

(Mr. Fields, United States)

Soviet Union does not want to accept. It would allow the Executive Council to endorse a request for challenge inspection only by consensus. In other words, the State to be inspected would control whether a request was even made. Furthermore, even if a request were made, the State to be inspected would have, under the Soviet proposal, complete freedom to reject the request whatever the circumstances.

The Soviet approach can only be termed as a "double-veto" approach. There is no other term for it. Except possibly the term "totally ineffective". It has a built-in guarantee of failure. It would produce a convention with noble aims but no effective mechanism to ensure compliance. It would thus fit the lamentation of Macbeth — "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing".

It has been wisely said in this body — by Ambassador Dhanapala of Sri Lanka and others — that parties to a chemical weapons convention must accept some risks. A convention without risk cannot be achieved in the real world, nor can it even be designed. I completely agree with that. Absolute verification is fantasy and we should not waste time pursuing illusion. The United States recognizes that even the most effective verification system that can be conceived does not eliminate all risks that any deliberate violation of obligations undertaken will not be detected. The United States is prepared to accept such risks.

There is another fantasy that must be avoided — the notion that an effective verification system can be designed to eliminate all risks that that system might be abused or that some confidential information might be disclosed. While steps can and should be taken to minimize the potential for abuse and for disclosure of confidential information, it is inevitable that risks will remain. The United States is willing to accept these risks to obtain the benefits of an effective verification system. Those countries that desire effective verification should also be willing to accept such risks.

If an effective verifiable chemical-weapons ban is to be achieved, all States must be willing to accept risks. But we must not let the twin fantasies of absolute verification and risk-free verification consume our energies. Let there be no doubt however that we will press for the most effective and verifiable convention that can be negotiated.

The purpose of my statement today has been to promote a common effort to identify and resolve the pivotal issues in the chemical-weapons negotiations. I have presented the proposals of my delegation and commented on the proposals made by the Soviet Union. In each case I believe a fair comparison shows that the proposals of the United States are more effective and realistic. But my delegation welcomes constructive comments from others, both positive and negative. That is the process which will lead to solutions that will be acceptable to all. If there are proposals for other ways to achieve a chemical-weapons ban that would provide the same level of confidence and effectiveness, the United States is ready to consider them.

In conclusion, I would like to remind the Soviet delegation of the words of the late Leonid Brezhnev in his statement to the second special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament:

"Everything should be done to eliminate chemical weapons from the world. The Soviet Union is a convinced champion of this approach. We are prepared to reach agreement without delay on the complete prohibition of chemical weapons and destruction of their stockpiles."

I trust that the Soviet delegation will match his words with their deeds.