

(Mr. Friedersdorf, United States)

not proven to be the case. On almost all issues examined in our working groups, there is such wide divergence of views that consensus seems as distant as it was before the Paris Conference. It would be overly pessimistic to attribute this state of affairs to any general retrenchment, although we have not witnessed much flexibility in positions taken by various delegations.

We were enjoined in the Final Declaration of the Paris Conference to redouble our efforts to achieve a chemical weapons ban, and we have endeavoured to do that. Under the guidance of our energetic and capable Ad hoc Committee Chairman, Ambassador Pierre Morel, we have maintained a fast pace as we addressed a large number of important issues which affect the national interests of all delegations. It seems to our delegation that States have been preoccupied with preserving their own positions, and less concerned with reconciling their views with those of others. We would hope that the forthcoming pause in our negotiations will enable all delegations to catch their breath and reassess their approach to these issues, with a view toward compromise and a convergence of views.

Our delegation is concerned, however, about the disquieting possibility that, while all delegations earnestly may want a chemical weapons ban, they may not want the same chemical weapons ban. That is, we are concerned that there are fundamental aspects of this convention upon which there is no agreement, and no willingness to compromise.

I will limit my remarks today to only one of those issues - the issue of mandatory, short-notice, on-site inspection. This issue has loomed in the background as something too hard to confront head on - something to be skirted as we have attempted to resolve other, less provoking issues. But, if we are to complete a verification régime for the convention, this issue cannot be avoided. Mandatory, short-notice, on-site inspection is the linchpin of such a verification régime, and until we all have acknowledged that fact, there will be no firm foundation for the resolution of other verification issues.

Consider the activity of Working Group 1 on the critical issue of verification of non-production of chemical weapons. We have been unable to make progress in this area despite the commendable stewardship of the Working Group Chairman, Mr. Lüdeking of the Federal Republic of Germany. This lack of progress is not attributable to a lack of effort. Many delegations have addressed the concept of a "verification gap", and I am sure other delegations also have carefully considered this topic. The Federal Republic of Germany and, more recently, the United Kingdom, have tabled papers offering proposals designed to fill this so-called gap.

Although our delegation is not convinced there is such a gap, we willingly participated in the examination of this important topic, because the United States has been particularly concerned about civil facilities that are capable of producing chemical weapons agents or key precursors, but which would not be declared under present provisions of the "rolling text". After several months' work on this subject, however, our delegation is convinced that we are approaching the question of the so-called "verification gap" from the wrong direction, and I will explain what I mean.