

(Mr. Hansen, United States)

suddenly appears the day the convention enters into force. Unless some degree of confidence among States already exists, it must be created, or reaching agreement will be an extremely difficult task. Thus, the building of confidence must be a step-by-step process that begins well before the negotiations have been completed.

Confidence-building should start with greater openness on the part of all members of the CD. The United States is concerned that some other States participating in the negotiations have been extremely secretive about their chemical weapons programmes. If countries possessing chemical weapons refuse to acknowledge such capabilities during the negotiations, confidence is seriously undermined. Therefore, we must all agree that greater openness is essential for building the kind of confidence States must have before they will be willing to give up their own chemical weapons. The United States has consistently stressed this concern in bilateral negotiations and wishes to make this point clear in the multilateral context.

The fact that the United States maintains a chemical weapons deterrent and retaliatory capability has long been a matter of public record. On 10 July 1986, the United States delegation sought to promote the confidence-building process by unilaterally providing its negotiating partners here with further detailed information about its stockpiles of chemical weapons, including information on stockpile locations and the chemicals in the stockpile. We urge others to follow our example of openness.

On 5 March of this year the Soviet Union finally made an oblique reference to its possession of chemical weapons in a plenary statement. The United States welcomes this small, helpful step by the Soviet Union. We hope it was only the first step towards increasing openness by the Soviet Union and its allies about their chemical weapons programmes. Other States could usefully take similar steps.

In this connection we have also noted the candid statement by the Foreign Minister of France on 19 February that his country is considering endowing itself with a limited and purely deterrent capability in the chemical weapons field.

It should not be forgotten that over the years a number of States, primarily from the Western Group, have made clear in the CD that they do not possess chemical weapons. Such statements can only be welcomed.

Many CD member States, however, have said nothing. Most undoubtedly do not possess chemical weapons; but it would be very useful for them to say so. Unfortunately, it cannot be ruled out that other States participating in the negotiations do possess chemical weapon capabilities. For example, we would welcome clarification by the Iranian delegation of press reports concerning an Iranian chemical weapons capability.

Because of the magnitude of the chemical weapons capabilities possessed by the Soviet Union, the United States has stressed to Soviet authorities the importance of greater openness. But the principle applies equally to other States. Within the CD, we call upon all our negotiating partners to indicate possession or non-possession of chemical weapons and chemical weapons