

(Mr. Lowitz, United States)

As I noted, the joint statement of 21 November also addressed the issue that clearly is of most urgency for the Conference on Disarmament at this time: a comprehensive and verifiable global ban on the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons. Mr. Gorbachev's statement of 15 January also addressed the chemical weapons negotiations, and we look forward to the elaboration of his remarks by the delegation of the Soviet Union in the negotiations in the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. It is important at this stage that the possibilities suggested by Mr. Gorbachev be translated into a clearer picture of Soviet views. We also seek a clear response to the detailed proposals contained in the United States draft convention CD/500, which has been on the table in this Conference for almost two years. With such responses from the Soviet Union, we hope it will be possible to speed up our work. Thus far the situation has been one in which, on many issues, but in particular on verification, it has appeared that the United States was being invited to negotiate with itself. This is clearly not a productive path.

My delegation very much hopes that it will be possible to advance our work on the chemical weapons convention swiftly during this session. Ambassador Turbanski of Poland is to be commended for patiently guiding the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons in its 1985 session. We pledge our full support to Ambassador Cromartie of the United Kingdom as he assumes his duties as Chairman of this Committee during 1986.

We look for progress on the numerous issues which await resolution in the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons. We attach particular importance to the following issues: the important problem of ensuring that chemical weapons will not be produced in the civilian industry; the elimination of chemical weapons facilities; and the matter of resolving questions about compliance, including by challenge inspection. Progress in the Committee is needed on all these issues in parallel. It might seem easier to postpone resolution of the difficult issues, including verification, to a later time, and to make progress on the less difficult matters. But such an approach would be misleading. It would create a false impression that sufficient momentum had been generated to sweep all obstacles aside in the interests of concluding an agreement. The shortest path to our agreed objective lies rather in a candid recognition from the outset that verification issues, and in particular the matter of challenge inspection, need to be settled sooner rather than later. There should be no mistake about the views of the United States on challenge inspection. They remain as I described them in my statement of 22 August last: a fundamental need for an effective convention is mandatory, short-notice challenge inspection provisions to complement its routine verification provisions. The issue is the effectiveness of the provisions in satisfying security concerns, not specific language.

Within the structure of the common outline of a chemical weapons convention as contained in the 1985 report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, CD/636, it should be possible to narrow differences of view on many