(Mr. Tornudd, Finland)

Success in concluding a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons has too long eluded the Conference. In the meantime, interest in new forms of chemical weapons is growing. Reports appear of the proliferation of chemical-weapon manufacturing capacity. And most disturbing of all, chemical weapons have been actually used, as documented by the United Nations team in connection with the Iran-Iraq conflict. All these developments make the prohibition of this particularly insidious weapon more urgent a task than ever.

The necessary technical groundwork for a ban has been largely laid. Much of the legal language in terms of the outlines of a convention already exists. The political impetus to a chemical-weapon ban given by the two major Powers at their summit meeting should make a difference. In his message to the Conference on Disarmament, the Secretary-General of the United Nations concludes from this evidence that -- and I quote -- "it seems reasonable to expect that the remaining obstacles can be overcome during 1986". The Government of Finland shares this expectation.

The remaining obstacles are none the less difficult. One of them concerns the definition of high-risk chemical compounds and of the corresponding régimes such compounds must be submitted to in order to ensure their solely non-military use. It is important that the system finally arrived at is both effectively verifiable and sufficiently realistic. All parties must feel confident that the régime in question is credible, that it can be complied with. At the same time, it must avoid unduly hampering the operations of civilian chemical industry.

Another major issue is the verification provisions of the convention, particularly the régime to be applied to the various verification tasks, such as the provisions relating to challenge inspection. It is clear that effective verification requires both on-site inspections and the use of modern monitoring equipment.

Automatic monitoring equipment for chemical-weapon verification purposes has been studied and tested within the Finnish chemical-weapon verification project since 1972. The project seeks to develop verification methods that would cover all the verification requirements under the convention: non-production, destruction of existing stocks as well as detection of alleged use. The most recent findings will again be incorporated in a "Blue Book" and presented to the Conference at the summer part of its session this year.

Although verification by technical means only does not in itself suffice to provide the necessary assurance of compliance in all cases, it can be helpful as a complement to on-site inspection. One could also give consideration to a combination of different methods incorporating different degrees of intrusiveness.