

(Mr. van den Broek, Netherlands)

between the United States and the Soviet Union will certainly have a positive effect on the work here in the Conference on Disarmament. I should also like to thank the Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee, Ambassador Morel of France, for his tireless efforts over the past year. I wish his successor, Ambassador Hyltenius of Sweden, every success, and assure him that he can count on the full co-operation of the Dutch delegation. We have certainly not yet reached the end of our exercise, but there is a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. On the basis of what has already been achieved and the detailed nature of the discussions on virtually every aspect of the chemical weapons treaty, it should be possible to resolve the remaining major issues this year and to wind up the negotiations promptly thereafter. If we demonstrate the political and, I should add, the practical will, this should be feasible, and we will soon be on the home stretch.

Speaking of practical will, I would like to stress how important it is to gain practical experience with the verification system to be established under the convention. In that context, trial inspections have proved to be extremely useful. You are aware of the trial inspection held in a chemical plant in the Netherlands last spring. We now intend to organize a trial challenge inspection in a military installation in the near future. Its results will be communicated to the Conference on Disarmament at an early date.

With the end of the negotiations now, as we hope, in sight, I wish to repeat my offer to host the international organization responsible for the implementation of the chemical weapons treaty in the Netherlands. We propose The Hague, due to its central location and accessibility and because it is the seat of other international organizations such as the International Court of Justice. The Netherlands also has a sophisticated chemical industry and laboratories which can lend assistance. I hope that the conviction and dedication with which my country has continuously supported the negotiations will earn your support. I intend to provide you with the details of the Netherlands offer in the near future. I gather that my friend Alois Mock will be making similar proposals on behalf of Vienna. Consider us to be friendly rivals.

I do not wish to conclude without pointing to the rediscovery and proliferation of a category of weapons which was banned in a treaty over 15 years ago, but which unfortunately seems to have regained its attractiveness for military purposes. I refer to biological weapons. We must combine our utmost efforts and imagination to stop the abhorrent abuse of substances and equipment otherwise used for legitimate purposes. In the Netherlands we are examining the possibility of taking steps at the national level. For some time the Government has been engaged in contacts on this matter with Netherlands-based companies and institutes of international repute which are active in the field of biotechnology. We are now considering the possibility of issuing a paper to raise awareness of this problem among relevant companies and institutes. Further measures cannot be excluded.

It would be highly ironic if these horrific weapons, which we had hoped to banish, were once again to acquire a place in countries' arsenals, at a time when so much progress is being made in many areas of arms control. I fear that we are also paying the price for the absence of a verification mechanism in the biological weapons Convention, which as it stands represents