

(Mr. Bush, United States)

All forms of warfare are terrible. But these weapons are particularly to be feared because of the human suffering that they inflict. That is why the civilized world has condemned their use. Sadly, mankind has, nonetheless, had repeated demonstrations of the cruelty and horror wrought by the use of these weapons. And now, chemical and toxin weapons are being used in Afghanistan and south-east Asia in violation of international law and international arms control agreements. These violations are made all the worse by the fact that the victims do not have the means either to deter the attacks against them or to defend or protect themselves against these weapons.

The United States presented conclusive evidence to the world community of the facts surrounding the use of chemical and toxin weapons. Others have presented evidence as well. We did not come to these conclusions seeking confrontation or rashly, but only after the most exhaustive study. The implications that flow from the use of these weapons are so serious that many would prefer to disbelieve them, simply to ignore them. In our view we just have to face the facts.

The world's progress toward more civilized relations among States has been doggedly slow, and beset at every turn by fears, ambitions, rivalry among nations. We cannot, therefore, allow the progress which we have made in civilization to be destroyed. To do so would be to begin a relentless slide back to a new dark age of mindless barbarism. This is what is at stake here, and this is what we must prevent.

What must now be done? We have called upon the Soviet Union and its allies to stop immediately the illegal use of these weapons. I strongly repeat that call here today. And I urge the Soviet Union, and all other members of the Committee, to join the United States in negotiating a complete and effective and verifiable ban on the development, production, stockpiling and transfer of chemical weapons, a ban that will ensure that these horrors can never occur again.

A complete, effective and verifiable ban on chemical weapons is really long overdue. My Government, therefore, would like to see the work of this Committee accelerated, and negotiations undertaken on a treaty to eliminate the threat that is posed by chemical weapons.

A number of key issues, of course, must be resolved if we are to be successful in negotiating such a treaty. In the coming days, our delegation will present to this Committee a new document that contains our detailed views on the content of a convention that we believe could effectively — more specifically, verifiably — eliminate the chemical weapons threat. We undertake this initiative with the aim of further advancing the work of the Committee, and to encourage contributions and co-operation from others as well.