Statement

by

Sergio Duarte
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations

Panel Discussion on the Tenth Anniversary of the Entry into Force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and of the inception of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Co-organized by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) during the 62nd Session of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly

United Nations Headquarters
19 October 2007
I would like to take the opportunity to thank Ambassador Badji, the Chairman of the First Committee and members of his bureau for allowing this event to take place in the programme of the Committee's thematic debate. I am honoured and pleased to welcome such an eminent group of panellists who will address various aspects and issues related to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. I look forward to a fruitful discussion to follow after the presentations by the speakers.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) on 29 April 1997 was undoubtedly a milestone in our efforts to achieve a world free of chemical weapons. Albania's successful completion last July of the destruction of its entire stockpile of chemical weapons is a significant step forward in fulfilling this great goal. I would personally like to reiterate and further underscore my appreciation to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for its significant accomplishments on the road to full implementation of this historic Convention.

The 10th anniversary of this Convention provides an excellent opportunity to reaffirm our collective commitment to multilateral treaties and to the objective and purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Several joint fora were organized by the United Nations together with the OPCW this year to commemorate this event. Today's panel discussion is but one of many of our efforts to mark this anniversary.

In close cooperation with the OPCW, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has actively promoted and publicized this anniversary event, both among UN Member States and the general public. We participated in the unveiling of the Memorial to chemical weapon victims in The Hague. We published on our website an electronic "Update" on the tenth anniversary. In June, we assisted in preparations for a workshop and exhibition on this theme, held in Geneva, and we helped in arranging for the OPCW's Director General to address the Conference on Disarmament. In September, we participated in the Academic Forum organized by the OPCW in The Hague, and helped to organize the High-level meeting on the CWC held at UN headquarters, which was addressed by our Secretary-General. We will soon be publishing the papers from that meeting. Finally, we also helped in arranging the OPCW's current Exhibition outside the General Assembly.

I can say without hesitation that the incremental growth in membership of the CWC, coupled with the efforts now underway by its states parties to fulfill their obligations under the Convention, testify to the strength of the global norm against chemical weapons. They reinforce the long-standing taboo against the use of such weapons dating back to the Geneva Protocol of 1925. Beyond this, the Convention helps to promote multilateralism, the rule of law, and even the ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament.

I therefore call upon all states to reaffirm their commitment to this historic instrument and to ensure that the OPCW has the political support and resources it needs to fulfil its important responsibilities in the years ahead. I also ask all Governments that
have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention without delay, and call upon all possessor States to complete their destruction according to the agreed deadlines.

The United Nations will continue to work together with the OPCW and the international community to continue to promote universality and full implementation of the Convention.