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Statement by
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Informal Heads of Delegation Meeting - CSCE

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Mr. Chairman:

I rise to reply to a rather surprising statement by the Delegate from the Soviet Union at our plenary session last week. The procedural chaos on Tuesday made the exercise of this right of reply inappropriate; our long list of speakers on Friday made it undesirable. I will address myself now to a narrow portion of the Delegate's strange criticism of my country. Since this is an informal meeting of the heads of delegation, I will do so with some specificity, comfortable in the knowledge that it will not serve to divert our attention from the violence that has been perpetrated against the people of Poland in violation of the Helsinki Final Act.

The Soviet Delegate criticized my Government for engaging in chemical warfare preparation. The reason I describe this reference as "surprising" and "strange" is that I would have thought this to be a subject that the Soviet Union would want to keep away from, since they have made every effort to hide from the world their own priority attention to this form of brutality.

All of mankind lives with the horrible reality that the unravelling mysteries of science and technology have so intensified Man's capacity to be brutal to Man that he runs the risk of destroying himself and his planet. This conference in Madrid is another in a long series of searching steps to seek means of minimizing the threat of war and violence for us and our children. This is why so many of us here have expressed our deep concerns about the tragic developments in Poland.

Reason and conscience demand that we continue to work for agreements and treaties among ourselves to increase the degree of sanity governing relations among states. Principle X of the Helsinki Final Act is based on the premise that if there is to be any confidence in our capacity to begin weaving the fabric of understanding among us so essential to our survival, those international treaties must be looked upon as sacred ones, to be scrupulously observed. When they are not observed, we must, as we did all of last week on Poland, and as we will continue to do, express our outrage and disappointment.

As early as 1925, with the expansion of new frontiers of knowledge, statesmen with vision understood the need to deal with the awful realization that Man then had the capacity to unleash poisons in the air. In that year, the Geneva Protocol was signed banning the use of chemical and bacteriological gases.

Science continued to evolve and prove the maximum that the devil too evolves. The more powerful nations, including our own, found themselves in a race to adapt new learning to wartime use. The growing sophistication of bacteriology and chemistry now provided additional instruments of horrible destruction.

The United States, in an effort to inject sanity into the process, unilaterally renounced its use of those weapons in 1969. A sensible solution then emerged: let us agree mutually to renounce the use of biological or toxic weapons. An international convention toward that end was signed in 1972 by 111 countries. The pledge taken was not to "develop, produce, stockpile or otherwise acquire and retain" these biological weapons.

Most of the world greeted that step with enthusiasm. This was not an arms limitation; it was a disarmament agreement. We knew that the treaty did not provide for ways to insure verifiability, but we were convinced that the treaty would be observed because the alternative was too awful to be contemplated by the rational mind. This proved to be a naive error.

It is with regret, Mr. Chairman, that I bring to the attention of this meeting that the Geneva Convention of 1925 and the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention have both been seriously and deliberately violated by the Soviet Union. The consequences are most serious. The realization that even in this area the Soviet Union operates without restraint affects our confidence in any agreement signed by the Soviet Union. The need for absolute and unmistakable verification of any agreement to be entered into is now for us unconditional.

But the violation of Principle X of the Helsinki Final Act represented by these transgressions, serious as it is, is not our only deep concern arising from this disregard for international law and human decency. There is an intense moral and practical concern as well.

It is unmistakable that innocent people in Laos, Kampuchea, and Afghanistan have been victims of a deadly poison rained

down upon them by airplanes carrying, among other lethal agents, potent mycotoxins of the trichothecene group. Death, often with victims choking on their own blood, occurs within an hour after exposure. This biological warfare agent has either been used by Soviet planes and Soviet pilots, or supplied by the Soviet Union to the pilots and planes of others.

Soviet scientists have been working on biological weapons since the 1930's. Judging by its published scientific articles, the emphasis of their work has been on how to produce the poison in massive quantities, rather than on how to create antidotes, or on how to prevent bacteriological attacks. Furthermore, we have sound reason to believe that during 1963-67 the Soviet Union tested its poison gases and bacteriological toxins in combat during Egypt's war with Yemen.

