

(Mr. Rostow, United States)

been confirmed by new evidence from south-east Asia -- evidence of the use of prohibited lethal mycotoxins, which are particularly cruel and inhumane weapons of war. The production and use of such weapons raises most serious questions about compliance with existing international constraints on such activities, including the biological and toxin weapons Convention of 1972 and the 1925 Geneva Protocol, to which the Soviet Union is a party. This development demonstrates the necessity of further consideration of the adequacy of applicable verification and compliance provisions.

It is vital that all countries concerned co-operate to the fullest extent with the work of the United Nations Group of Experts investigating this matter. It will not suffice simply to call attention to the problems. We deserve answers. The 1979 anthrax outbreak in Sverdlovsk has never been adequately explained. The Soviet Union and its friends and allies have vehemently denied that the Soviet Union is engaged in any way in the use of toxins or other chemical weapons. But it remains altogether unwilling to discuss these matters in detail or to offer the kind of co-operation that might alleviate the legitimate concerns of the world community. Soviet behaviour in the face of such inquiries has simply deepened the suspicions and anxiety of all persons of goodwill. This is a fact of particular importance to the work of this Committee.

It is therefore essential that the verification of compliance with arms control treaties be made a central feature of our work programme here. Until the nations agree on the principle of far-reaching international co-operation in monitoring and enforcing compliance with such agreements, arms control and disarmament cannot begin to achieve their full potential as programmes of peace. The Soviet Union has recently stated that while it continued to rely primarily on national means of verification of compliance with arms control treaties, it was willing to accept co-operative means of verification where circumstances make such procedures necessary and desirable. The United States welcomes this assurance. And it recalls the fact that in 1947 the Soviet Union made a far more comprehensive statement of its readiness to accept inspection and other co-operative means of verification in the interest of arms control during the consideration of the United States' proposal for the international control of nuclear energy, known as the Baruch Plan. The volatility and fragility of the international atmosphere make it essential that the Soviet Union go beyond President Brezhnev's statement of 23 November 1981, to Foreign Minister Gromyko's earlier and more ample offer.

Thus far, I have alluded only in passing to the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. That is because in many respects its shape and the nature of its contribution to our common endeavours cannot yet be clearly foreseen. In no small part, what happens in New York in June will depend upon what happens here between now and then. The Committee's work on the comprehensive programme of disarmament will be a major input. In that effort, the United States wishes to play an active and energetic role. But, obviously, all does not rest on what we do here. Much will depend on whether the behaviour of States conforms to their professed goals and intentions. The work of the second special session will be particularly sensitive to this factor. Let us hope that, to the extent that we can influence events, this Committee will contribute to a special session which should be marked by a realistic appreciation of the role of arms limitations in the effort to maintain peace and security for all mankind.