

(Mr. Fields, United States)

First, let us not waste time and energy on procedural struggles. The chemical weapons Working Group should be re-established and resume its negotiations immediately. It is the responsibility of the western delegations to nominate this year's Chairman. As you know, Ambassador McPhail has agreed to assume the Chair under the rotation system. Consultations on other procedural issues could be conducted simultaneously. Let us not hold up this vital work while we attempt to sort out other problems.

Secondly, let us focus on the tough issues, which are the key to real progress towards a convention. Some may argue that progress could be made by dealing with the "easier" issues, or by drafting treaty texts on matters already agreed on in principle. But this would be a fruitless exercise if the key verification issues cannot be resolved. We will not support a diversion of effort away from the real obstacles to a convention. Before the drafting of actual treaty text can be productive, an acceptable verification and compliance framework must first be negotiated.

Thirdly, the chemical weapons Working Group should be allowed to proceed at its own pace. It should determine its own schedule and not be dependent on the schedules of other groups. It is to be expected in any serious negotiation that during some periods frequent meetings will be needed, while in other periods very informal consultations and work within delegations will be most productive. The Working Group should have the flexibility to adopt whatever schedule will best facilitate its work.

Fourthly, the very useful innovation of contact groups should be retained and refined to permit related issues to be dealt with together. For example, a method needs to be found to deal simultaneously with all questions related to stockpiles -- declarations, destruction and verification. These issues are so closely linked that they cannot be resolved in isolation.

Fifthly, more effective ways must be found to make use of technical expertise. Experience has shown that close interaction between technical experts and diplomats is essential. While there will continue to be a need for discussions which are primarily technical, the highest priority should be given to integrating political and technical considerations, perhaps within the framework of the contact groups. As part of the work of these groups, specific periods should be planned, well in advance, for combined political-technical discussion of issues on which technical advice is particularly important.

In closing, I want to stress again what Vice-President Bush said a few days ago in this room. The goal of my Government is to eliminate the threat of chemical warfare by achieving a complete and verifiable ban on chemical weapons as soon as possible. We urge every member of this Committee to join the United States in intensive negotiations to ensure that the possibility of chemical warfare is eliminated for ever.