

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

Finally, a few words on chemical weapons. Negotiations on chemical weapons are beginning to take a decisive turn. Due to the patient and painstaking efforts of last year's Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Cromartie, and his staff, we can now work on the basis of a so-called "rolling text", which provides us, in spite of the multitude of square brackets -- and perhaps also because of those brackets -- with an excellent starting point from which the negotiations can proceed. We are grateful to Ian Cromartie for the dedication and insight with which he and his colleagues have guided the work. We congratulate Ambassador Ekéus on his appointment as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee for this year. We know the chairmanship to be in good hands.

Many colleagues have said we should make use of the momentum in the negotiations. In fact, our goal should be to reach agreement before the end of the year. As I myself said in July last year, my delegation indeed hopes that before the end of the year we can break the back of the problems. Recent moves made by the Soviet delegation are indeed encouraging. We hope this sets the trend for further progress.

However, we also wish to voice a note of caution. A variety of important and sensitive issues must still be addressed. A great number of practical issues have to be dealt with at some moment before an agreement be signed. It would not be wise to leave major loopholes in the convention that could later lead to misinterpretation and arouse suspicion on implementation, if not worse.

Three major areas of disagreement have plagued this Conference for many years. They concern challenge inspection, the question how to verify that the civil chemical industry is not misused for the production of chemical weapons and the issue of how to declare and monitor existing chemical weapons stockpiles. Although in particular on the first of those issues, challenge inspection, we still have a long way to go, it is reassuring to note that on each of these issues progress has been made in recent months.

Let me first take the subject on which, in our view, the most significant steps have been made, the declaration and monitoring of stocks. It has now become clear that the Soviet Union is prepared under the convention to make a declaration containing detailed information on locations of chemical-weapon stocks shortly after the entry into force of the convention. We welcome this, because we infer from it that a system of successive declarations, phased out over the entire period of destruction is no longer deemed necessary.

We were also happy to note that destruction, rather than diversion, of CW stocks for peaceful purposes is now the objective, even if the issue of a possible diversion of stocks on a very limited scale is not finally settled yet. A lot of substantive work still remains to be done on the issue of stocks -- I mention only the sensitive issue of the order in which stocks must