

tion has, I understand, said that no such imbalance was intended and that it is ready to work with others to ensure that its verification proposal apply fairly to differing economic and political systems. I suggest to the delegations most concerned to address the difficulties which they see in the United States draft by proposing alternative arrangements which are equally effective but do not suffer from the problems they see in the present draft. This would be an act of positive negotiation, and such proposals would be considered.

I should like to mention briefly Australia's contribution to verification. In the field of chemical weapons, Australia has long been conscious of the fact that the 1925 Protocol lacks verification provisions. For this reason we supported the General Assembly resolution initiated by France (37/98D) inviting the Secretary-General to establish a list of experts and laboratories on which we could draw to investigate allegations of the use of chemical weapons.

Following adoption of the resolution, Australia nominated the Materials Research Laboratory of the Australian Defence Department to the Secretary-General's list. We are now making plans to expand the capabilities of that laboratory to contribute such expert services to international verification of reports of use of chemical weapons. Indeed, even before the Secretary-General had completed the task of implementing resolution no. 37/98D, he had occasion to establish an investigatory team of specialists to investigate reports of the use of such chemicals in the Iran-Iraq war. Australia contributed an expert to that mission. By virtue of our geographical location, Australia is in a position to make a unique contribution to verification and information gathering related to the implementation of nuclear-arms control.

The arms-control agreements being observed by the United States and the Soviet Union rely on the national technical means of those two Powers, especially on information-gathering satellites. More than ever, information-gathering satellites make an essential contribution to the stability of the strategic balance between East and West and they do this by providing a basis for confidence in the observance of arms-control agreements which can lead to significant arms reductions. The preservation of that capability is vital to all. It is in fact a necessary prerequisite to arms reduction and disarmament. In this context I note, in particular, the section of the recent French initiative on outer space arms control which calls in part for "prevention of destabilizing military developments without affecting military activities (in space) that contribute to strategic stability, and those which may be instrument in controlling disarmament agreements".

In similar spirit I would suggest today as an urgent items for the Conference on Disarmament, in its exploration of the issues relevant to arms control in outer space, consideration of the possibility of measures to protect from attack all satellites (early warning, communications and the like) which contribute to the preservation of strategic stability and which can be instrumental in monitoring disarmament agreements. I would also suggest that the same protection be extended to the ground stations which are essential to the operation of these satellites. For the present, I hope that the idea will commend itself to the Conference as a potentially important confidence-building measure. It directly supports the implementation of present arms-control agreements and future disarmament agreements, and above all, it will contribute to the maintenance of stability, until the required disarmament agreements are made and put into effect.

In relation to the question of a nuclear-test ban, Australia has participated actively in the continuing work of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts. We are involved in the co-ordination of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts' global seismic experiment. Subject to budgetary decisions, which I can confidentially acknowledge have been successful, we are preparing to expand Australia's own seismic detection capabilities and ability to contribute to a global network in support of a CTB.