

(Mr. Beesley, Canada)

As in recent years, the negotiation of a verifiable, comprehensive ban on chemical weapons is a priority item on our agenda. Modest but detectable progress was made on this item during the 1985 session but there is still cause for disappointment in spite of the strenuous efforts of our friend and colleague, Ambassador Turbanski of Poland, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee. Known instances of recent chemical weapons use should add to our collective sense of urgency to attain the earliest possible conclusion of such a ban. We note with particular attention the affirmation by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in their Joint Statement of their intent to "accelerate their efforts to conclude an effective and verifiable international convention" as well as their intention to "initiate a dialogue on preventing the proliferation of chemical weapons."

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As others have pointed out, and indeed my delegation has in the past, it will be of limited utility if we get an effective bilateral convention which is not a comprehensive convention in both senses in extending to all the main issues under negotiation and comprising a genuine non-proliferation convention. It is our understanding that this latter initiative is not intended in any way to divert efforts from the priority need to conclude a comprehensive chemical weapons ban, so too with respect to the statement contained in the proposals most recently made by General Secretary Gorbachev raising the possibility of "certain interim steps," possibly involving multilateral agreement on matters relating to the non-transfer of chemical weapons.

Despite the considerable progress which has been made, there remain several difficult issues to be resolved if a chemical weapons ban is to be concluded. Among these, the verification provisions of the treaty will require especially serious and dispassionate effort if agreement is to be achieved. It will be recalled that in April 1984, almost two years ago, the Vice-President of the United States of America tabled in this forum a draft treaty text which is the most comprehensive proposal yet before us, setting out in detail the kind of verification régime his Government prefers and would regard as adequate. Canada has indicated its readiness in principle to accept and apply the kinds of verification provisions contained in the United States text. However, while there has been much criticism of these proposals, no delegation has thus far come forward with concrete, substantive alternative proposals which would delineate with clarity the area of common ground and the areas of disagreement, thus providing a basis for serious negotiation with a view to arriving at verification provisions which would be acceptable to all.