

(Mr. Beesley, Canada)

It will be recalled that I presented the Canadian position on substantive aspects of each of these items in my plenary statement of 4 February 1986. Today I wish to address the kind of concrete action which the Conference on Disarmament could, and in our view should, take on each of these items, taking into account that on each subject the Conference is at a different stage of consideration, deliberation or negotiation.

On item 4, chemical weapons, it is quite clear that the Conference is more advanced in its work on the comprehensive convention on chemical weapons than on any other item on its agenda. Thus, it is encouraging, albeit not surprising, that we have been able to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons on which the Conference had agreed at the end of our last session. This should, nevertheless, not be grounds for special satisfaction on our part. When we began this session over a month ago there was a heightened sense of expectation about the prospects for progress in these negotiations. Recent reports of renewed chemical-weapons use, which have led the United Nations Secretary-General to initiate an investigation, should have reinforced our concern to make early and urgent progress.

In my statement of 4 February, we gave notice of our intention to submit documents intended to advance the negotiation of a comprehensive chemical-weapons treaty. I wish now to inform the Conference that the Canadian document entitled Handbook for the Investigation of Allegations of the Use of Chemical or Biological Weapons has been submitted today to the secretariat for distribution to delegations. As I pointed out earlier, this working document identifies procedures, equipment and standard formats to help ensure that the findings of an investigation of alleged chemical weapons use would be as conclusive, convincing, objective and impartial as possible. It reflects Canadian experience and expertise, but also recognizes and benefits from important contributions by several other countries involved in extensive research in this area, particularly Sweden, Norway and Finland.

As stated in the introduction to the document, "such a handbook is both useful today in the context of the existing authority of the Secretary-General under resolution 37/98 D or under the Charter of the United Nations, and it should also be of use in the future in the context of a verification régime that would be part of a future chemical weapons convention as it is currently being negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament." The Handbook, as some delegations are aware, has already been submitted to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in New York.