

(Mr. Lowitz, United States)

-years and where the risk of use in the future is greatest. And it is precisely developing countries which are the most vulnerable and which can least afford to divert scarce resources to chemical defence. We cannot agree with those who argue that a ban on chemical weapons should somehow be dependent on progress in other matters before the conference or that it is a matter of interest to only a few countries.

I believe that an effective chemical weapons convention can be achieved. The disturbing trends mentioned earlier do not have to get out of hand. But it will require a new sense of urgency and dedication from all of us. The Conference cannot continue on a "business as usual" basis and expect to succeed.

What then is to be done? Let me offer some specific suggestions.

First, our work must be put on a more rational schedule. Under the present arrangements no serious negotiations take place between mid-August and late February. Almost half of each year is being wasted. No other international negotiation operates in such a fashion. Our experiments with a three-week session in January have not succeeded -- for a variety of reasons. A better way needs to be found. For this reason my delegation strongly supports the proposal for a six-week negotiating session in the autumn.

Understandably, a number of delegations have pointed to the difficulties such a schedule would pose for existing staffing patterns. Concern has been expressed that the benefits might not outweigh the costs. I believe that a more rational schedule would lead quickly to better results. Of course, there is no way to know in advance. But there is a way to ensure that negotiations do not move forward in the six months between August and February. If there is no negotiating session there will be no progress. Instead of following a course that will clearly not help to accelerate the negotiations, let us take an initiative to provide the framework for swifter progress.

The second suggestion for accelerating the negotiations is for the Conference to identify and focus on the truly pivotal issues. At times it seems that the negotiations have become entangled in a thicket of secondary issues. Each of these issues is important to at least one delegation. But solving these numerous complex issues one-by-one will not move the negotiations ahead very quickly. The Conference should concentrate its efforts on those issues which are the keys to progress. In every negotiation there are a few such issues. If progress can be made on these pivotal issues, momentum will build up and secondary issues will be resolved much more rapidly.

At the current stage of the negotiations, three issues seem to my delegation to be the keys to progress. One is the declaration of locations of chemical weapons stocks and chemical weapons production facilities. A second is how to ensure that chemical weapons are not produced under the guise of commercial chemical production. The third is what approach to take to challenge inspection. Today I will briefly recall the approach to each issue proposed in the United States draft convention (CL/500) and elaborated in the statement by my delegation on 23 August 1984.