

(Mr. Adelman, United States)

Two years ago, in his speech to the United Nations second special session devoted to disarmament, President Reagan noted that: "The use of chemical and biological weapons has long been viewed with revulsion by civilized societies. No peacemaking institution can ignore the use of these dread weapons and still live up to its mission".

It is the view of the United States Government -- and, as those of you who have worked with me in the United Nations and elsewhere know, my strong personal conviction as well -- that this Conference should put its highest priority and its utmost efforts toward achieving a complete global ban on chemical weapons. Make no mistake about it, the dangers of chemical weapons proliferation are increasing. The problem is getting much worse.

Last April, Vice President Bush introduced our draft convention, and the negotiations subsequently intensified. We should not ease up until we have succeeded in effectively abolishing these weapons. Our proposed ban on chemical weapons focuses world attention on the issue and thereby helps to re-establish international norms long respected and now so much in danger of eroding.

In this connection, we were very heartened when the United Nations Secretary-General, on 5 February, urged that a comprehensive test ban on chemical weapons be completed by the end of 1985. We fully endorse his injunction. We hope that the Soviet Union will engage in serious negotiations on every element of the United States draft with that goal in mind. Were that goal met, 1985 would become a historic year in the annals of arms control -- much as 1968 became with the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The Conference on Disarmament would be infused with new importance to world affairs, which is so badly needed.

We recognize that chemical weapons pose some of the most confounding verification problems encountered in the vast realm of arms control. For this very reason, we are seeking new and rather bold approaches, including an "open invitation" for mandatory international inspection on short notice.

As I noted earlier, overcoming the problems of verification and compliance is essential. Arms control is empty without compliance; and compliance, particularly for a closed society, is impossible to establish without verification. A ban on chemical weapons honoured by open societies and violated by closed societies would be no ban at all. It would constitute unilateral disarmament in the guise of multilateral arms control.

During the course of these discussions, I also encourage the Conference to look carefully at how to handle chemicals normally used in industry or agriculture, but which also can be used for the manufacture of chemical weapons. Chemical weapons used in Iraq's war with Iran were produced from just such substances. To help prevent development and use of chemical weapons in the future, we need to ensure that steps are taken to control the export of such chemicals and related equipment and technology. Countries with advanced chemical industries have a special obligation in this regard, and in the future should exercise considerable restraint. Personally, I believe this is an ever-increasing priority in arms control.