

(Mr. Jessel, France)

everyone has noted the new things being said on this matter by the Soviet Union. However, the clarifications we have been given, including those given within the framework of the Conference, do not seem to us to have provided so far the truly decisive elements that we expected. We must therefore patiently continue the search for a satisfactory solution to this key problem.

Here in April I presented France's view of the general structure of a verification system based, in almost all cases, on international on-site inspections -- "routine" inspections -- and on the regular exchange of statistical data. Unfortunately, this has been a further year with no in-depth discussion of those matters.

To be complete, the system we have to set up must also provide for the exceptional cases where, doubt having arisen regarding the compliance with its obligations by a State party to the Convention, the regular "routine" inspection measures cannot be enough to dissipate it. In that case it becomes necessary to be able to resort to other measures, to other machinery. To be effective, such a "safety net" must, in our view, meet several criteria: first, the time interval between the request for an on-site inspection and the implementation of that request should be extremely brief so that there is no time to get rid of the evidence of a possible violation; for this reason, the procedure must be automatic, that is a State which wants to initiate an inspection should not have to go through an institutional obstacle course which, aside from wasting time, would also have the disadvantage of making it possible to block a request; finally, replying to a challenge should as a general rule be mandatory and not simply voluntary. Only if it meets these three criteria can an international on-site challenge-inspection régime serve as a genuine deterrent.

The United Kingdom delegation has submitted to the Conference, in working document CD/715, a draft which meets these criteria. It is based on two fundamental elements which seem to us both to guarantee the effectiveness of the system proposed and to respect the legitimate security requirements of each State.

To explain: on the one hand, the United Kingdom proposal calls for a public procedure of which the bodies of the Convention would be kept fully informed from beginning to end but the implementation of which would be the responsibility of the two States concerned, the State which requests the inspection and the State to which the request is addressed. The initiation of the procedure as well as the consequences to be drawn therefrom are up to them. Thus, whether the replies given by the "challenged" State are satisfactory or not can, all things considered, only be decided by the party whose suspicions have been aroused.

The second characteristic of this proposal is to provide that in very exceptional cases, where the security of a State is at stake, satisfaction could be given by measures other than unrestricted access to the installation with regard to which there are doubts. But those measures would have to be such as to enable the challenging State to come to the conviction that prohibited activities were not taking place at the installation in question. A State which requests an inspection being by definition the only judge of when