

(Mr. Fields, United States)

Our document is an elaboration of the general points which we presented last summer. I would stress, however, that the substance of the document results from a very careful review by our experts of the ideas presented in the Committee by many delegations over a period of years. The results achieved in the contact groups established last summer received particular attention. As you study our document, it will become apparent that suggestions and ideas from many different sources have been adopted. There are also many new ideas.

As delegations will have an opportunity to study the document in some detail, let me just sketch out briefly our approach to the key issues, especially those relating to verification and compliance.

The United States supports a comprehensive ban on chemical weapons. Any activity to create or maintain a chemical weapons capability would be forbidden. On the other hand, chemical activities with a legitimate purpose would continue unhampered. The convention should also contain several specific provisions relating to the use of chemical weapons to help ensure that our common objective -- to remove the menace of the possible use of such weapons -- is met. In particular, use in circumstances not covered by the Geneva Protocol should be prohibited; the provisions for dealing with compliance issues should be applicable to all allegations of chemical weapons use.

Existing chemical weapons stocks and production and filling facilities would be promptly declared, and destroyed over a 10-year period. In order to take into account concerns expressed in contact group discussions, we have incorporated specific ideas for dealing with the possible discovery of chemical munitions, for example, on World War I battlefields, after the initial declaration of stocks.

As Vice-President Bush emphasized, the key to an effective convention is the firm assurance of compliance through effective verification. We have learned the hard way -- through the bitter experience of recent events in Sverdlovsk, south-east Asia and Afghanistan -- that effective verification is an absolute necessity for any future agreement.

Many different approaches to the verification of a chemical weapons ban have been discussed in this Committee. We share the view of the majority of delegations, which have emphasized the importance of systematic international on-site inspection. Only an independent, impartial system responsible to all the parties can provide the necessary confidence that the provisions of the convention are being faithfully observed. National technical means alone are not sufficient, as they are available only to a few and are of extremely limited utility for the verification of a chemical weapons ban. Nor can so-called systems of "national verification", which would be tantamount to self-inspection by parties, be taken seriously when one considers the vital import of such a convention.