

(Mr. Friedersdorf, United States)

At the midpoint of the summer part of the session, the atmosphere has somewhat changed. I have begun to hear from a number of delegations that morale is low, and that people are pessimistic regarding the negotiating pace, and unhappy at the amount of time required to achieve a convention. I am concerned that such a perspective will have a negative impact on work remaining to be done. I believe that unexpectedly rapid developments in the spring raised unrealistic expectations that a chemical weapons convention would be in hand by the end of this year. This unfounded optimism masked what remained to be done.

This summer, as the negotiations have delved more deeply into key aspects of a chemical weapons ban, new issues surfaced. Additionally, delegations have begun to grapple with some of the difficult issues which had in the past been set aside for future discussion to allow work on some less controversial areas to proceed. These are natural developments in any negotiation as work progresses from one level to the next.

I do not entirely share the pessimism expressed by others. We have been doing some constructive work this summer. More delegations are participating actively in the discussions. Difficult issues previously put aside are being addressed, and this is a reason for encouragement. However, no one should expect the negotiation of an effective chemical weapons convention to be an easy task. It is a complex undertaking in which elaboration of certain details is of great significance. To have an effective convention, we must thoroughly think through the issues, work out our differences and develop the necessary detail. We must, throughout this process, keep our focus on what we are trying to achieve -- not on artificial deadlines that could only yield a worthless agreement, but on a convention which will provide us with security and a true sense of confidence that the threat of chemical warfare will be removed.

This effort requires constructive suggestions, not polemics. We need ideas, not rhetoric. In this spirit, I would like to respond to some comments made before this Conference on 2 July by the distinguished representative of the Soviet Union, Ambassador Nazarkin.

The statement of 2 July mischaracterized my own plenary statement of 30 June to assert that the United States is not committed to the completion of an effective, verifiable ban on chemical weapons as rapidly as possible. Let me reassure all of the delegations to the Conference that the United States remains committed to this goal. We introduced a comprehensive draft convention in 1984 and have contributed numerous papers and proposals since then to help advance the negotiations. However, development of a comprehensive chemical weapons ban requires careful work and consideration, and we should not and will not be pressed to proceed hastily at the expense of ensuring the convention's effectiveness.

I was disappointed by the critical Soviet remarks about the United States invitation to visit the chemical weapons destruction facility at Tooele, Utah,