

(Mr. Evans, Australia)

responsibility, the Conference is engaged in an undertaking of immense significance in the negotiation of a comprehensive and universal convention on chemical weapons. The improvement in international relations which is a feature of our times does present us with an opportunity to conclude the CW convention. This is an opportunity which cannot and must not be lost. All of us are united in our abhorrence of these weapons and our commitment to ensure that they are banned for all time. Through a universal convention, the Conference will make an historic contribution to international security and stability. The Paris Conference, held in January, provided the impetus for the negotiating process this year. The collective call by 149 States to intensify the chemical weapons convention negotiations, and to conclude the convention at the earliest date, could not have been clearer. We appreciate very greatly, may I say, the energetic and creative approach of the Chairman of the CW Committee, Ambassador Morel of France, whom I had the pleasure of meeting earlier this afternoon, in injecting the international community's expression of commitment at the Paris Conference into the work of this Committee. Under his leadership, the Committee has the prospect of recording real progress this year.

Others who have addressed this plenary in recent times have asserted that the final text of the CW convention is within reach. I share that conviction. I am convinced that, with a concerted and sustained effort by all members of this Conference, the text of the convention can be finalized in the very near future. As a result of developments in recent years, most of the major conceptual issues, and many of the details, have been resolved. This has been achieved through the active participation of the entire membership of the Conference, which is essential if the convention is to have universal validity. A perusal of the "rolling text" reveals that a considerable amount of technical detail apparently still awaits resolution. However, this is not a reason for prolonging the negotiation process, which has now been going on for many years. Rather, it is up to us to address the outstanding issues rigorously - to look constructively for solutions that will bring about the early conclusion of an effective convention. The problem posed by chemical weapons is serious; a convention is needed without delay; this Conference has a responsibility to provide it.

The achievement of a global chemical weapons convention is one of the Australian Government's principal disarmament objectives. Our commitment to that objective is reflected in our active participation, over many years, in the negotiations in Geneva and our technical contribution to that process through, for example, the conduct of national trial inspections. An area of the convention with which Australia has been particularly associated in recent times, as you have been aware, has been those provisions which concern the interrelationship between States parties and their national chemical industries. This is of course a crucial aspect of the convention. It is imperative that the right balances be struck in the text - between the need to ensure that chemical weapons are not being produced by the chemical industry of a State party; the right of States parties to be able to engage in activities not prohibited by the convention; and for chemical industries to be able to operate without overburdensome monitoring or intrusion.