the area where the H'mong people live. On this question too the Group of Experts has been understandably cautious. It has carefully analyzed and, on important aspects, refuted a "critique prepared by experts" submitted by the Permanent Representative of the USSR in reaction to a report by the Department of State to the Congress of the United States of America; this "critique" purported to attribute the occurrence of trichothecene mycotoxins to natural origins (see paragraphs 51 to 57 of the report).

Conversely, the Group confirmed with respect to Thailand and surrounding countries the findings of the Canadian Government that naturally occurring diseases due to these toxins do not occur in those countries and that there are no detectable levels of mycotoxins in the natural environment. The Group confirmed another Canadian submission, of 25 November 1981, on the so-called Hmong incident, and judged the possibility of natural explanations of a report submitted by the United States on 20 May 1982 to be "extremely remote". Both submissions concluded that the statements and analytical results alike were compatible with the use of mycotoxins.

Why then could the Group not prove the use of trichothecene mycotoxins altogether? Because under prevailing constraints it could not possibly confirm the one missing element of proof: namely, the origin of samples the analysis of which had turned out to be positive but which the Group had not collected itself. Another definite problem was apparently the confirmation of the integrity of the so-called chain of custody of the samples gathered by the Group and others all the way from the location of their origin to the laboratory.

Technical and political difficulties - at least two States concerned refused any co-operation to the Group and would not admit it to their territories - precluded the United Nations from establishing unequivocally where the truth lies.

The active co-operation of the Government of the Netherlands with the work of the experts was not prompted by a desire to defame one or more States. On the contrary, the Government of the Netherlands is convinced that any doubts with respect to compliance with the international instruments in force should be allayed in view of the importance my Government attaches to further measures of arms limitation and disarmament, and for humanitarian reasons. Negotiations on further measures, such as a total ban on chemical weapons, cannot prosper in the absence of confidence in compliance with previous measures. Our humanitarian incentive is our desire to stop the gradual extermination of political and ethnic national groups by sinister and outlawed means of warfare.



(Mr. Wagenmakers, Netherlands)

As regards draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.79, the representative of the USSR though fit to cast doubts on the origin of that text as well as on the text of resolutions 35/144 C and 36/69 C. In fact, he suggested that those texts had been prepared elsewhere. This is, of course, a baseless allegation. I have stated the reasons why the Netherlands Government played an active role in this matter. The text of the draft resolution presented to the First Committee is the joint responsibility of the representatives of the sovereign States which sponsored draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.79, and no other.

My delegation is confident that the General Assembly will shortly adopt procedures with a view to assuring this aim in the future. This is our sincere hope.

We appreciate and respect the report of the Group of Experts, prepared under difficult circumstances, and we are therefore a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.79. We strongly hope that other delegations will likewise be guided by the motives I have mentioned and will therefore vote in favour of that draft resolution.

The CHAIRMAN: Before adjourning, I call on the Secretary of the Committee to make an announcement.

Mr. RATHORE (Secretary of the Committee): I should like to inform the Committee that the following countries have become sponsors of the following drafts: draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.73/Rev.2, Madagascar, Niger and Peru; draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.77, Niger; draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.78, Congo, Panama and Mali; draft resolution A/C.1/37/L.79, Spain and Turkey.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.