

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

If there has been a perceptible slowing of the pace of the negotiations, we should not be discouraged. The rapid progress which was recorded during the latter part of last year and in the first half of this year naturally gave rise to expectations that the momentum would be sustained. But the convention we are negotiating is a complex one. And progress cannot always be even. Indeed, we have reached a stage now where we have narrowed the remaining issues, but those issues necessarily require careful consideration and discussion in order to arrive at solutions. This is the process we are now engaged in.

It is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the initiative of the Chairman of the CW Committee in holding informal open-ended consultations yesterday on the key subject of challenge inspection.

We all recognize the importance of reaching agreement on a challenge inspection régime for inclusion in the convention. Thus a number of proposals and ideas have been put forward by delegations. I believe we are building a solution through a process of careful consideration and discussion of the various component parts which have been suggested. We encourage Ambassador Ekéus to continue the initiative which he has taken on this subject.

Important work has also been undertaken during the current session on, inter alia, the important questions of commercial super-toxic lethal chemicals, and the composition, powers and functions and decision-making of the Consultative Committee and the Executive Council.

In addition, a very productive two-day meeting of chemical industry representatives was held which made a significant contribution to our consideration of aspects of the convention relating to the civil chemical industry.

So a lot has been going on, and we have hardly been marking time.

Clearly, the need to conclude a convention as early as possible continues to be of vital importance.

Australia, like other members of this Conference, deeply deplores the fact that chemical weapons continue to be used. The conclusions of the United Nations team of experts that chemical weapons have once again been used recently in the Gulf war is a matter of the deepest concern to us.

Simply, the use of chemical weapons must cease.

We also share the view that has been expressed by other delegations that all members of this Conference should indicate whether or not they possess chemical weapons and chemical weapon production facilities. Several countries, including Australia, have indicated that they do not possess such weapons or facilities, but many member States have remained silent. They should break that silence. It would contribute to the strength of the convention to which we are all committed if each member of this Conference were to frankly state its position. Otherwise, confidence in the convention will be seriously undermined.