ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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SIXTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST COMMITTEE (DISARMAMENT)

“CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE FIELD
OF ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT
AND THE ROLE OF THE RESPECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS”

STATEMENT BY

H.E. AMBASSADOR ROGELIO PFIRTER
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
OF THE
ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

New York
17 October 2007
Mr Chairman,

Allow me at the outset, to express my congratulations to you on your election to chair the 1\textsuperscript{st} Committee of the 62\textsuperscript{nd} Session of the General Assembly. I wish you and this Committee every success in its important work.

Indeed, the crucial role that the 1\textsuperscript{st} Committee plays in guiding the international disarmament agenda makes it a privilege for me to address it once again and to provide an update on the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

This has been an important year for our Organization and its Member States. 29 April 2007 marked the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Commemorative events have taken place in all regions underscoring the importance States Parties attach to the Convention.

On 27 September, a High-Level Meeting was convened here at the United Nations at which some 120 Foreign Ministers and Permanent Representatives of UN Member States gathered to reaffirm their support for the noble objectives of the Convention and for the OPCW. As I stated on that occasion, while the symbolic theme of the Meeting was the tenth anniversary of the CWC, it was in fact an international congregation dedicated to peace, progress and multilateralism in the service of humanity.

In his statement, the UN Secretary-General, H.E. Mr Ban Ki-moon described the Convention as a truly significant accomplishment in the field of disarmament, and as a monument to the world’s determination to eliminate one of the most inhumane weapons ever conceived.

Mr Chairman,

The significance of these commemorations lies in the recognition of the OPCW's concrete achievements during the first ten years after its establishment.

In this relatively short period, our membership has reached the figure of 182 States – a rewarding result of the persistent efforts to promote universality of the Convention, and a sign of the broad support that the CWC enjoys amongst the great majority of the members of the international community.

In terms of its disarmament goals, over one third of all declared chemical weapons have been eliminated. As of 30 September 2007, more than 25,000 metric tonnes of the over 71,000 declared metric tonnes of chemical agents have been certified by the OPCW as destroyed. This represents around 35% of the declared stockpiles worldwide.

All 65 chemical weapons production facilities declared by 12 States Parties have been inactivated, and 94% of them have either been destroyed or converted for peaceful purposes in accordance with the Convention.

Our teams of inspectors continue to monitor continuously the destruction processes at the relevant facilities, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As of 31 August 2007, close to 1800 inspections have been carried out in connection with chemical demilitarisation or a total of 116,902 (or 85%) inspector days and 86 million kilometres flown around the globe. At the same time over, 1200 inspections have been carried out at chemical industrial facilities under article VI of the Convention.

The importance of a well-honed and efficient industry inspection regime that has been established cannot be overemphasised since this is fundamental to promote confidence among States Parties that chemical industry engages only in legitimate and peaceful activities thus advancing the security goals of the Convention.

Effective national implementation of the Convention within the domestic jurisdiction of our Member States represents an important factor in the eventual success of the Convention. We have developed programmes that ensure critical assistance to the national efforts in this area and the number of States Parties that have enacted comprehensive domestic measures to render the Convention effective in their respective legal orders is progressively increasing.

This is a vital area also in connection with global efforts to prevent terrorists and other individuals from acquiring, transferring and misusing dangerous substances and technologies to threaten our lives. Full
national implementation of the Convention thus represents a crucial contribution to global counter-terrorism efforts.

Within our international cooperation and assistance programmes, over 5,600 persons have been involved in a broad range of activities and exchanges aimed at the promotion of chemistry for peaceful purposes, and at enhancing the capacity of Member States to react in case of a threat or actual attack with chemical weapons.

Mr Chairman,

What has been accomplished, however, also brings into relief that which remains to be realized. And we are clear in our minds that significant challenges exist that would need to be addressed effectively in the near and the long term.

With less than four years remaining before the 2012 final deadline for completing the destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles, an understandable focus of our attention has been devoted to the ongoing destruction campaigns in the six possessor States.

On 11 July 2007, the OPCW and its Member States witnessed an historical landmark with Albania becoming the first possessor country to eliminate its chemical weapons stockpiles. This represents a truly momentous step not only for Albania, but also for the international community as a whole.

