

Mr. FRIEDERSDORF (United States of America): Mr. President, very briefly, I know the hour is late, but I would like to respond if I might. Our delegation has listened with great interest to the statement of the distinguished Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, in which he described proposals for various aspects of the chemical weapons convention. We will, of course, study this statement in depth during the coming days and we will no doubt have more detailed comments in the future. I would like to take the opportunity to welcome this initiative of the Soviet Union, and express our optimism that this proposal will bring our positions closer together.

Of course, our delegation recognizes that closing the gap between the positions of the United States and the Soviet Union is but one step toward a CW convention, albeit an important one. There are 38 other equal negotiating partners, whose views must be taken into account. I remarked last month in this Chamber that we have seen, during this session, a gradual convergence of those views. We must acknowledge, however, that significant differences remain on some of our more complex issues, such as monitoring non-production in the civil chemical industry; the organizational infrastructure that will oversee the convention; challenge inspection; and security during the period between the treaty's effective date and the conclusion of chemical weapon stockpile destruction. Then there is a difficult problem of what to do with those chemical plants that do not fall within the present definition of a chemical weapons production facility, but which nevertheless have the capability to produce chemical weapons, or their key precursors. Further, after the Conference reaches consensus on a treaty text, how do we persuade other chemical-weapon-possessing States outside the Conference to accept it? This threat posed by non-parties is a problem we should address in future meetings. The issues I have mentioned are not all the issues remaining unresolved, nor are they necessarily the most important, but they illustrate that there are deep-seated differences, based on national interests, and they illustrate that we still have much work ahead of us. As we move toward conclusion of our 1987 Conference on Disarmament session, and begin preparations for next year, we know that our task is not an easy one, but we also know that, with constructive steps, such as the Soviet Union has taken today, that task will be considerably easier.

(Mr. Friedersdorf, United States)

Our delegation also welcomes the opportunity to meet with Soviet representatives to gain a further understanding of these proposals mentioned today, before we return to our capitals to begin preparations for our future negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament.

As the Conference delegations are aware, Vice-President Bush, on behalf of the United States, tabled a draft chemical weapons convention here three years ago, and our delegation has been engaged in concluding a convention based on that proposal and the views of all delegations to this Conference, and will continue to do so.