ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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SIXTY FIRST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FIRST COMMITTEE (DISARMAMENT)

STATEMENT BY

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New York
9 October 2006
Madam Chairperson,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Ambassador Mona Juul, most warmly, on your election as Chairperson of this august forum.

I also thank the Under-Secretary-General Nobuaki Tanaka for guiding this panel.

It gives me great pleasure to address once again the First Committee, which plays such a pivotal role in guiding the international-disarmament agenda, and which is crucially linked to the achievement of recognised milestones in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

The Tenth Anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and of the establishment of its implementing body, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, will fall on 29 April 2007. Within relatively a short time-span, and despite the ebb and flow we have seen in the wider field of disarmament and non-proliferation, the Convention has been accepted more and more broadly by the international community as a credible and unique instrument for the destruction and future non-proliferation of a whole category of weapons of mass destruction. It is being effectively implemented, in particular, its disarmament agenda and the OPCW has emerged as a solid institution that is carrying out its mandate with dedication and determination. We remain steadfast in our goal of ridding the planet completely of chemical weapons. Our membership has been increasing steadily, and has recently reached the impressive figure of 180 States Parties.

While it is natural to take some satisfaction at such achievements, we are nevertheless fully conscious of the many significant challenges that lie ahead. There remain a small number of countries that have yet to join the Convention. They number only 15 and we know that some of them, in fact, are effectively moving to join us. However, a few others appear to be putting off joining the Convention indefinitely. This latter group of States are players in well-known sensitive regions of the world.

The fact remains, however, that, it is precisely in areas of conflict that, in the interest of peace and security, we need to ensure complete chemical disarmament in accordance with the spirit and the provisions of the Convention. But I will have more to say about universality in a few moments.

At this stage, let me mention the equally indispensable need to secure the effective implementation, in full and on time, by all States Parties to the Convention of their obligations under it.

With these points in mind, then, I would like, Madam Chairperson, to offer a brief overview of current developments in the area of chemical disarmament and non-proliferation.

The framers of the Convention set possessor States Parties the ambitious task of destroying over 71,000 metric tonnes of chemical-warfare agent and nearly 9 million munitions. Eliminating this huge stockpile of extremely toxic and dangerous substances, while ensuring that neither people nor the environment are harmed, was always going to be a daunting challenge for these States Parties. The destruction of more than 14,700 metric tonnes of chemical-warfare agent in the six possessor States Parties has been verified. This represents over 20% of the total declared stockpile in the world.

Similarly, the destruction of 2.6 million, or more than one-quarter, of declared munitions and containers has been verified by OPCW inspection teams.
While these figures are a sign of steady progress, it is just as clear that the majority of the world's stockpile of chemical weapons has yet to be destroyed.

Five possessor States Parties have requested extensions of the final destruction deadlines to dates beyond 2007 with plans to eliminate their declared chemical weapons stockpiles prior to April 2012 which is the final deadline set by the Convention.

The lion's share of resources and inspection time, are, of course, devoted to the destruction campaigns in the two possessor States Parties with the largest declared stockpiles, namely, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

In the Russian Federation, the chemical weapons destruction programme is gaining the necessary momentum. Operations at the destruction facility in Gorny were completed in December 2005. Two new facilities in Kambaraka and Maradykovsky became operational in December 2005 and August 2006 respectively. The Russian Federation plans to begin destroying chemical weapons at three other chemical weapons destruction facilities, located at Leonidovka, Pochep and Shchuchye, in 2008. A fourth facility in Kizner — the last one to be constructed — will be operational in 2009. The whole Russian chemical weapons stockpile, comprising more than 39,000 tonnes of blister and organophosphorous agents, is thus scheduled for destruction by April 2012.

These plans reinforce the assurances from the Russian Government of its resolve to accelerate the pace of destruction, and to meet this State Party's obligations under the Convention. And I commend both the effort and the commitment underlying it.

Indeed such positive signs are most welcome, since until recently the slow pace at which the Russian Federation's large stockpile was being destroyed gave cause for understandable concerns.

I applaud the assistance of the G8 countries and other donors to support the Russian Federation's destruction programme, and I hope that this vital cooperation will continue and be further reinforced in the future.

In the United States of America, 9 destruction facilities are currently operational, and more than 36% of the American stockpile has been destroyed to date. These figures make abundantly clear the commitment of this State Party to comply with its obligations under the Convention, which is vitally important for the achievement of its object and purpose.

Scepticism and concern are sometimes expressed about whether chemical weapons can in fact be eliminated as the Convention foresees and requires. I continue to remain positive and optimistic on this matter.

