

(Mr. Friedersdorf, United States of America)

One of the most difficult and sensitive issues is certainly the problem of ensuring undiminished security during the transition period, that is, during the 10-year period in which chemical weapons and their production facilities are being destroyed. As a country that has maintained a deterrent chemical weapons capability as an important aspect of its overall security, the United States considers it essential that, as this capability is phased out, our security, and that of our allies, remain undiminished. We certainly share the concerns expressed by others on this subject. We believe that it is high time to deal directly with these matters, in order to determine the nature and extent of the problem and to exchange views on how the issue may be resolved to the satisfaction of all. We welcome the plan to discuss these concerns, which could affect several articles of the convention, in the inter-sessional discussions.

Another issue that the Committee needs to come to grips with is how to deal with the possible development of new agents. This issue has been raised recently by the delegations of the Soviet Union, Italy, the United Kingdom and Czechoslovakia. We share the view that the provisions of the draft convention need to be scrutinized carefully to make sure that they deal as effectively as possible with the potential threat from new agents. Let us look at the real issue, though, not at a shadow of it. Our impression is that the concern expressed by some delegations about laboratory synthesis of small quantities of schedule [1] chemicals is really a concern about development of new agents. The Ad hoc Committee has had months of fruitless debate over proposals for declaration of such laboratories. We share the concerns expressed by the Swedish delegation on 13 September about these proposals. So far the Committee has not tackled the underlying problem, the new agent issue, which has been allowed to block progress on other issues related to schedule [1]. Our delegation believes that those issues should be settled promptly and that the Committee should then focus on the new agent issue separately.

The third key issue I want to raise today is what approach to take to challenge inspection. Intensive consultations held by Ambassador Ekéus during the 1987 session demonstrated clearly that, although there is broad support for a mandatory régime, serious reservations still exist on the part of some delegations. Recognizing that a continued head-on approach would not be productive and that other aspects of the challenge inspection régime have an important role in shaping views of delegations, the Chairman of Working Group C, Mr. Numata, perceptively has focused work this year in these other areas. Under his patient and skilful leadership the discussions have been very productive, and have led to important additions to the "rolling text". We believe that this successful work will facilitate resolution of the central issue of the mandatory nature of challenge inspections when the discussions focus on it again. In this connection, I would also like to express appreciation for the recent working paper on challenge inspection procedures by the German Democratic Republic. This very useful paper is the latest in a series of significant contributions from the German Democratic Republic, and I might add, on a personal note, that our delegation regrets very sincerely the departure of Ambassador Harald Rose of the German Democratic Republic and his important contributions to the Conference will be long remembered.