

(Mr. Evans, Australia)

negotiations such as these are often, of course, susceptible to conclusion by the utilization of the device of a Chairman's text. That is a device which has been successfully deployed on a number of occasions to overcome log-jams. I have spoken of the trust we repose in the current Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Adolf von Wagner. It seems to us that a combination of first, his skills, secondly, the immense achievements represented in the "rolling text", and thirdly, the model of compromise and treaty format which our work demonstrates, can and should be brought together quickly to produce a Chairman's text. Given the clear political commitment which I believe exists in the CD, we accordingly propose that Ambassador von Wagner should hold consultations with delegations during the forthcoming inter-sessional period with a view to his producing a final consensus text. We believe this could and should be prepared in time for presentation at the opening of your next session in May this year.

We believe that no other process can produce a convention while the window of opportunity, which we all agree is there, is still open. That seems to us to be the logical conclusion to the argument with which many of you here have said you agree - that a convention is within our grasp, that it is desirable to achieve it quickly, that acceleration of the negotiations is needed, and that if we do not achieve it soon the opportunity will have been lost. So I call on all of you who share such sentiments with us to support the process I am outlining for finalizing the negotiations.

I have stressed that the kind of compromises that are necessary to conclude this convention have been proven by our work to be achievable: they require only a combination of real commitment and genuine flexibility. None the less I concede that, as with all Chairmen's drafts presented to nation States on a "take it or leave it" basis, there may be a very small number of residual issues which, by their nature, necessarily have to be resolved by Ministers: I have already pointed to the composition of the executive council as one such example.

Australia has long believed that the very end of the end-game would need to be endorsed by a ministerial meeting. When I wrote to my Foreign Ministerial colleagues last year suggesting this, there was virtually universal agreement. A number argued at that time that such a meeting would need to be very carefully prepared - that Ministers could not sensibly or reasonably be asked to negotiate all of the issues which are outstanding and unagreed. And of course I agree with that. But equally I have no doubt that if we pursue the course that I am commending to you today then, by the time of the end of the next session of the CD at the end of June, or at the very latest by the beginning of the third session at the end of July, we will be in a position where the final issues are very few and very clear.

In these circumstances a ministerial meeting, to endorse the work done by then and to resolve any outstanding issues, would be a very effective way of bringing these very long and difficult negotiations to an end. I need hardly tell you that I stand ready to come here again at very short notice to participate as actively as is needed with my ministerial colleagues, whom I know share all of my commitment to conclude the convention.