Two conditions are essential in order for efforts in this vital area to be sustained. These are: an unwavering political will and, under girding it, specific plans for the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles.

I will continue to urge all States Parties to approach this matter in a constructive spirit and to support governments in their efforts to achieve the targets concerned.

There are some important milestones that provide indications that we are on track. In addition to the chemical weapons stockpiles, all 65 former chemical weapons production facilities, which were declared by 12 States Parties, have been permanently deactivated.

The destruction, or the conversion for legitimate purposes, of over 87% of these facilities has already been certified by OPCW inspectors, and the remainder are expected to be destroyed by the end of 2007 or converted by the end of 2008.

A good example of this beating of swords into ploughshares is the conversion by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya of its former chemical weapons production facility, which will be devoted to producing low-cost vaccines and medicine for the African continent.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya's chemical weapon stockpile is now expected to be destroyed by the year 2011, following its request for extensions of its intermediate and final destruction deadlines.
India achieved the destruction of 45% of its stockpile ahead of schedule, in November 2003. Chemical weapons are now being destroyed at India’s second destruction facility. According to India’s request for an extension of its final destruction deadline, all of its stockpile will be eliminated by 28 April 2009.

On its part, another State Party continues to move steadily towards fulfilment of its obligations to eliminate its chemical weapons stockpile.

Albania is also moving forward, and we expect it to be able to start disposing of its declared stockpile no later than November of this year. Albania recently requested the extension of its intermediate destruction deadlines, but all declared chemical weapons will be destroyed by the end of April 2007.

Madam Chairperson,

While we must persevere in upholding the provisions of the Convention that cover disarmament, there are other pressing priorities that need to be tackled.

The Convention contains provisions and obligations that, if effectively implemented, will go a long way toward addressing the international community’s heightened concerns about proliferation and possible terrorist acts perpetrated through the use of chemical weapons.

Lax controls over the trade in, or the manufacture, or sale of, toxic materials not only could lead to their proliferation, but also heighten the risk of chemical terrorism, especially since knowledge and the skills needed to produce rudimentary types of chemical weapon are not difficult to acquire.

The Convention now covers over 98% of the worldwide chemical industry relevant to it, and over 90% of the world’s population.

Over 2,500 inspections have been completed by OPCW inspection teams at more than 946 sites in 76 States Parties. While the majority of these have been at production, storage, and destruction facilities relating to chemical weapons, we have also completed over 1,100 industry inspections, and will continue to increase gradually the number of industrial inspections that we conduct each year.

With the support and cooperation of our Member States, and indeed of the world’s chemical industry, whose valuable support for the Convention, I would like to acknowledge, the non-proliferation and confidence-building regime of the Convention has gained global acceptance.

However, we need to ensure that every Member State of the OPCW establishes the administrative and legislative measures to detect, pursue, and prosecute any breach of the Convention by its nationals on its territory.

Recognising this imperative, the First Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention held in 2003 adopted an action plan to encourage all States Parties, especially those that had fallen behind in meeting their national-implementation obligations, to take the steps necessary to meet the Convention’s obligations regarding national implementation.

The Conference of the States Parties to the Convention at its Tenth Session held last year acknowledged the significant results achieved by States Parties in implementing their obligations.

There is an increase in the number of States Parties that were in the process of enacting the necessary legislation, including penal legislation, or of adopting administrative measures. The number of States Parties that have enacted comprehensive legislation had increased from approximately 50 in October 2003 to 68 by the end of September 2006, and 110 States Parties had informed the Secretariat of the legislative and administrative measures they had adopted. Of these, 93 had submitted the text of their implementing legislation.

At the same time, the number of States Parties that had designated or established their National Authority—a step required under the Convention—had increased by the end of September from 126 to 168, or 94% of all States Parties. While these figures represent satisfactory progress in the
implementation of the plan of action, more must clearly be done to ensure that the key provisions of the Convention requiring systematic declarations, industry monitoring, controls on transfers of chemicals, and regulatory measures to identify and track chemicals of concern, are in place in each and every State Party.

In the last three years over 130 States Parties to the Convention have requested and received from the Secretariat and several States Parties, the support they have needed to establish their own capacity to apply the chemical weapons ban nationally. This year again, the Conference will closely examine the status of implementation of the Convention globally and will, if necessary make appropriate recommendations.

It is evident that more needs to be done by a considerable number of States in order to fully implement the Convention in their territories. I urge them to do so in the belief that full implementation by all Member States is indispensable for the ultimate success of the Convention. The OPCW remains ready to actively support them in their endeavours to that end.

