

(Mr. Wegener, Federal Republic of Germany)

the part of the United States delegation on a crucial issue of the chemical weapons convention allow us to sharpen our focus on the key decisions negotiators will have to take. The document will undoubtedly stimulate a dialogue between the United States, the Soviet Union and other interested delegations on the key provisions of an international verification system and will hopefully facilitate a narrowing of differences.

Last year my delegation, together with others, formulated a certain number of questions designed to clarify those parts of the Soviet "Basic provisions" document which relate to international verification issues. While our patience has been somewhat taxed in waiting for a satisfactory response, we are pleased that replies to our queries are now imminent. They will certainly fertilize our further work. We continue to hope that the Soviet Union, pursuing further the promising course on which it had embarked in its Basic provisions document, will soon come to the insight that an obligatory on-site inspection clause in the case of on-challenge cases will be an indispensable feature of the future convention. As regards such on-site inspections, my Government reiterates its full preparedness to contribute to the rapid success of the chemical weapons negotiations and to make its territory available for international controls like those it already practises in connection with its unilateral renunciation of chemical weapons of 1954.

Another important proposal that is certain to have a substantial bearing on our negotiations is contained in the statement of Ambassador Issraelyan of Tuesday (22 February 1983). The suggestion that a non-use provision be incorporated into the scope of the prohibition of a future convention is of the highest interest to my delegation. A number of factual and legal arguments why the scope of the prohibition should be so defined has been adduced by the Soviet delegation. My authorities have already initiated a thorough examination of the Soviet proposal, and I hope that I will soon be in a position to provide more substantive comments on it. One of the criteria which my Government will apply in analysing the legal complexities which the proposal entails is whether it is likely to render the future convention, including its verification provisions, more effective.

In the last months, and specifically at this session, several proposals have been formulated for the creation of chemical-weapon-free zones in Europe. These proposals come in two variants: some speak of a narrower chemical-weapon-free zone covering only a strip of territory in central Europe, while others call for a zone comprising all of Europe. Objections against the former, more limited concept may be even greater and come to mind even more readily, but in principle both concepts appear to offer similar problems. On 19 November 1982, my delegation had the opportunity to spell out some of our doubts on these concepts before the First Committee of the General Assembly. The fact that the idea of a chemical-weapon-free zone has nevertheless been reiterated with some insistence prompts me to clarify our viewpoint further.

In the first place, we should see the negligible military relevance of such zones. Chemical ammunition is easily transported and can readily be reintroduced into a free zone, if indeed it has not remained hidden there in the first place.