

(Mr. Imai, Japan)

With regard to the prohibition of chemical weapons, thanks to the intensive deliberations conducted under the able guidance of Ambassador McPhail of Canada, as well as to the co-operation of experts over a long period, a clearer picture is emerging indicating various issues involved, including in particular their technical aspects.

As an advocate of the early conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons as an important subject which may be second only to that of nuclear disarmament, Japan is encouraged by the positive outcome of the discussions held last year and expresses its strong desire for further progress in our work this year. The convention to be agreed upon is of a comprehensive character, not limited to specific regions, and aims at the complete destruction of existing stocks of chemical weapons as well as the prohibition of the development, production and use of chemical weapons on a global basis.

Of these items, we believe that the starting point is the destruction of the existing chemical-weapon agents. On this issue, an important contribution has been made on the basis of past experiences by several countries such as Indonesia, the Netherlands, Great Britain and the United States. Last year the United States placed their chemical-weapon destruction facility in the State of Utah at the disposal of a workshop in which many countries took part with great interest, and the Federal Republic of Germany has already announced its plan to hold a similar workshop this year. My delegation wishes to express its appreciation for the precious efforts undertaken by these States.

In the light of these developments, the international community will be justified in its expectation of an early agreement in substance on the destruction of chemical weapons. The issue of destruction has been a subject of intensive discussions in the Working Group last year as well as at the beginning of this year. In addition, we welcome the indication by the United States recently that it will submit a draft convention to this forum. My delegation hopes that intensive discussion and elaboration will make further progress and lead to a possible agreement on this most important issue of the prohibition of chemical weapons even within this year. Japan will, of course, continue to participate in this process in a positive and concrete manner.