I wholeheartedly congratulate Albania for having fulfilled its obligations under the CWC despite the considerable technical challenges it encountered. I also pay tribute to the United States as well as Greece, Italy and Switzerland, for the critical support they provided to Albania.

In terms of the realisation of the object and purpose of the Convention, this development proves that chemical disarmament is within our reach — if one country can accomplish it, so can others.

As I had informed the Committee last year, the other five possessor States had requested and been granted extensions in the destruction deadlines. The United States and the Russian Federation, the two major possessors of chemical weapons, will have until 2012, which is the final non-extendable deadline under the Convention.

The Russian Federation has completed the destruction of 25% of its chemical weapons stockpile. Destruction activities in Russia have progressively intensified with the coming online of two new destruction facilities at Kambarka and Maradykovsky. Russia’s determination to fulfil its disarmament obligations is commendable. The assistance that the G8 countries and other donors provided in support of the Russian Federation’s destruction programme has been crucial to the increased momentum of chemical demilitarization in Russia, and I hope that this vital cooperation will continue in the future.

The other major possessor, the United States of America has destroyed over 13,000 metric tonnes of chemical-warfare agents. This represents 48% of the total US stockpiles and an important milestone in their destruction campaign. I wish to commend the commitment of the U.S. which began destroying its stockpiles before even before the Convention entered into force. Its resolve to honour the obligations under the Convention has remained steadfast. At the same time the U.S. has provided critically needed assistance to other countries in their own destruction efforts.

With respect to other possessor States, India has demonstrated exemplary resolve to complete destruction of its stockpiles within the extended April 2009 deadline. As a result, India has already destroyed 87% of its chemical weapons stockpile and by April 2009, it is expected to reach its 100% target.

Similarly, a State Party has already completed 94% destruction of its chemical weapons and deserves equal praise for its resolute adherence to its disarmament obligations. This State Party is expected to finish the process by the end of 2008.

On its part, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya’s has undertaken measures to ensure the destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile by the year 2011. This country recently informed our Executive Council that it was finalising arrangements for the setting up of the required destruction facility for completing this task within that deadline.
While these figures are a sign of steady progress, it is just as clear that the disarmament efforts will continue to demand most of our attention, energies and resources. The United States and the Russian Federation are facing the biggest burden in this context.

Although the total volume of chemical weapons destroyed so far falls short of what the Convention envisaged, this does not represent a deficit in the political will of the possessor States, but is a result of the technical and financial challenges encountered in the destruction process that the drafters of the CWC could not have fully anticipated.

We find encouragement in the visibly strong commitment to the Convention shown by all possessor States and by the recognition of their solemn obligation to complete destruction by the legally binding 29 April 2012 deadline.

Mr Chairman,

Together with our disarmament efforts, we need to continue to ensure that the non-proliferation regime under the Convention is implemented to its full potential and in all its aspects.

OPCW teams have carried out approximately 1200 inspections in 80 countries. This figure is bound to increase in the future as a result of the progressive completion of our disarmament task. Indeed, after the realisation of the disarmament objective, non-proliferation will surely become the core objective of the OPCW.

We must, therefore, ensure that the non-proliferation regime under the Convention remains effective. This will require continued refinement and higher intensity of our inspection verification efforts so that all categories of relevant facilities contemplated in the Convention especially the category known as the ‘other chemical production facilities’ are adequately covered under the verification regime.

The chemical industry like any other modern enterprise also continues to evolve, while the verification mechanism remains relatively stable. The increasing overlaps between chemical and biological sciences, the integration of chemical engineering into the life sciences, and the fusion between these and information technology are factors that have an impact on a number of areas of crucial relevance to the purposes of the Convention.

In the context of future challenges, we would need to take into account new technologies, such as nanotechnologies or the creation of new chemical manufacturing methodologies, which if abused, could lend to the fabrication of new chemical weapons and pose a danger to the verification regime established under the Convention.

For the mechanism to maintain its relevance and effectiveness in the future, the OPCW will have to adapt it to rapidly changing research, production and management methods throughout the global chemical industry.

Our Scientific Advisory Board is constantly engaged in ensuring that the mechanisms set forth in the Convention to enforce the chemical weapons ban keep pace with progress. But in this endeavour, the continued cooperation from scientists and engineers all over the world, as well as from the chemical industry, which has been a reliable partner of the OPCW, is vital. Here I wish to underline the admirable support and cooperation of the global chemical industry which has been crucial to the success of our endeavours.

