

(Mr. Evans, Australia)

I have not come here today to chide, harangue or plead with this Conference, or to add any more rhetoric on chemical weapons to the already large stockpile. Rather I have come to work with you and, I hope, to contribute to your deliberations in a practical and helpful way. I do come with a sense of urgency, which I know you share, about the palpably growing risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and in particular chemical weapons, in the contemporary world. It is that sense of urgency which was the origin of the work which I bring to you today in the form of an Australian draft of a model compromise convention, now before you as document CD/1143, and may I say a special word of thanks to the secretariat staff who have worked so hard and so productively to enable that document to be circulated today?

This is not the occasion either to recount the horrors of past use of chemical weapons, or to construct brutal scenarios about their possible use in a world where proliferation has already occurred. Nor is there a need for me, before this audience, to spell out the great costs to trade in the chemical industry which are likely to flow from failure here. But I do want to begin by recalling the immense investment of political capital which already exists in the early conclusion of a chemical weapons convention.

In recent years we have had many meetings, many of them attended at the highest levels, devoted to expressing our unanimity about the urgency of concluding a convention. In Paris, in January 1989, 149 States which were party to the 1925 Geneva Protocol met and called for the earliest possible conclusion of the CWC. In Canberra, at the Government-Industry Conference against Chemical Weapons in September 1989, the international chemical industry expressed the strongest possible support for a chemical weapons convention and undertook to contribute actively to its implementation. In New York, year after year, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted unanimous resolutions calling for the urgent conclusion of a CWC. Heads of State, from the CSCE in Europe and from the group of Latin American States in the Mendoza Declaration and the Cartagena Declaration, have recently been united in calling for the urgent conclusion of a CWC. President Bush has called in a highly publicized way for the completion of a convention by mid-1992. And the Conference on Disarmament's own mandate calls on this Conference to achieve a final agreement on the convention by 1992.

So, over and over again, for year after year, at gathering after gathering, we and others representing our countries have said that a convention is within our grasp. There is complete unanimity in the international community about the need to conclude a CWC in the shortest possible time-frame. But for all our agreement on these points, there have been too few answers to the question of just how to achieve this.

The very thorough work here at the CD has, of course, continued to advance the process. There have been many valuable contributions from delegations, and in particular from the chairmen of the Ad Hoc Committee, in recent years, and I want to pay a significant tribute to Ambassador Morel of France, to Ambassador Hyltenius of Sweden and to Ambassador Batsanov of Russia. And we are now seeing the fruits of the labours of another