

In Geneva, progress towards a chemical weapons ban has been made in recent years, as the negotiators have moved closer to agreement on the definition of chemical weapons and on procedures for their destruction. Detailed provisions have been elaborated on the verification of declarations of existing stocks, and the closure and elimination of production facilities, while useful work has also been done on the guidelines for an international inspectorate. On 11 August 1987 the USSR tabled a proposal on compulsory on-site inspection which came close to that put forth by the United States in 1984. The Soviet proposal accepted the concept of challenge inspection of all chemical weapon facilities with no right of refusal. It also provided for the entry of inspection teams within 48 hours of a challenge (previously the Soviets had insisted on the right to veto requests for challenge inspection, and did not require that inspections be so expedient).

On 3 October 1987, the representatives of forty-five nations visited a Soviet chemical weapons facility at Shikhany, on the Volga River south of Moscow. The foreign delegations were shown 19 different types of chemical munitions, as well as a mobile complex used for the destruction of chemical weapons. Bilateral talks between the superpowers also resulted in arrangements whereby the United States would visit a Soviet facility devoted to the destruction of chemical weapons at Chapayesk, while the Soviets would visit an American chemical weapon facility at Tooele, Utah. During the Tooele visit, which took place 19-20 November 1987, Soviet military experts viewed various elements of the United States stockpile. The American visit to the Soviet facility is scheduled to take place this year.

On 26 December 1987, the Soviet Union declared the size of its chemical weapons stockpile as being no more than 50,000 tons of poisonous agent,