

(Mr. von Stulpnagel, Federal Republic of Germany)

Allow me, therefore, to address one of those issues which is of truly crucial importance: challenge inspections. It has been under intensive discussion for almost three years now, so far without a solution. I am convinced that a solution to this problem would not only remove one of the main obstacles in the way of completing the verification system, but would also provide a strong stimulus to tackle the other as yet unresolved issues of the convention.

There seems to be agreement that challenge inspections are indispensable and a corner-stone of the whole verification system, since they constitute an all-embracing measure enabling all States parties, on an entirely equal basis, to clarify doubts about the compliance of others. Despite this basic common understanding, and despite all the efforts undertaken over the past years within the Ad hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, divergences of view seem to persist.

Following consultations conducted last year and earlier by the chairmen of the Ad hoc Committee, it seems to me that we have in some respects got bogged down. Divergences seem to have been unduly politicized. They have also gradually grown out of proportion. If we continue in this way we may thwart a solution which is both realistic and meets the requirements of effective verification.

What is needed now is a fresh look at the issues of challenge inspection - a look unclouded by some of our past discussions. The point of departure should be a consideration of the technical nature and the basic political characteristics of challenge inspections. Here some agreement seems to exist - as reflected in such catchwords as challenge inspection as a means to clarify doubts about compliance; the right of each State party to request a challenge inspection any time, anywhere; no refusal of the request; the right and obligation of the requested State party to demonstrate compliance; inspection to be carried out in accordance with the request in the least intrusive manner possible; the right of the requesting State party to observe the inspection; and the right of the inspected State party to protect sensitive equipment or information as far as possible. If there is agreement on these points, why is it not possible to include provisions to that effect in the "rolling text"?

Whenever technical aspects are accompanied by political and psychological sensitivities, our Conference starts to stall. Some say they want the philosophy of a subject to be clarified. Others insist that only the wording - even the final wording - should be at the centre of our deliberations. And in the process we lose the opportunity to take the necessary political decisions. This is the case with regard to challenge inspection too. The question is simply whether this verification method should be a factor of normal life or confrontational in nature. In considering this the following aspects should, in my view, be borne in mind. Firstly, challenge inspections are designed to be implemented on a regular basis, like other verification measures under the convention, but they are triggered by doubts about compliance. Secondly, at the same time, challenge inspections, like all other on-sit inspections, are intended to provide an assurance of compliance by not relying solely on declarations or assurances by State parties but by checking on the spot. In this regard all inspection