

(Mr. Friedersdorf, United States of America)

Attracting the attention of non-member States is very important. But it should not be forgotten that active participation by members of the Conference is even more important. If a truly global convention is to be achieved, negotiators must hear and take into account the views of a wide variety of States. Toward this end, there needs to be more vigorous discussion at all levels. We would encourage other delegations, particularly those neutral and non-aligned delegations who have not done so recently, to present their views both in the plenary sessions and in the negotiating working groups. Active participation in the negotiations is seen as an important expression of commitment.

Another important form of commitment is support for the 1925 Geneva Protocol. That agreement provides the foundation for negotiation of a complete ban on chemical weapons. All of us must do everything possible to prevent further erosion of the norm it contains. For States that are parties to the Geneva Protocol that means taking action to stop the continuing violations that have been found. In this connection, I wish to inform the Conference that the United States is gravely concerned over the reports of Iraqi use of chemical weapons against its Kurdish population. We have stressed this concern, and the potential impact on United States-Iraqi relations, to the Government of Iraq at a very high level. The United States has been consulting with United Nations officials, Security Council members, and others on the need for an impartial investigation by a team of experts.

States that are not party to the Protocol should accede to it - as suggested by the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, Sir Geoffrey Howe, during the third special session of the United Nations devoted to disarmament. Regrettably, as noted by Ambassador Solesby in her plenary statement on 16 August, some members of the Conference have still to become parties to the Protocol.

Greater openness is also a form of commitment. We welcome the data that have been presented this summer with the aim of facilitating the negotiations. I am referring particularly to the data provided in the statement by Ambassador Loeis of Indonesia on 17 July, and in the working papers from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. The United States delegation also presented new data to the Conference. None the less, much more information is needed, particularly from socialist and neutral/non-aligned delegations. For example, nearly one fourth of the members of the Conference have apparently not yet even indicated whether or not they possess chemical weapons. A number of countries with known significant chemical industries have not yet indicated whether they have industrial facilities subject to the convention's monitoring provisions. We urge countries that have not yet provided these kinds of general information to do so in the near future.

It is probably human nature to want to avoid difficult and sensitive issues. But avoiding the hard issues in the negotiations will only prolong efforts to complete the draft convention. Instead, the Conference needs to identify the real obstacles to an agreement and to deal with them. To stimulate this process, I would like to highlight three issues that the United States delegation believes are central to the success of the negotiations.