The United Nations has encountered a similar situation with regard to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1540. Our outreach activities and a sustained programme of assistance have contributed to the endeavours of many States Parties in closing the gap between joining the Convention and implementing it.

We are glad to add a new chapter to our ongoing collaboration with the United Nations, especially its Department for Disarmament Affairs, in the context of its own outreach activities that are connected to the implementation of resolution 1540. I wish to assure you that, through various forums organised by the UN in different regions of the world, the OPCW will continue to make active contributions by sharing its experience and its expertise with Member States of the UN with a view to advancing our common objectives.

Further efforts are being undertaken by the OPCW in the implementation of Articles X and XI of the Convention, which cover international cooperation and assistance. These are areas that are of particular interest to our many Member States whose economies are developing or in transition.

Contemporary security threats, including the possibility of the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors, have created a renewed interest in the ability of the OPCW to coordinate the delivery of emergency assistance to States Parties in case of an attack or the threat of an attack with chemical weapons. We are working purposefully to strengthen this capacity.

Last year the OPCW Secretariat participated in a major field exercise, Joint Assistance 2005 in Ukraine. We continue to draw valuable lessons from this exercise, in terms of building the capacity of States Parties to coordinate with international organisations, such as the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Relief Coordination Centre of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), which also participated in, and provided valuable support for the exercise.

Madam Chairperson,

The OPCW and the UN enjoy fruitful cooperation in a number of areas, based on the relationship agreement between them.

Recently, I had the pleasure of attending the Seventh High-Level Meeting with Regional and Other Governmental Organisations, hosted by the Secretary-General, H.E. Mr Kofi Annan. The meeting gave me the opportunity to provide an overview of the OPCW's efforts to contribute to the common goal of a sustainable, peaceful, and secure world.

Our links and our cooperation with the UN, especially the Department for Disarmament Affairs and its regional centres, continue to grow and be strengthened. I am confident that such collaboration will enable us also to fulfil the expectations of Member States expressed by the General Assembly in the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted in September 2006.

This important strategy encourages the OPCW to continue to help States to build their capacity to prevent terrorists from accessing chemical materials, to ensure security at chemical and
related facilities, and to respond effectively in the event of an attack in which such materials are used.

We have begun a process of examination and consultations to determine how best we might respond, within our mandate, to this request of the international community.

Madam Chairperson,

Allow me to recall once more that universal adherence to the Convention is an objective that is fundamental to the goal of strengthening the global ban on chemical weapons and of ensuring that its prohibitions are accepted globally. We have witnessed remarkable progress in meeting the goals set by the action plan for the universality of the Convention—a plan recommended by the First Review Conference in May 2003.

There were 40 States not Party to the Convention in 2003, when the universality action plan was adopted. Today there remain only 15. We warmly welcome the new accessions and ratifications. By choosing to join the Convention, these new States Parties have made a critical contribution to advancing the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Indeed, as I mentioned at the beginning of my statement, membership in the OPCW today stands at 180 countries. Of these, 6 have joined the Convention since I last addressed this Committee: Djibouti, Haiti, Liberia, the Comoros and most recently the Central African Republic for which the Convention will enter into force on the 20th of this month.

For its part, Iraq has informed us that it is taking steps to accede to the Convention in the near future. We welcome the recent decision by the Council of Ministers of Iraq to recommend their country’s accession to the Convention. We plan to build on our recent fruitful cooperation that includes training opportunities for Iraqi officials, and will continue to extend all possible assistance to help Iraq follow through on its decision to join the Convention.

On the other hand, despite the high level of participation in the Convention in all regions of the world, there is a gap that continues to be of concern to States Parties and the OPCW. Several of the remaining 15 countries have cited logistical or resource constraints as the cause of their delay in joining. Others have assured us that they are in the process of preparing to accede or ratify.

The real concerns, however, lie elsewhere on account of the apparent lack of political will to join a treaty that conforms to the disarmament ideals of the international community in terms of its non-discriminatory character and its strong verification system.

A significant part of the Middle East represents a serious void on our map, since neither Egypt nor Israel, neither Lebanon nor Syria, has yet joined the Convention, even though, as is well known, Israel has signed it.

A similar situation exists in North-East Asia where the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is still not a State Party. I regret to say that North Korea is the only country that has not responded at all to any of our initiatives for contacts and dialogue. When I consider this in the context of the news that has shocked the world today, I cannot but join others in expressing serious concerns about the security situation on the Korean peninsula.