In April 1979, an explosion occurred at Soviet Military Compound No. 19 in Sverdlovsk in the Ural Mountains. That explosion released a cloud of anthrax spores into the atmosphere. The Compound was then and is today the site of a Soviet biological weapons research and production facility. It is reported that more than 1,000 people died in that explosion. The amount of spores released into the air was much too large to be a research sample. It indicated that the Soviets were mass-producing the bacillus. We are aware of five other such facilities in operation today.

Refugee victims from the areas of biological poisoning tell tales of either "yellow rain" or "blue rain" or "black rain." The amounts of poison found on the scene and recovered demonstrate that they were manufactured and not produced by nature. The only known factories in the world that manufacture these poisons are in the Soviet Union. Their use, in defiance and violation of international agreements, merits the condemnation of civilization.

Now let me move to the related question of chemical warfare, raised by the Soviet Delegate.

The record will show that in 1969 the United States ceased the production of all chemical weapons and has today only one chemical weapon production facility, which is no longer usable or used.

The record will also show that today the Soviet Union operates at least fourteen chemical weapon production facilities. Its armies are better equipped, better organized and better trained in chemical warfare than any others in the world. Each Soviet combat unit, down to the regimental level,

has a sizeable chemical warfare contingent. Chemical warfare specialists are assigned at the company level. It is estimated that there are close to 100,000 personnel with chemical warfare training, a training which uses actual chemical agents. Soviet artillery units are regularly equipped with various kinds of chemical warfare shells and other weapons. The Soviet Union has without doubt invested heavily in all aspects of chemical warfare.

My government, therefore, found itself in a position of having unilaterally renounced production of all chemical weapons in 1969 while the Soviet Union recklessly proceeded in an effort to gain world supremacy in this area of warfare. To meet this dilemma constructively, we initiated in the 1970's an attempt to reach an agreement with the Soviet Union on a comprehensive and verifiable joint ban on all chemical weapons.

I have been informed by experts that the question of verification is a complex and difficult one. We concluded that on-site inspection was a prerequisite for agreement. We found that the Soviet Union rejected all suggestions for on-site inspection. It appeared to us that the Soviets had no incentive to enter into an agreement with us. They possessed a decisive advantage in this field because of our inactivity and saw no reason to give it up. Nevertheless, they continued to talk, without decision; and we saw that their purpose in going through the form of the negotiation was to impede the ability of the United States to protect its own interests by building an adequate deterrent capability. We concluded that it was essential to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that we would now deny them any significant military advantage from using chemical weapons. We would improve our defenses against their use and thereby prayerfully reduce casualties; but it was also necessary for us to maintain a capability to retaliate so as to reduce any incentive that the Soviets might have for the first use of these awful weapons.

It is thus the reluctant policy of the United States to build and maintain a chemical munitions stockpile to deny a significant military advantage to any who would seek to initiate their use. We are making only those improvements necessary to provide us with a credible and effective deterrent.

It is our fervent hope that this program will provide an incentive to the Soviet Union to join us in seeking a complete and verifiable ban on the production, development and stockpiling of all such weapons.

Our objective is not to produce chemical weapons. We have demonstrated the genuineness of that objective by our unilateral action of 1969. Our objective is to achieve a complete and verifiable prohibition of chemical warfare. Our unilateral restraint has not worked and has instead only resulted in a significant imbalance between our capability and that of the Soviets. It is necessary for us to try another approach. We are doing so.

The official position of our government was stated in the following announcement from the White House:

"The Administration's ultimate goal in the area of chemical warfare (CW) is a complete and verifiable ban on the production and stockpiling of chemical weapons. Until such a ban can be obtained, our objective, consistent with existing treaties and international law, is to deter the use of chemical weapons. The U.S. will not use chemical weapons unless chemical weapons are first used against us or our allies. The U.S. does not and will not possess biological or toxic weapons."

We have had enough self-serving and misleading allegations and assertions by the Soviet Union here and elsewhere. The search for peace will not be achieved by propaganda. The search for peace will be achieved by actions consistent with peace. That is what our delegation has been asking for at this meeting. When we see action which merits a constructive response from us, I want to assure this body that our response will be immediately and generously and enthusiastically forthcoming. Until then we will expose the propaganda for what it is, just as we will continue to use this forum to expose the violations of the Helsinki Final Act, including the violence against the people of Poland, for what they are.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.