

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

chemical industries in general. We all know, for instance, that the future chemical-weapons ban will have to strike a careful balance between the need of an effective verification régime, inspiring State parties with confidence in compliance with the Convention and, on the other hand, the need to safeguard the legitimate commercial interests of the chemical industry to be inspected. In other words, we have to balance the need for verification of non-production of chemical weapons with the need for not hampering legitimate civil production. Crucial to success in this balancing act is accurate knowledge of all factors involved. I feel confident that we have sufficient knowledge about the chemical weapons aspects of the problem, but I have the impression that we often lack precise knowledge about relevant aspects of the civil use of key precursors. We shall touch upon the latter issue on the first day of the Workshop. To that end, participants will receive an overview of existing national regulations in the Netherlands.

The task of developing methods of verification that take the required balance into account is a formidable one. But there certainly is no reason for despair. As undoubtedly in many other countries, we in the Netherlands have acquired a lot of experience with inspecting chemical industries for a variety of purposes, such as environmental protection, public health and safety. This system of inspection can, if necessary, be very intrusive, but at the same time it safeguards the intellectual property of the inspected plants.

We are, of course, very well aware of the difference between existing national inspection for civil purposes and the kind of international inspection needed under a chemical weapons convention. We believe, however, that a brief review of the experience the Netherlands has gained with existing national inspection will provide a proper background for a fruitful discussion -- at the Workshop, but also later on in the Conference -- on the international inspection we are heading for in the chemical weapons convention.

The centre-piece of our Workshop will be a report to be prepared for the Workshop on an experimental inspection of a production installation that is processing trimethyl phosphite. A few words may serve to clarify the relevance of verification of non-production in such a production installation.

There seems to be a consensus amongst delegations that the production of compounds with a P-methyl bond deserves special treatment in a chemical weapons convention because of the importance of those compounds as key precursors of certain nerve agents. Trimethyl phosphite is not a compound with a P-methyl bond but can relatively easily be transformed into such a compound. The main purpose of the experimental inspection is to study and test organizational and technical aspects involved in verification measures that are to ensure that the production installation processing trimethyl phosphite is not used for the production of compounds with a P-methyl bond.

The results of this experimental inspection will be discussed at the Workshop on the basis of documentation on the experiment to be made available to delegations. And, of course, the inspected chemical plant itself will be visited, in order to permit participants to get a better insight into the nature of the problem on the spot.

We hope that all delegations will be in a position and willing to participate in the Workshop. I would say: come and see for yourself this summer.