

(Mr. Burns, United States of America)

At the same time we do not underestimate the difficulty and complexity of the task. Despite the considerable progress that has been made, difficult problems remain in developing effective means of verification, in providing undiminished security for all States during the transition period, and in ensuring that the ban is truly global. In our view, it is important to address these problems as a matter of continuing urgency.

The kind of convention we are seeking can be achieved only through multilateral negotiations. This Conference must be the focus of efforts to achieve a ban. On specific issues, bilateral discussions can facilitate the resolution of issues in the multilateral negotiations. Therefore, in addition to our continuing active participation in multilateral work we periodically discuss key issues with the Soviet Union, and with others, in an effort to find mutually acceptable solutions. In our view, both multilateral and bilateral efforts are essential. Moreover, evidence of the spread of chemical weapons has led to increased awareness on our part of the need to consult States who are not participating in the work of the Conference.

As you know, the United States has long sought to deter chemical attack through a capability to retaliate in kind. We will continue to maintain this capability until the threat of chemical attack is removed through an effective, verifiable, truly global chemical weapons ban.

As everyone knows, the presidential election campaign in the United States is now in full swing. Alternative policies on many issues are being rigorously debated. But on the prohibition of chemical weapons there is no debate. The United States commitment to a chemical weapons ban is an enduring, bipartisan commitment. For its part, the Reagan Administration will continue earnestly to pursue this goal until the new Administration comes into office in January. We will work hard with all delegations to resolve the difficult questions that remain.

I would add only one or two cautionary notes. As you progress toward the completion of your work on a CW ban, resist the temptation to rush to signature by passing over the details. It is unrealistic to believe that a preparatory committee or some governing body can solve problems that have eluded your experienced experts for the past several years. The time to resolve differences is before a treaty enters into force. The second observation I would make is that practice inspections can be quite useful in uncovering potential areas of controversy while you still have time to resolve them - before a treaty goes into effect.