

(Mr. von Stülpnagel, Federal Republic of Germany)

Only last week we concluded a trial ad hoc check at a chemical plant in the Federal Republic of Germany. The results, on which a report will be submitted to the Conference soon, are encouraging, and corroborate our view that ad hoc checks are effective and feasible. We have presented our proposal as an input to an ongoing debate, as I explained in my statement on 13 September last year, in which I introduced our second working paper (CD/869) on ad hoc checks. It has been our intention to stimulate further thinking. We are open to any other suggestion or compromise which meets the requirement of a solution that is manageable and at the same time effective.

Let me stress again that we consider the existing verification system sound and reliable. Any ad hoc verification measure we may add to it should be regarded only as filling out the existing draft provisions. It should not in any way fundamentally change or detract from the established verification framework. The convention we are envisaging poses particularly difficult verification problems. But we should keep in mind that no disarmament agreement will be 100 per cent verifiable. Yet we believe that the verification system of the convention will be effective in deterring possible violations of the convention.

And at a more general level, all States would in terms of security be better off with a comprehensive and global convention than without it, even if the convention did not contain verification measures which could come up to the ideal of 100 per cent detectability. This should be especially clear in view of the current situation, which is characterized by speculation and suspicion about the threat posed by existing or allegedly existing CW stockpiles and the proliferation of chemical weapons. A convention would provide confidence: existing CW stockpiles and production facilities would be eliminated, and this process would be subject to strict verification; the production, processing and consumption of the chemicals in question would be monitored, thus giving assurance that such substances are not diverted for chemical weapons purposes; even if doubts about compliance were to persist, States parties could resort to the instrument of challenge inspections, which would permit swift clarification in any case involving serious concerns about security. Had the international community been able to resort to such an instrument in the past, many ambiguous situations - also pertaining to the alleged proliferation of chemical weapons - could have been resolved or, more likely still, avoided in the first place.

The Paris Conference gave expression to the world-wide consensus for a global ban on chemical weapons. Let us not lose this consensus. The conclusion of our negotiations is overdue. It is not possible to maintain the momentum in the negotiations indefinitely. We here in Geneva should not succumb to the danger of getting bogged down in protracted discussions of unnecessary details. It is our responsibility to seek early breakthroughs on the crucial issues which remain to be resolved and stand in the way of final agreement. Let us make use of the "window of opportunity" provided by the historic situation we find ourselves in. Let us also remember this: time is not on our side. The risk of further proliferation, and of chemical weapons becoming an accepted means of warfare, is growing. Thus, there is no time to lose.