



**ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

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

STATEMENT BY

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**Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure for me to address this Committee once again to report on the progress and developments in the chemical disarmament sphere, and the activities carried out by OPCW in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Mr Chairman, on your assumption of this important position. I am very grateful to you for giving me this opportunity to speak during the ‘action week’ of the First Committee. I would also like to express my thanks to the Secretary of the Committee, who facilitated these arrangements.

The work of the First Committee has a close and long-standing connection to the OPCW and the Chemical Weapons Convention. My presence here today is a reflection of this relationship and the importance we attribute to this forum for our own work.

Since my last intervention last year, the OPCW has registered significant progress on a number of fronts, and considerable momentum is being generated in the implementation of the Convention.

However, huge tasks and challenges remain before us – to achieve universal adherence to the Convention, to meet the timelines for destruction envisaged by the Convention, to translate its operative provisions into an effective web of national laws and implementing authorities and arrangements, and to achieve thereby the highest level of assurance to which the Convention aspires.

For this reason, my main message today is to stay the course – and to encourage and sustain the important momentum already created – for the immediate future and beyond.

The widespread support we are receiving from our ever-expanding group of Member States is vital in this endeavour.

As of this month, the total number of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention has increased to 174, confirming that the CWC continues to be the fastest growing disarmament treaty in history.

With your permission Mr Chairman, I would like to offer a brief overview of current developments in the area of chemical disarmament and non proliferation;

The six chemical weapons possessors continue to destroy their declared stockpiles which originally exceeded 71,000 metric tonnes of chemical agents, and nearly 9 million munitions and containers.

These chemical weapons stocks have been secured, and the destruction of more than 12,000 metric tonnes, or 17% of the total agent stockpile, has been verified.

Similarly, more than one-quarter, or 2.3 million of the declared munitions and containers have been verified as destroyed by OPCW inspection teams.

At the same time, it is evident that the lion's share of the task lies ahead.

Whilst most possessor States could complete their destruction campaigns by the time of, or before 2007, ten years following the Convention's entry into force, major challenges remain.

Of necessity, most of the effort continues to be deployed, in terms of destruction campaigns, resources, and inspection time, in relation to the two largest stockpiles in the Russian Federation and the United States. I have visited destruction sites and facilities in both of these Member States.

In Russia, not less than six facilities are to become operational in the course of the next four years, in addition to the destruction facility at Gorny where 1,000 metric tonnes have been destroyed to date, with the remainder of the stocks stored at the Gorny storage facility expected to be destroyed by the end of this year. A new facility is about to become operational in a few months in Kambarka, and others will follow.

I have personally received formal assurances from the Russian Government of its firm determination to move ahead decisively, to accelerate the pace of destruction, and to meet their obligations in time. Foreign Minister Lavrov, the Presidential delegate and Chairman of the Commission for Chemical Disarmament Kirienko,

as well as the officials in charge of the destruction programme have all been unanimous in their expressions of commitment and determination to meet the final destruction deadlines in 2012.

This is a welcome and encouraging sign, as the magnitude of the remaining stockpiles in Russia is indeed impressive and the pace of destruction so far has not been nearly as sustained as it would have been expected.

In the United States, seven destruction facilities are currently operational. With more than 32% of the US stockpile destroyed to date, it is clear that there is an unwavering commitment to this crucial disarmament effort. This unmistakable demonstration of political will to comply is of vital importance for the international credibility of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Convention foresees April 2012 as the final deadline for the entire destruction effort.

As Director-General of the OPCW, I continue to believe that the solemn commitments undertaken by all Parties to the Convention must, and will be honoured, and I support Governments in their efforts to achieve this target, no matter how sceptical some remain and how complex this may seem at this point in time.

In this connection, I wish to recognise once again the support the Russian destruction programme is receiving from the G8 through the Global Partnership and encourage donor countries to continue to engage and to cooperate with Russia in this process.

