

(Mr. Lang, Austria)

document CD/CW/WP.372 - clearly demonstrates that challenge procedures should be kept simple in order to avoid undesirable delays during the inspection. The reason for "streamlining" them seems evident to us: by no means should a violator be allowed time that would help him to destroy or hide evidence of non-compliance. If this could not be guaranteed, the whole proceeding would then become highly detrimental to the aims and purposes of the Convention.

Certainly, abuses during inspection cannot be excluded, at least theoretically, from the very outset but we would like very much to point out that the issue of abuses is not at all specific to inspections in the field of chemical weapons. The possibility of abuse is inherent in all legal regimes - whether the regime of individual property law, company law, State constitutions or international organizations. We are very well aware that within the scope of the Convention on Chemical Weapons the abuses could be both of a political as well as of a more technical nature if we think of the possibility of industrial or military espionage. It goes therefore without saying that the possibility of abuse should be minimized, but fears about abuses should not lead to a verification regime that is not conducive to the effective deterrence of any prospective violator.

For very similar reasons, Austria takes a sceptical stance with regard to widening the scope of Article VI of the Convention. The future Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will necessarily dispose of a limited budget, even if it is generously funded. Hence, the Organization ought to concentrate its verification activities on more acute cases of alleged non-compliance. A perfect system of total control of all capable facilities would inevitably put a strain on the staff and its means which it would not be able to handle both from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view. If this were the case, the credibility of such a system would decrease even below a threshold of dissuasion.

Mr. President, please allow me at this stage to express a grateful word of thanks to Ambassador Brotodiningrat for having carried out consultations on the issue of "Old Chemical Weapons" and having subsequently produced an excellent paper, dated 20 December 1991, reflecting the various opinions on this subject. The Austrian view on this topic starts from the perception that in many cases it could be tackled as an environmental issue where particular care should be devoted to the serious hazards these so-called weapons are very likely to pose to men and nature. In this respect, the efforts of this Conference should only consider the issue of old and abandoned chemical weapons in so far as they constitute a threat to national and international security interests. We fear, however, that more detailed stipulations would pose insurmountable difficulties, given the very different historical reasons for which old and abandoned chemical weapons are to be found nowadays and given the different provisions in various peace treaties with regard to war material which has been left behind.

Austria, being a member of the Security Council since the beginning of 1991, knows very well in this context that the provisions of last year's Security Council resolution 687 on a permanent cease-fire in the Iraq-Kuwait conflict are not directly comparable to the necessities of a future Convention