

(Mr. Hansen, United States)

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Yesterday was the 72nd anniversary of the first time poison gas was used in warfare. The United States of America deplores the use of chemical weapons in the prolonged war between Iran and Iraq. This tragic state of affairs appears to be duplicated in Kampuchea, where chemical weapons used by the Vietnamese are said to have killed nearly 1,000 civilians. The continued use of chemical weapons demonstrates that an arms control agreement, such as the 1925 Geneva Protocol, cannot rest on solemn vows. In any future chemical weapons ban, there must be legally binding agreements which serve as enforcing mechanisms, which deter States from acquiring such weapons by making the political price of their acquisition too high, and which provide assurance to all States that all other States are in total compliance with the commitments and obligations undertaken. The key to compliance lies in verification.

Secretary Shultz, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze and their advisers also discussed the negotiations on a comprehensive global ban on chemical weapons being conducted in this Conference. They noted that the United States has facilities for destroying chemical weapons and that the Soviet Union is constructing such a facility. Secretary Shultz and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze agreed to have experts visit each other's sites to observe destruction procedures as one step in improving confidence between the States with the largest chemical weapons capabilities. We welcome this move as well as the statement of the distinguished head of the Soviet delegation, Ambassador Nazarkin, in which he stated a desire to dispel mistrust on the part of the West.

In this context, I am pleased, on behalf of the Government of the United States, to invite Ambassador Nazarkin and appropriate Soviet experts to visit the United States chemical weapons destruction facility in Tooele, Utah. This visit would include a visit to a chemical weapons bunker. We suggest this visit be conducted during the week of 19 October this year.

My delegation has also noted the announcement by General Secretary Gorbachev that the Soviet Union has ceased the production of chemical weapons. We make the assumption that in ceasing production, open-air testing of agent stocks and the filling of agents into munitions has also been halted.