

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

Chemical weapons should never be used and thus the case for their complete elimination and their non-production is absolute, and that case expands whenever we hear of the use of chemical weapons, as we regrettably have within the last 24 hours. The work which has been proceeding in the Conference towards this end is work of great importance; we all have an interest in its early and successful completion. Work on this Convention raises the fundamental question of the role of verification within arms control agreements. Because of the stakes at issue, an effective universal chemical weapons convention will need a level of verification which provides full confidence that the objectives of the convention are being met. We all know that there is, at present, an argument about what that level and nature of verification should be, but it is my Government's conviction that we can settle this argument.

What is required for this result is both, the removal from the work on the convention of political contention which has little if any relevance to the technical problems which need to be solved, and the emergence of real determination, real will, to bring this convention to an early and successful conclusion. It has been proposed that the Conference should increase the priority attention it has previously given to the chemical weapons problem so that a convention may be concluded this year. Australia supports this approach. Having said this, I want to record that we do not believe that it is beyond our capacity to put extra effort and resources into our work on chemical weapons and at the same time carry out serious and detailed work on other important items on our agenda. I referred a moment ago to the necessary political will in support of our work on chemical weapons. Australia has that will and holds the view that if all of us at this table truly want to bring this convention into existence we can do so, and can do so quickly.