

(Mr. Friedersdorf, United States)

Today I would like to present the views of the United States on some of the current issues in the chemical weapons negotiations. At the outset I want to stress the personal commitment of the President of the United States, George Bush, to chemical weapons arms control. Our delegation knows that this commitment is shared by our colleagues here in the Conference, and particularly by the Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, Ambassador Pierre Morel of France, and the chairmen of the five working groups serving under Ambassador Morel. They have all amply demonstrated their ability and commitment, and there is no lack of dedication in the Conference.

We are also encouraged by the fact that most of the countries that need to be parties to the convention to make it effective are already participating in the negotiations. The future convention must be a truly global one. For that reason the United States attaches great importance to the principle that was expressed in the Final Declaration of the Paris Conference last January, namely, "any State wishing to contribute to these negotiations should be able to do so". All of us supported this principle in Paris; let us all support it in Geneva.

The negotiations, however, show us that commitment is only part of the solution to the problem of chemical weapons. Hard work on the details of a multitude of complex issues is necessary as well, particularly in the area of verification. With that in mind, let me address specific verification-related issues in the negotiations. Working Group 1 on verification is dealing now with a number of issues that are vitally important to an effective ban. Our insistence upon verifiability of arms control agreements is broader than just the agreement being negotiated here in the CD. It is indeed an insistence that is well known in all arms control areas. As arms control negotiations aim for substantial cuts in existing arsenals, and as arms control agreements increase in complexity, detailed and effective verification provisions become even more critical. We welcome the growing recognition by the international community of this very important fact. The building of confidence, however, must begin well before an agreement enters into force. We need confidence that the information to be provided under a particular agreement will be accurate and that the verification procedures will be sound. For these reasons, we strongly support advance data exchange, with provisions for its verification, and trial inspections as an essential component of the process of negotiating a chemical weapons ban.

Our striving for effective verification is not, as it is sometimes described, an effort to achieve perfection. Rather, it is an effort to ensure that the future chemical weapons convention protects our security. We will not lower our standards for security simply to meet an artificial deadline or to experience the exhilaration of a treaty-signing ceremony. As we have said before, having an agreement without effective verification would be worse than having no agreement at all.

One critical task in the negotiations on a chemical weapons ban involves verification in the chemical industry. We welcome the informal consultations being held this week between negotiators and chemical industry representatives from many countries. We welcome as well the convening of the conference in