The only other State not Party in Asia, Myanmar, is an original signatory to the Convention. By signing, it has indicated its political decision to respect the provisions of the Convention. We have intensified our interactions with Myanmar, with a view to encouraging further its ratification at the earliest.

Madam Chairperson,

In the context of our broader approach to promoting the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we are looking forward to a key event that will take place in the coming weeks.

The third workshop on the universality of the Convention in the Mediterranean Basin and the Middle East will take place in Rome later this month.

This meeting will follow previous gatherings in Malta and Cyprus in 2004 and 2005, and will hopefully build upon the fruitful exchanges that took place on both of those occasions.
I am grateful to the Foreign Ministers of Israel, Lebanon, and Syria, each of whom has responded positively to my invitation by nominating an official delegation to participate in the event. This will allow each of these States not Party to take part in a candid, forward-looking dialogue that will have as a key aim their eventual adherence to the Convention. I also hope that we will be able to build on our positive contacts with Egypt, whose participation in such events would only add to their value and promote fruitful dialogues.

I once again appeal to all remaining non-Parties in the Middle East to seriously consider joining the Convention at an early date. Surely, taking this step can lend a significant impetus to advancing the aspirations of peace and security in the region.

Finally, I also appeal to the remaining States not Party in Africa and the Caribbean. In Africa, we hope that the few remaining States will soon join the rest of the continent in support of the Convention. I would encourage, Congo which presides over the AU and is also a member of the Security Council to take the leadership role in joining the Convention.

In the Caribbean sub-region, despite the relevant decisions of the OAS calling for the establishment of biological and chemical weapons-free-zone in Latin America, there are still three countries that are not yet States Parties. Their non-participation is becoming increasingly difficult to understand. These countries must surely understand that, at this late stage, their absence and their seeming indifference, even if not inspired by any fundamental disagreement with the object and purpose of the Convention, in fact undermine it and that this is increasingly at odds with the best interests of the international community. I therefore urge the Bahamas, Barbados, and the Dominican Republic to take urgent and concrete steps to join the Convention.

Madam Chairperson,

Another important and tangible aspect of the OPCW's international-cooperation activities is our programmes to build the capacities of our Member States to promote the peaceful application of chemistry and the peaceful pursuit of industry-related activities.

As Director-General, I am particularly conscious and supportive of the aspirations of the majority of our Member States in this important area.

I would mention particularly one endeavour that is the flagship of our international-cooperation activities: the Associate Programme. This annual course has now been held successfully seven times. The latest edition concluded at the end of September and was attended by representatives of 24 States Parties mostly with economies that are either developing or in transition.

The programme facilitates the application of those provisions of the Convention that are relevant to the chemical industry. Under the programme, national capacities in the peaceful uses of chemistry are enhanced through improvements in the skills of qualified chemists and chemical engineers from States Parties.

The Associate Programme has a comprehensive curriculum that encompasses theory and practical experience in the implementation of the Convention and the OPCW's activities. It also incorporates a range of activities such as lectures, visits to specialised institutions, hands-on practice at chemical plants, and the participants' own research projects. A unique aspect of the programme is the support and cooperation of educational institutions, and a number of chemical-industry associations and companies to which we are deeply indebted.

At this point I would like to place on record the expression of my deepest gratitude to a number of States Parties for their voluntary contributions to this and other critical activities of the OPCW. This includes valuable contributions from the European Union, Japan and the United States as a whole, to support the Secretariat's programmes in the area of national implementation, international cooperation, and the promotion of universality.

Madam Chairperson,

May I say in closing that we continue to make steady gains in implementing the programme priorities of the Convention and those established by States Parties.
These gains are reflected in the sustained progress we have made in:
- ensuring a credible and transparent regime to both verify the destruction of chemical weapons and prevent their re-emergence;
- in consolidating our efforts to prepare for exigencies that would require the coordination of assistance and protection if ever a Member State were to suffer an attack or the threat of an attack with chemical weapons;
- in promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of chemistry and assisting in national implementation of the Convention; and,
- in promoting the universal adherence to the Convention.

Together, we can take a measure of pride in the work of the OPCW—work that is underpinned by two fundamental principles: the centrality of the multilateral character of the Convention and the equal application of its provisions to all States Parties. All are equal under the rules of the Convention.

We remain totally committed to fulfilling our mission to implement the provisions of the Convention in order, in turn, to achieve the vision upheld by the international community of a world free of chemical weapons. In so doing, we seek to promote the larger goals of international peace, security, and stability. These are objectives that are consistent with the principles and purposes of the United Nations and the provisions of its Charter.

Thank you for your kind attention.