

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

An additional related complicating factor is the emergence of highly developed chemical industrial activities for civil purposes in an increasing number of countries. Thus there is an increasing risk of proliferation of chemical weapons to be taken into account. This underlines the importance of a truly multilateral agreement.

Do these complicating factors render our goal well-nigh out of reach? This certainly is not the case. We witness progress in the Ad Hoc Committee and in working groups. We have listened to very constructive and thoughtful interventions on the matter in these last weeks. I mention the very interesting and comprehensive clarifying contributions made by Ambassador Fields of the United States, and by Ambassador Cromartie of the United Kingdom, the important observations which the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Bill Hayden, made in particular on the verification issue, as well as Ambassador Dhanapala's lucid remarks that brought certain problems into their proper perspective. Permit me also to mention the interventions of Ambassador Issraelyan, on 9 August, Ambassador Datcu of Romania, Mr. Montassier of France and the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Mr. Brunner, to whom we are grateful for inviting us to visit his country's protection facilities in Spiez.

We share the views of those who stated that obtaining a hundred per cent assurance of compliance is beyond our reach. The other day Ambassador Issraelyan made the plea that "presumption of innocence" rather than mutual mistrust should be the guiding principle in our work for the convention. We wish to add, however, that "presumption of innocence" is only valid once a verification regime will ensure that the present alarming situation, which certainly did not arise out of acts of innocence, will effectively be tackled.

In our view, we should seek, so to speak, "adequate" assurance of compliance through a package of verification measures which complement and mutually strengthen each other. At the same time, we should not dissimulate that ultimately the decision whether or not to agree on any draft of a chemical weapons convention is a political one, requiring both courage and, of course, confidence. Courage, because certain risks cannot fully be covered. Confidence, because, after all, the most likely risks under a regime banning chemical weapons will have been dealt with and the remaining risks can be minimized.

Let us take a closer look at some of those risks. The first such risk is the continued existence of stockpiles, in contravention of the ban. Therefore parties to the convention should first be enabled to assure themselves that declared stocks fully coincide with existing stocks. There is a limit to the degree of certainty that can be obtained, because the possibility for a State to hide stockpiles can never totally be precluded. But provisions should be such that a State contemplating doing so -- in militarily significant quantities -- would be deterred by a serious risk of detection warranting a challenge inspection.

We believe that there seems to emerge a consensus that international on-site verification of the declaration of stockpiles could be made less sensitive by having it organized at relocation sites where chemical weapons will be regrouped, in lieu of in military arsenals.