

(Ms. Wilde, New Zealand)

In our view the regional seminar on chemical weapons and the Government-Industry Conference held in Australia last year were particularly useful initiatives. The Government-Industry Conference heard the first collective statement by the world's chemical industry giving a commitment to assist in bringing about a total chemical weapons ban.

We believe that finishing work on the "rolling text" on chemical weapons at this session is the CD's most pressing task if the Conference is to retain credibility.

Arms control in chemical weapons has also highlighted another problem: arms disposal. The destruction of chemical weapons is not easy. It is in everyone's interests that it be done in any environmentally safe manner. This issue is causing some anxiety to Pacific nations, which have long protested at the use of their region for nuclear weapons testing in which they want no part. Now countries of my region are watching carefully the proposals made for the destruction of chemical weapons there. Small Pacific islands may seem remote from the huge continents of the world but, together with the Pacific Ocean, they are the homes and life-support systems of the many peoples of the region. We do not want the delicate ecosystem damaged any further by new intrusions.

Despite the importance of chemical weapons, the focus of the Conference cannot remain that subject alone. The Conference's work on other areas must be advanced. I am particularly concerned at the prolonged inability of the Conference to agree on a mandate for a committee to debate item 1 - a nuclear test ban.