

(Mr. Friedersdorf, United States of America)

The Soviet Union, in the mean time, was amassing a formidable chemical warfare capability. The Soviet Union has by far the largest CW stockpile in the world. Further, the Soviet Union has an even greater edge in the number of military personnel, chemical units, decontamination units and training facilities. This Soviet chemical warfare capability is far greater than would be required for solely defensive purposes. It is this threat that prompted the United States to take action.

Throughout the unilateral Soviet build-up, the Soviet Union reacted to inquiries about its possession of chemical weapons either with silence or with denial. On 29 May 1986, the Soviet Union denied that it possessed chemical weapons, then, a few months later, announced it had ceased production of chemical weapons. The Soviet official who publicly proclaimed that the Soviet Union possessed no chemical weapon stocks subsequently had the contradictory assignment of displaying for the delegates of this Conference 19 different types of Soviet chemical weapons at Shikhany. And now we are told that the Soviet Union has as much as 50,000 tons of these chemical weapons they denied possessing only 19 months earlier. The decision to modernize the United States' chemical weapons stockpile was made long before these recent revelations, and that decision was predicated on the CW threat as the United States assessed it. These Soviet revelations buttress the wisdom of that decision, and contribute to our resolve to continue the rehabilitation of our ability to retaliate against a CW attack.

We know the Soviet Union has a decided advantage over the United States in chemical warfare capability, and even if the most optimistic forecasts for completing a chemical weapons convention are borne out, the Soviet Union would continue to enjoy that advantage, in all probability, for the remainder of this century. The United States also shares the concern of others regarding chemical weapons proliferation. We are unwilling to face a growing CW threat with a diminishing retaliatory capability.

The Soviet Union also knows that the binary programme does not mark the expansion of the United States' chemical weapons stockpile. By the very terms of the legislation authorizing the binary programme, and as certified by the President, every binary chemical weapon produced must be offset by the destruction of a serviceable unitary artillery shell from the existing arsenal. The number of munitions destroyed pursuant to this destruction plan, which, I repeat, is mandated by law, will be several times the number of binary munitions to be produced. Ultimately, all unitary munitions will be destroyed. This destruction plan is ready now to be implemented.

It is also significant that the United States has been completely candid about this modernization programme, and no one who has read the ample public reports and followed the legislative process of this programme could seriously believe that the United States intends to maintain anything more than a small, safe, modernized CW retaliatory capability.