Mr. DIETZE (German Democratic Republic):

I have asked for the floor today to express some considerations in connection with the fact that we are holding today the 500th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. We thought it would be appropriate on this very day to reiterate the importance the socialist countries, including the German Democratic Republic, attach to this single multilateral disarmament forum. Disarmament is a univeral concern, and the Conference on Disarmament has indeed shouldered a high responsiblity in undertaking to bring about multilateral agreements on the cessation of the arms race and disarmament. At a time when we may witness unprecedented positive changes in the international political climate, including important achievements in other disarmament - related forums, the Conference on Disarmament, in our view, cannot and should not remain behind or outside of such a process. What is needed are concrete results, and if this is not possible on all items under consideration, then it should be at least on some major items of our agenda. This is particularly valid for the earliest possible conclusion of the convention on the total prohibition of chemical weapons. The Paris Conference, and I think this is an agreed position, gave us a clear-cut mandate to this effect. The priority we attach to the issue of a chemical weapons ban does not, of course, diminish or decrease the importance of other disarmament areas under consideration - I mean, in particular, the nuclear test ban and the prevention of an arms race in outer space. We hope that it will be possible to start substantive and action-oriented work on item 1 of our agenda very soon, and we therefore appeal to all parties concerned to show the necessary flexibility and good will for a reasonable compromise. As far as the issue of preventing an arms race in outer space is concerned, we expect that the Ad hoc Committee will resolve the outstanding organizational issues as soon as possible and proceed to substantive consideration without delay.