In addition to the chemical weapons stockpiles, all of the 64 former chemical weapons production facilities declared by 12 States Parties have been permanently inactivated.

Eighty per cent of these facilities have already been certified by OPCW as destroyed or converted to legitimate purposes, with the remainder of the facilities expected to be destroyed or converted by 2007.

Of note is the fact that Libya is now able to convert two of its former production facilities as a result of a change to the Verification Annex of the Convention approved by the States Parties. This converted facility will be used to produce vaccines and medicine for the African

continent. I see in this, a telling example of a true peace dividend, with positive repercussions for the entire African continent.

I encourage Libya to continue its efforts to in the area of destruction, where some delays appear now possible, so as to avoid to the extent possible any unnecessary postponement of its undertakings.

India has continued its destruction campaigns at a satisfactory pace and is ahead of schedule. We are currently working with the Indian authorities to complete the technical requirements necessary to start the next phase of the destruction campaign at a new destruction facility.

Albania is also moving forward and we expect them to be able to start as soon as possible disposing of the declared stockpile in time to comply with the Convention's intermediate deadlines.

Mr Chairman,

A substantial political and financial investment has been made in the overall destruction process. This only reinforces the need to strengthen the global chemical weapons ban, and the Convention itself as the only active and effective instrument overseeing the destruction of a whole category of WMD.

But the destruction of existing stockpiles is not the only challenge.

The risk of chemical weapons proliferation looms ever larger, particularly in view of the potential for terrorists to acquire chemical weapons and the materials for their production.

Of more than 2,200 inspections carried out by teams of OPCW inspectors to date, at more than 865 sites in 72 countries, the majority have been conducted at production, storage and destruction facilities relating to chemical weapons, as well as about 900 inspections at nearly 700 chemical industry facilities.

The support and cooperation of our Member States and of the global chemical industry for our non-proliferation activities is crucial in this regard. Unlike for even primitive biological and nuclear weapons, the components and know-how to produce simple chemical weapons are widely available, and the financial and technological hurdles are much less problematic.

We have also had to recognise the hard fact that not every Member States of the OPCW is currently in a position to detect, pursue and prosecute a breach of the Convention by its nationals within that Member State's jurisdiction.

We have therefore been intensifying our efforts since the adoption in 2003, by the First CWC Review Conference, of an Action Plan to enhance national implementation, to identify areas for improvement, and to spend the time, money and effort required to address perceived gaps as expeditiously as possible.

The OPCW Action Plan foreshadowed by a year UNSCR 1540, which in turn created a binding obligation upon all U.N. Member States, OPCW Members or not, to enact the legislation necessary to create an interlocking web of systematic declarations, industrial monitoring, chemical transfer controls and regulatory measures that identify and track the chemicals of concern.

We face a daunting task requiring a vast effort.

In the past two years, over 100 States Parties to the Convention have requested and received from the Technical Secretariat and several Member States the support needed to establish an autonomous capacity to apply the chemical weapons ban nationally. States Parties are now evaluating the results and recommendations, and considering the need for further action.

While the OPCW is not an anti-terrorist agency, full implementation of the Convention is recognized as constituting one effective means of addressing the menace of terrorism, in the chemical weapons field. The OPCW continues to be an active partner in this struggle.

In April of this year, at its invitation, I briefed the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) on OPCW activities relevant to this resolution. Activities being undertaken by States in accordance with resolution 1540 are also promoting important, and timely, synergies and consistency with the CWC.

In addition to playing our role in accordance with applicable United Nations Security Council Resolutions, the OPCW continues to develop and deepen its contacts with the UN, in the context of the

relationship agreement between the two organizations, to strengthen cooperation and forge closer international and regional ties.

This year, you have been part of important events here in New York. I had the privilege to represent the OPCW at the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the Sixtieth Session of the UN General Assembly as well as the Sixth High Level Meeting between the UN and Heads of Regional and Multilateral Organisations held in July.

