

(Mr. Ledogar, United States)

aware of the intense interest of the United States Congress as well. The United States has taken pioneering steps in the past on chemical weapons, presenting a draft treaty in this body in 1984, proposing mandatory challenge inspection, and releasing extensive information on the composition and location of United States CW stockpiles and production facilities.

Without in the least slighting the other important work of this Conference, I wish today in accord with rule 30 to address the CW issue as it appears from the United States' perspective. I look forward to addressing other issues on our agenda in a subsequent statement.

Since arriving in Geneva, I have heard recurrent criticism of the slow pace of work on the chemical weapons convention. Some say the political commitment made at Paris and Canberra last year has not been matched by efforts to resolve the remaining issues on a CW ban.

There may be some measure of short-term truth to this criticism, but for the most part it is a gross exaggeration. I think that many of us are so engrossed in our work that we are not seeing the forest for the trees. The scope and technical and political complexity of this convention are unprecedented. Many of the issues now before us are the difficult ones set aside in the past in favour of dealing with the more readily soluble issues.

It is easy to see just the trees - the sheer weight of detailed work needed to formulate the CW convention. We have to stand back to see the forest - that is, how far we have already come. We must not let political haste to get a convention lessen our commitment to a convention that will truly enhance security and that will work in practice. Our success won't be judged by how quickly we reach agreement but whether our legislatures and our people decide their national security interests have been met, and whether the treaty can be effectively implemented and verified.

The firm commitment of the United States to a multilateral, effectively verifiable CW convention has taken several forms. A very important one is our work with the USSR.

Convinced that greater openness can contribute to the prospects for an early multilateral convention, the United States and Soviet Union signed a memorandum of understanding in Wyoming in September 1989 regarding a bilateral verification experiment and data exchange. These significant steps will occur in two phases. Phase one, already under way, involves the exchange of general data on each side's chemical weapons capabilities and a series of visits to relevant military and civil facilities on our respective territories. The initial exchange took place on 29 December 1989. In phase two the sides will exchange more detailed data and permit on-site inspections to verify the accuracy of the information exchanged.

In addition to the increased confidence gained from such exchanges of data, visits and inspections, we believe the inspection experience gained, drawing largely on multilateral provisions elaborated to date in the "rolling text", will contribute much to our work here in the CD as we further elaborate and finalize such provisions for the convention.