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(Mr. Friedersdorf, United States)

Here in Geneva, in this Conference, our delegation has welcomed the positive proposals on chemical weapons introduced on 6 August by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union.

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(Mr. Friedersdorf, United States)

I would like to conclude today by giving our delegation's assessment of the current state of the chemical weapons negotiations.

When I spoke in plenary on 23 July, the mood was somewhat pessimistic. Since then a fresh mood of optimism has appeared. This, of course, may change again. However, we must not become so intent on day-to-day details that we lack a broader sense of how far we have come, and how far we have to go, and what we need to do to reach our common objective. The period since Vice-President Bush tabled the United States draft convention in April 1984 has been an especially productive one. We expect this trend to continue.

Let me suggest two criteria for assessing the current state of the negotiations. First, are the negotiators focusing on the real issues, or are they dwelling on minor points? Second, are the negotiators exchanging the same old views, or are new ideas being put forward? On both counts I believe there is reason for encouragement.

Since early 1986 there has been a pronounced trend toward dealing seriously with the security concerns that underlie these negotiations. This trend is reflected both in the converging of views on a number of the basic verification provisions of the convention, and in the increasing support for other measures to build confidence during the negotiations. The most recent evidence of this trend was the announcement by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze on 6 August that the Soviet Union supports a mandatory challenge inspection provision, and his invitation to Conference delegations to visit the Soviet chemical weapons facility at Shikhany. We welcome these steps.

During the summer part of the session, a number of new and important ideas were put forward. This makes it clear that the negotiations are not stagnating, and that delegations are searching for solutions to real problems. Let me cite a few examples. In CD/757, the French delegation identified a real security problem faced by States with small stockpiles and proposed possible solutions. Canada and Norway pooled their expertise on the investigation of use of chemical weapons and proposed, in CD/766, an annex on this important subject. The United Kingdom presented a thoughtful analysis in CD/769 of the steps that need to be taken to ensure that the verification system functions effectively from the very beginning of the convention. The distinguished Director for Political Affairs at the Finnish Foreign Ministry, Ambassador Kahiluoto, proposed in his plenary statement on 7 July that efforts be undertaken to co-ordinate the various national-level CW verification projects that are under way. All of these proposals represent fresh thinking about how to solve the problems that remain before us.