These interactions with the United Nations have provided fruitful opportunities to share perspectives on issues of common concern. We are also increasing cooperation and links between the OPCW and the Department of Disarmament Affairs and its regional centres, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Asia and the Pacific, and more recently for Africa. We are extremely grateful for the continuous support we receive from the United Nations and the DDA in particular.

Such efforts serve to promote effective implementation of the Convention, for example by developing regional networks to strengthen national protection capacities, and to promote its universality in all regions.

I would not wish to conclude, without placing, once more, the strongest possible emphasis on the need to continue the pursuit of universality of the Convention by the earliest possible date, in order to realize its full political, security and other benefits for all States.

Universal adherence to the Convention is a primary objective, which is also the subject of a separate Action Plan developed on the recommendation of the First CWC Review Conference.

In this chapter we have witnessed remarkable progress, with nearly half of the States not Party to the Convention having become Member States since the adoption of the Action Plan less than two years ago. In rough terms, 30 States have acceded to the CWC in three years, a singular achievement by any measure.

As of this week, total OPCW membership stands at 174 States Parties. The number of States not Party has thus been reduced to 12 signatory and 8 non-signatory States. So far this year, ratifications of the Convention have been deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General by Bhutan, Cambodia, Grenada, and Honduras,

and three non-signatory States, Antigua and Barbuda, Niue, and Vanuatu, have also acceded.

We warmly welcome these new States Parties, whose actions have made an important contribution to international and regional peace and security, through the consolidation of the global chemical weapons ban.

As a result, the number of OPCW Member States has doubled since the entry into force of the Convention in 1997 – from 87 to 174 States Parties.

Universality has now been achieved across many regions and sub-regions, including all of Western, Central, and Eastern Europe, and the continental Western Hemisphere, including North, Central and South America, all members of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and of the Pacific Islands Forum, as well as almost all members of Caricom and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

We are very near to achieving universality in the Asia-Pacific

As the distinguished Members of the First Committee will be able to see in the documentation provided by the OPCW, the list of countries still outside the chemical weapons ban is shrinking quite dramatically.

But notable absentees remain, particularly in the Middle East and on the Korean peninsula. This is a cause of continuing concern.

Further progress on universality of the Convention must continue to be encouraged, and I would like to express my particular appreciation to the many speakers in the general debate who have reiterated their support for the Chemical Weapons Convention, including the promotion of its universality.

The OPCW stands ready to support North Korea, the only remaining non-signatory State in this region, in its consideration of the issue, now that virtually every other country in the region has taken the decision to renounce the chemical weapons option forever. Moreover, following Myanmar's recent announcement that it will be ratifying the Convention presently, this will mean that all signatory

States in the Asia-Pacific, and all members of ASEAN, will then have joined the OPCW.

There is also cause for measured optimism in Africa and the Mediterranean Basin, including the prospect of useful dialogue in the Middle East region on issues relating to the Convention, which remains a priority for the entire Organisation.

As an example, for the first time in June 2005, all States not Party in the Middle East attended an OPCW event in Cyprus. Further meetings have taken place and will occur in future.

Dialogue and a persistent reiteration of the benefits that accrue to the countries in the region that join the Convention, such as Libya has done most recently, may well lead to conditions that are conducive to the achievement of universality without waiting impractically for 'perfect' conditions or agreements, or a comprehensive settlement.

As Director-General of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW I must warn against the logic that confines the accession to a non discriminatory, universal disarmament Convention like the CWC to an undefined future, when complete disarmament and ideal conditions would prevail.

Let us remember that we are talking about weapons of mass destruction which have been condemned and outlawed by the international community. No one can expect that by keeping a so called 'chemical option' open by not adhering to the CWC, chances for peace will increase. It is rather the contrary.

