

(Mr. Tóth, Hungary)

measures. Let me welcome at this point the approach of document CD/1129, submitted by Australia at our last plenary meeting, which seems to share the main purpose of our paper.

Having introduced our annual declaration, let me touch on a few unresolved points on the agenda of the CW negotiations. In our view challenge inspection is an indispensable element of any disarmament agreement. This is even more valid in the case of the chemical weapons convention, where both the relative easiness of producing dangerous chemicals and the enormous range of relevant chemical industry render the establishment of a foolproof verification system practically impossible. Earlier in my statement I had the opportunity to recall one part of the 1989 Hungarian initiative. Our unilateral commitments, however, went much further than that and also included the vital issue of verification. In fact, already three years ago Hungary stated its readiness to receive - on a reciprocal basis - verification, including on-site inspections in accordance with the objectives of a chemical weapons ban. In practical terms, this step means that any country ready to accept the same obligations vis-à-vis Hungary is welcome to carry out inspections on Hungarian soil. It stems from this unilateral measure that for us the preferred solution of the question of challenge inspections is the most stringent regime which is still acceptable for other negotiating partners. We had no serious difficulties with the so-called "classical" approach, but we also realize that national interests concerning the protection of sensitive information not directly related to the convention need to be reconciled with the objectives of the chemical weapons ban. This flexible approach, however, doesn't stand without its limits. Narrowing down conceptual differences regarding the role of the executive council, the obligations and rights of the inspected State, the question of observers, the perceived danger of abuse and the modalities for action following the preparation of the inspection report must not lead to a total dilution of the challenge regime. If the original aim of finding satisfactory answers to serious compliance concerns is lost from sight, the very sense of challenge inspections will be endangered.

It is clear that besides the technical complications associated with challenge inspections, this method of verification is overburdened by political implications. One of the highly political issues is the role of the executive council in the process of a challenge inspection. We strongly believe that a challenge inspection request needs prompt action, especially if it is to detect a suspected violation of the convention. Regular and protracted intervention by the executive council in the required automaticity in responding to an inspection request will certainly cause delays that might adversely affect the inspection procedure. Noting the justifiable concerns with regard to possible abuse or requests that clearly fall outside the scope of the convention, the setting up of an exceptional decision-making mechanism at the very beginning of the challenge process is within the limits of acceptability. This mechanism has to be quick and effective, and the possibility of stopping the inspection procedure should be linked to the consent of all members of the executive council which have no direct interest in the specific case. It seems to be undesirable, however, to set up a political filter at the beginning of the challenge inspection process. In our judgement, it is after the mission of the inspection team has been