

(Mr. Ledogar, United States)

The United States warmly welcomes the initiative made today by Senator Evans on behalf of the Government of Australia. We share the belief that a chemical weapons convention can - and must - be completed this year. The United States will work closely with Australia, with Ambassador von Wagner, our Ad Hoc Committee Chairman, and with like-minded countries to make this objective a reality.

The United States believes that the Australian initiative represents a great challenge to which we must all respond. It is an opportunity to break the negotiating patterns of the past, and to shift to more productive ways of thinking and working, and to achieve a text that all of us can subscribe to. Continuing "business as usual" will not produce a chemical weapons convention this year, or next year, or perhaps ever.

All of us must focus now on the issues that affect our countries' basic interests, rather than continuing to argue endlessly about refinements and footnotes. Each country must ask itself, "What is there in the draft convention that we absolutely cannot live with?" - and, "What is missing from the draft convention that we absolutely must have?". All of us must now look for compromise solutions rather than continuing to argue for our own preferred approaches. The question for all of us must be, "What can we accept?" - not, "What would we prefer?".

In this respect, the United States recognizes the text presented by Australia as a proposed compromise. We appreciate this Australian effort to facilitate completing the chemical weapons convention. The United States, however, has substantive differences with the content in several elements of the text. Some of these are of serious import and must be resolved through further discussion.

We appreciate that Senator Evans has described the text as a possible compromise package, but has also made clear that his Government does not consider it immutable.

We urge the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, Ambassador von Wagner, to present a Chairman's proposed compromise text to the CD at the opening of the second 1992 session on 11 May. In our view, the new Chairman's text should be based on intensive consultations during the six weeks of the inter-sessional period, and should represent a synthesis of the present "rolling text" and of the new Australian text. The United States delegation will cooperate fully with Ambassador von Wagner in his effort to produce a Chairman's text that will command broad support in the CD. We call on each delegation here to join in this effort.

Finally, I can inform the Conference that the United States is ready, if there is a consensus text on which we can agree, to support Australia's call for a meeting of foreign ministers late this summer to endorse that text.