Statement by Mr. Reza Najafi  
Director for Disarmament and International Security  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran  
On “other weapons of mass destruction”  
At the Thematic Discussion of the 67th Session of the First Committee  
New York, 22 October 2012

---

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Mr. Chairman,

The Islamic Republic of Iran associates itself with the statement made by Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement on this cluster.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is the main victim of the use of chemical weapons in the contemporary history. As a result of more than 400 attacks with chemical warfare agents during the 8-year imposed war by Saddam against Iran from 1980 – 1988, more than 100,000 Iranian citizens were either martyred or injured that includes more than 7000 injuries among civilians as a result of nearly 30 attacks to Iranian cities and villages.

In one instance, on 28 June, 1987, Saddam’s warplanes unleashed sulfur mustard gas bombs on four residential areas of Sardasht, a town in the north-west of Iran. As a result, more than 130 unprotected civilians have been martyred and almost 5000 injured, who still continue to suffer from long-term complications. The anniversary of this tragedy is commemorated in Iran as the “National Day for Campaign against Chemical and Biological Weapons.”

Likewise, in 2010, the OPCW Executive Council invited the Director-General, on behalf of the OPCW, to convey annually on 28 June to the authorities and inhabitants of the city of Sardasht, a statement in memory of the chemical weapons attacks thereon, and to express sympathy for the victims.

In the implementation of that decision, in the past two years, OPCW Director-General made statements on the anniversary of this tragedy, and while conveying sincere sympathies to the authorities and people of the city of Sardasht, stated that "our hearts go out to those who continue to bear the painful consequences of exposure to chemical weapons". He further reaffirmed our resolve to rid the world permanently from the threat of chemical weapons and to guarantee that chemical weapons are never used again.
Needless to say, that Saddam's army could not produce these inhumane weapons without the assistance and support of certain western countries, particularly those who have a permanent seat in the Security Council and now imposing illegal sanctions on Iranian Nation.

According to the well-documented evidences, over 450 companies, mostly from western countries, including UK, France and the USA, were involved in the development of Saddam’s chemical weapons program. Nearly 30 US companies were among those which supplied through the Persian Gulf waterway more than two-thirds of equipment and materials required for such program.

Given that all of those companies were under scrutiny of their governments, they could not transfer chemical weapons precursors to Saddam without their governments’ blessing. Among them, France had also provided the dictator Saddam with other weapons including missiles and more than 60 warplanes to strengthen the dictator army for delivering such weapons in all fronts, particularly in the Persian Gulf targeting the ships.

Indeed, the use of chemical warfare agents, in particular against civilians, mostly women and children, is a clear manifestation of war crime and crime of genocide. While Saddam and some of his partners, as the major perpetrators of such crimes, have been properly punished, there remains the punishment of those who contributed to the development of Saddam’s chemical weapons program.

Despite this painful experience, Iran not only did not resort to using chemical weapons in retaliation for such attacks during the imposed war, but also has promulgated a very public stance against the use of chemical weapons, and afterwards actively participated in the negotiations of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Iran was among the first countries that signed and ratified this legally-binding instrument.

Universality of the CWC is of outmost importance to Iran, particularly in the volatile region of the Middle East. We urge all non-parties to the CWC to accede to the Convention without further delay. In this regard, it is regrettable that provision of scheduled chemicals to a non-party has been continued thus discourage it to join the Convention.

Total destruction of all chemical weapons stockpiles continues to remain the key objective of the CWC. in this context and as expressly reflected in the decisions of the policy-making organs of the OPCW, the major possessor States Parties in non-compliance with the final extended deadline of 29 April 2012, shall embark on sustained and accelerated efforts, within the framework of the CWC and its verification regimes, for full compliance with their obligations under the Convention.

As a result of such obvious non-compliance, the raison d’être of the Convention has seriously been challenged and its credibility has been significantly tarnished. Being a victim of chemical weapons used by Saddam's army with the support of certain western countries, Iran considers the non-compliance of major possessor State Parties with the 2012 final extended deadline for the total destruction of their chemical weapons as a setback in the operation of the Convention which seriously challenges its relevance and reliability. In our view, this important issue should be accurately reflected in the UN draft resolution on CWC.

My delegation stresses the importance of full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, in particular its Article XI and in this
regard highlight the need for full implementation of relevant decision of the 16th Conference of CWC States Parties. In this regard, we call upon the OPCW Technical Secretariat to expedite its efforts for the operationalization of International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons and its voluntary Trust Fund.

Mr. Chairman,

Concerning the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), while my delegation welcomes the successful conclusion of its 7th Review Conference, we emphasize on the full, comprehensive and effective implementation of the Convention as well as its universalization, which regretfully has not been realized after forty years since its entry into force.

To ensure the universality of the Convention, as the Seventh Review Conference decided States Parties should "take action to persuade non-parties to accede to the Convention without delay". In this context, we call upon all States Parties to remain fully committed to their obligations not to transfer equipment, materials (including biological agents and toxins), as well as scientific and technological information to non-Parties. In this regard, the biological cooperation between some States Parties with a non-Party to the Convention, particularly Canada and Israel is regrettable.

Needless to say that, introduction of disincentives for the non-parties to the Convention and ceasing cooperation with them would encourage and facilitate the realization of the universality of this instrument. Additionally, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention, including adoption of concrete measures to prohibit the transfer to non-parties of any material and technology which could be used in development of biological weapons, would further strengthen the role and enhance the relevance and credibility of the Convention.

We strongly support NAM position “on the importance of strengthening the Convention through multilateral negotiations for a legally binding Protocol”, which was unfortunately failed to conclude by the adversarial position of the US in 2001 after years of negotiations. We continue to believe that this very important issue should be addressed in order to explore ways and means to respond to the wish of international community on early conclusion of such an instrument.

Furthermore, we underline that the promotion of international cooperation as provided for in Article X and removing the arbitrary and politically motivated denials should be adequately dealt in the meetings of States Parties and an action plan consisting of practical and concrete measures to strengthen the implementation of the said Article, as the best way to reinforce the Convention, should be worked up.

In conclusion, we reiterate our belief in a total ban on the use of biological weapons, and in this connection, while appreciating the withdrawal of reservations to the 1925 Geneva Protocol by a number of States Parties, we strongly support the NAM position in calling upon those States that continue to maintain reservations to this Protocol, to withdraw them without any further delay.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.