

(Mr. Lineham, New Zealand)

More recently the Government took further steps in order to limit the possibility that chemical manufacturers or suppliers in New Zealand could be used indirectly to contribute to the proliferation or use of chemical weapons. Since 1984 we have controlled the export of chemicals that could be used in the manufacture of chemical weapons, and have warned our industry of other chemicals that could be used in that category.

Notwithstanding all the action that we and other countries have already taken, there is no substitute for the successful negotiation in this Conference, of a treaty imposing a comprehensive prohibition on the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons.

A comprehensive convention would reinforce the existing international legal prohibition on the use of chemical weapons. It would stop any further proliferation of chemical weapons. It would provide for the total elimination, over as short a time as possible, of chemical weapons and production facilities. And it would also build confidence and enhance mutual security through measures to ensure the observance of its prohibitions.

It is encouraging that the atmosphere in the chemical-weapons negotiations this year has been both reasonably positive and constructive. This has undoubtedly been helped by the agreement of President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev, in their Joint Statement on 21 November 1985, to accelerate efforts to conclude an effective and verifiable convention. The bilateral talks which the United States and the Soviet Union have been holding as a complement to the multilateral negotiations may also have helped. This Conference may never have had as good an opportunity to make rapid progress on a chemical weapons treaty as it now has.

Progress has been made this year in a heightened spirit of commitment. We understand, full well, the enormous complexity of the negotiations on this subject. However it is important to match expressions of good intention with agreement on treaty language. That said, we do welcome points of agreement when they emerge, notably the language agreed last year on a provision which would unequivocally prohibit the use of chemical weapons.

As an observer, New Zealand has not been as close to the details of the negotiations as others involved in the work of the ad hoc committee. We would, however, offer some observations of a more general kind.

It is possible for negotiations to become bogged down in the discussion of detail. A comprehensive prohibition on chemical weapons requires, admittedly, the consideration of much detail and those negotiating must be vigilant to ensure that important details are not overlooked but also be awake to the possibility that some difficulties are not, in reality, central to the negotiations. Other speakers have referred to certain key issues in the negotiations and we would agree that it is on such issues that the negotiations should concentrate.

Much work has been done on lists of chemicals that pose a risk of diversion for the production of chemical weapons. Consideration is being