Iraq's government has indicated its intention to adhere to the Convention. This is a promising development as well, and I have pledged the OPCW's full support and readiness to assist that State in adhering to the Convention. We look forward to cooperating further with Iraq's government, following an initial training course on the CWC for Iraqi officials conducted at the OPCW in July.

A follow up meeting is now being prepared with the assistance of the Kingdom of Jordan, and will take place before the end of the year, to continue the preparations for a smooth induction of Iraq into the OPCW and its verification regime.

In Africa, OPCW's commitment is undiminished.

Indeed, it is maturing into a significant cooperative relationship, channelled through our own African Member States in The Hague and the Commission of the African Union in Addis Ababa. A handful of States remains outside the realm of the Convention, and I have met them in the last few weeks, in Africa and also here in New York. Prospects for their accession are indeed favourable, confirming the African long standing support for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction from their Continent and the rest of the world.

Only last week, in Addis Ababa, I met the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, President Konaré, who expressed his most firm support and commitment to the principles and objectives of the CWC as well as his desire to work together with the OPCW towards this goal.

Mr Chairman,

The capacity of the Technical Secretariat to offer and coordinate assistance in case of an emergency involving the use of chemical weapons demands serious preparation.

This week, in Lviv, Ukraine, an important event is under way.

It is the Joint Assistance 2005 (ASSISTEX 2) field exercise, Ukraine, where we intend to address the capacities of participating Member States international organisations, including NATO and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), and to provide different aspects of emergency assistance within their mandates and coordinate their actions in a disaster-stricken area.

The possibility of a release of toxic chemicals by terrorists has given rise to increased interest on the part of States Parties to the Convention in the implementation of Article X on assistance.

This exercise focuses on a real case scenario and aims at enhancing our collective ability to respond to unforeseen events.

Further efforts are being undertaken by the OPCW in the implementation of Articles X and XI of the Convention on international cooperation and assistance, which are of particular

interest for our many Member States from developing countries and economies in transition.

In the area of international cooperation, the OPCW continues to build the capacities of its Member States to support their implementation of the Convention, and in promoting the peaceful application of chemical and industry-related activities.

Most recently, we concluded both the second edition of the analytical-skills development course for technical personnel, and the sixth edition of the OPCW Associate Programme, which saw the participation of more than 100 experts from 73 Member States whose economies are developing or in transition.

Programmes such as these, and others providing equipment support and laboratory assistance, have been able to be conducted and expanded only with support from a number of OPCW Member States, private companies and public institutions.

I thank them for their generous contributions, which included in 2005 a very substantial contribution from the European Union in support of OPCW universality, implementation, and international cooperation programmes, under the Joint Action in the framework of the EU Strategy against WMD Proliferation.

Mr Chairman,

The Convention belongs to all of us. All countries, big and small, are directly concerned. It should not be perceived as a treaty for a few countries, namely those possessing the weapons or having the industrial capacity to develop them.

Through its verification activities, the intensification of its efforts in support of enhanced national implementation, and its programmes in the areas international cooperation and assistance initiatives the OPCW is staying the course and making a tangible contribution to peace and security.

I urge all countries to join with us to ensure that this unique Convention, identified by the Secretary-General as one of the 25 core treaties in the United Nations system, will deliver in full on its promise, and contribute thereby to the preservation of international peace and security, to which we all aspire.

The OPCW is a relatively new organisation. Over the past eight years, it has succeeded to establish itself as a credible, serious, technical body with a clear mandate. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in the Chemical Weapons Convention and its operational body, the international community can show a good example of successful multilateralism at work.

In this spirit, we extend our warmest congratulation to the International Atomic Energy Agency, and its Director-General, my friend and colleague Mohamed El-Baradei for the Nobel Peace Prize they have so magnificently obtained last Friday.

As a younger sisterly organisation we offer our heartfelt congratulations to our friends in Vienna and wish them well, as their success is also extremely important to our own efforts to make the world a safer place.

Thank you for your attention.