While we endeavour to ensure that the norms in the Convention remain effective and respond to the evolving circumstances, the safety net against the possible acquisition, development and misuse of toxic chemicals and their precursors needs to be secured within the realm of our Members’ internal legal system. States Parties have to ensure that the prohibitions under the Convention are translated into domestic rules applicable to any individual or other entities operating within their jurisdiction or control.

We cannot feel secure so long as loopholes exist that could allow for possible criminal and terrorist uses of chemistry and its products.

As I mentioned earlier, on its part, the Organization has been assisting its Member States in promoting more effective national implementation of the Convention.
Since the First Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention held in 2003, which adopted an Action Plan to boost effective national implementation globally, there has been a steady increase in the number of States Parties that introduced the appropriate legislation, including penal legislation. The number of States Parties that have enacted comprehensive legislation has increased from approximately 50 in October 2003 to 77 at present, while additional 43 States Parties have enacted legislation covering some, albeit not all areas relevant to the Convention.

At the same time, the number of States Parties that had designated or established their National Authority—a requirement under the Convention and the key factor in its domestic implementation—had increased to 172, or 95% 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 are being implemented domestically.

The added threat posed by the ease with which some commonly available toxic chemical compounds can be used for nefarious purposes using rudimentary but widely available knowledge to weaponise, makes it incumbent on all States to be aware of and address the existing dangers. Full implementation of the Convention by all States Parties and working together in all regions and with all stakeholders is a necessary means to address the threat of chemical terrorism. Such an endeavour also accords entirely with the objectives of the United Nations Security Council’s non-proliferation efforts under resolution 1540.

The several attacks with chlorine carried out in Iraq underline the dangers that the misuse of toxic chemicals, even the most common ones, poses to our security.

Even though the OPCW is not an anti-terrorism agency, given the comprehensive prohibition against chemical weapons that falls within its remit, it has an important contribution to make in this area. This is to be realised both through its full implementation, as agreed by our Executive Council in September of 2001 after the abhorrent terrorist attacks against the United States, and also in the context of the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution on 1540 (2004). The obligations of the resolution in the area of chemical weapons are entirely consistent with those of the Convention. In other words, full and effective domestic implementation of the Convention enables States to also fulfil their obligations under resolution 1540.

Since the adoption of the resolution, the OPCW has extended appropriate cooperation to the UN, in particular to the Committee established under resolution 1540, as well as to other relevant UN bodies including the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED).

Last February, I briefed the Security Council’s meeting to review “Cooperation between the Security Council and International Organisations in the Implementation of Resolutions 1540(2004) and 1673(2006)”, and we have also participated actively in all the regional outreach events organised by the United Nations and other interested bodies to promote the implementation of resolution 1540 in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East. In extending our cooperation, the OPCW is responding to the call both by the UN Security Council and the General Assembly to play its due part in this critical challenge to international peace and security.

Mr Chairman,

Two other important pillars of our work relate to Article X and Article XI of the Convention, which cover international cooperation and assistance. These are areas that are of particular importance to our many Member States whose economies are developing or in transition.

The OPCW carries out a number of programmes that aim to build the capacities of our Member States to promote the peaceful application of chemistry and the pursuit of legitimate industry-related activities.

We have a number of regular activities designed to benefit our States Parties. These include courses to develop analytical skills, support for research projects and placement of interns at various institutions around the world.

One of our most well known training programmes is the Associate Programme. The programme is designed to provide chemists and chemical engineers from OPCW Member States, whose economies are either developing or in transition, with a greater understanding of the CWC, focusing on the promotion of the peaceful uses of chemistry and facilitates industry-related national implementation of the Convention.
while also aiming to enhance national capacities in the peaceful uses of chemistry through improvements in the skills of qualified chemists and chemical engineers.

International cooperation and assistance programmes also include elements for building the national capacities of our States Parties to deal with the threats or actual incidents involving the use of chemical weapons or toxic chemicals.

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.

The provisions of the CWC on assistance and protection establish important rights, as well as responsibilities for States Parties, and represent a key element of the security assurances that they receive when joining the Convention. In this area, the focus of the Organization is to develop a dependable capacity for the deployment of the humanitarian potential of the Convention, especially to deliver a quick emergency response that would be adequate to the gravity of the situation.

