

(Mr. Renton, United Kingdom)

this common expression of determination. We also welcome the recent statement by Mr. Gorbachev, reinforced in his message to this Conference, in which he called for early and complete elimination of chemical weapons and of the industrial basis for their production. We look forward to hearing detailed ideas from the Soviet delegation on how to put this into practice.

There seems too to be general agreement that the main problem still to be solved is that of providing assurance to each party that other parties are complying fully with their obligations under the Convention. We must all work together to agree on provisions for the Convention that would give all countries the confidence they will require on this point. As chemical weapons are relatively easy to make and to conceal, stringent measures of verification will be needed to overcome suspicion that such weapons are being clandestinely retained or produced in violation of the convention; or that facilities for their production are being maintained under the guise of the civil chemical industry. To allay these suspicions, we shall need a combination of verification methods: first, during the transitional period covering the complete elimination of chemical weapons and their production facilities; and second, on a permanent basis, to ensure that material is not being diverted from civil purposes to make these weapons.

I think it is widely accepted that the measures of verification should include a system of fact-finding which could be initiated by a party suspicious about the compliance of another party. The convention would, however, be a fragile one if it depended for its verification mainly on a system of challenges. The British delegation has made detailed proposals for complementing ad hoc fact-finding with a system of international inspection on a random routine basis, combined with the international exchange of data. The purpose is to forestall suspicion that substances used for peaceful purposes might be diverted to the manufacture of chemical weapons. After detailed consultations with our own chemical industry, we are convinced that this purpose can be accomplished, without disrupting peaceful industrial operations or infringing their commercial confidentiality. In this context, we warmly welcome the invitation of the Government of the Netherlands to show members of the Conference just what this means on the ground in June. We hope that all delegations to this Conference will participate.

It is particularly incumbent on those countries which possess large stocks of chemical weapons to help devise means of convincing others that they will destroy them; and to agree to measures of verification that will give others the confidence, in both the short and long term, that they will not make them again. Many detailed proposals have been made to this end. If we are to accelerate work on this convention this year -- as the British Government is determined to do -- it will be necessary for all delegations either to accept what has been proposed or to offer detailed specific alternative suggestions for generating the confidence required. I have read with interest the remarks on this subject by Deputy Minister Kornienko of the Soviet Union. In the English saying, the proof of the pudding will be in the eating. We look forward to tasting the new menu which we are promised.

Last year in this forum, my predecessor, Richard Luce, dwelt on the subject of chemical weapons at some length. He made no apologies for doing so, and I can only repeat his sentiment. The recent evidence of the use of such weapons should put us on our mettle. We cannot sit idly by, while another genie threatens to emerge from the bottle. We meet once again in the