Mr Chairman,

The overwhelming majority of the international community is now part of the OPCW family. The fact that 182 States are today Parties to the Convention represents a general recognition that the norms against chemical weapons have acquired the force of international law.

While verification promotes confidence in compliance by States Parties, it is natural for concerns to be raised regarding those who choose not to join the Convention. Therefore, ensuring that the Convention is accepted by each and every country in the world is essential for its object and purpose to be realised fully. Once every possessor state that is a State Party to the Convention has completely eliminated its stocks of chemical weapons, there will not be a guarantee that such weapons have been completely eliminated from the world unless each member of the international community has embraced the Convention’s prohibitions by joining it.

It remains an important challenge for us to convince those states -- 13 to date -- to join the vast majority of countries in enforcing globally the hard-earned ban on chemical weapons.

It is reassuring to know that some of these countries are at an advanced stage in the process of acceding to the Convention by having completed the necessary parliamentary procedures. This includes Iraq and Lebanon. A team of Secretariat officials have recently returned from Lebanon where they had productive discussions with the Lebanese authorities concerning their accession and how the OPCW can be of assistance in this endeavour.

A few days from now, we will organise a training workshop in Amman, Jordan for Iraqi officials who would be involved in the implementation of the Convention once their country becomes a State Party. This would be the fourth such programme for Iraq and indicates the seriousness it attaches to joining the OPCW.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, we cannot unfortunately be as sanguine. Since countries such as Egypt, Israel— which has signed but not ratified the Convention— and Syria continue to cite regional security concerns for not joining the Convention. I for one firmly believe in the validity of the Convention no matter what the regional circumstances. In fact, joining it could only advance the cause of peace and security, especially in regions of tension.

I am grateful, particularly to Egypt and Israel who have not hesitated in keeping open the door for a constructive dialogue.

We also remain in close contact with the few remaining countries in Africa and the Caribbean whose political commitment to joining the Convention is not in question. They, however, need to resolve certain domestic administrative and resource constraints before they are able to accede. I must, however, urge them to do so at the earliest since a decade represents a sufficient period of time to prepare for joining a major international treaty absence from which for long can only lead to understandable concerns. I hope that Myanmar as a signatory will also take the long due next step to ratify the Convention and become a State Party.
The only country with virtually no contacts with the OPCW and no positive indication of its intentions is the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea. We can only hope that the present momentum towards the resolution of the nuclear issue will eventually have a salutary effect on DPRK's attitude towards the abolition of chemical weapons under the CWC.

Mr Chairman,

In sum, the OPCW will face important decisions in the coming years. These decisions would be crucial to ensure that the Convention's hard earned prohibitions remain relevant in the face of contemporary and future needs.

In particular, in addition to ensuring that the destruction process be timely completed, we will also have to see to it that the Convention will continue to be a critical tool against the re-emergence and non-proliferation of chemical weapons even after the existing arsenals have been totally eliminated. This would require a more robust industry verification regime, something that I have already touched upon, together with incorporating in this regime factors that take into account new scientific and technological developments.

At the same time, our continuously evolving security environment, calls for a greater deal of attention for the full and effective implementation of the Convention by all States, and for the importance of ensuring that the Convention is accepted globally by all members of the international community.

An early opportunity for such reflection and deliberations will present itself next year in April during the Second Review Conference of the Convention for which preparations are already underway through an Open Ended Working Group ably chaired by Ambassador Lynn Parker, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is my hope that, whilst showing the way forward, the Second Review Conference will be guided by a common desire to preserve and strengthen the OPCW.

Mr Chairman,

I wish to conclude my statement by recalling that the CWC and the OPCW are an example of the success of multilateralism that all our States Parties can be rightly proud of. The Convention represents the realisation of a long sought comprehensive prohibition against one of the most dangerous and inhumane category of weapons.

Our States Parties have spared no effort to ensure that the OPCW carries out its mandate effectively in order to ensure that the world will never again witness the devastating and horrendous effects of chemical weapons.

In my statement today, I have outlined both our achievements as well as our challenges. I have no doubt that the support and commitment that our Members have demonstrated at the OPCW will also galvanise our collective energies for dealing with other major priorities in the area of international peace and security including the promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Thank you for your attention.