



**ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

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SIXTY-THIRD 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 AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESPECTIVE
ORGANIZATIONS”**

STATEMENT BY

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Mr Chairman,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you on your well-deserved election to chair the 1st Committee of the 63rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The Committee plays a pivotal role in evaluating developments in the field of arms control and disarmament and making recommendations to the United Nations General Assembly. I wish you and the First Committee every success in your important work.

By the same token, I have always regarded it a particular privilege to report annually to the First Committee on progress being made in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). This progress defines both the importance of the Convention and its contribution in the context of international peace and security.

The cooperation of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) with the United Nations (UN) is a manifestation of the international community's aspiration for a law-based, humane and peaceful system of global security with effective multilateralism at its heart.

This cooperation received a welcome impetus last year, when in a special meeting convened at the UN Headquarters here in New York to commemorate 10 years of the operation of the Convention, some 120 Foreign Ministers and Permanent Representatives of UN Member States reaffirmed their support for the objectives of the Convention and for the OPCW.

This year too was important for the Organisation. In April 2008, members of the OPCW met for the Second Special Session of the Conference of States Parties to Review the operation of the Convention.

Second Review Conference

The Second Review Conference renewed the strong commitment of States Parties to the noble goals of the Convention, reiterated the critical importance of this instrument, and reaffirmed the essential contribution it makes to confidence-building and to cooperation among States Parties, as well as to their own national security. States Parties affirmed that the Convention sets new standards for both disarmament and non-proliferation through its non-discriminatory and multilateral verification regime.

The Conference reviewed and pronounced itself on all issues that impact the effective operation of the Convention. On the question of destruction of chemical weapons, while reaffirming that the complete destruction of such weapons is essential for the realisation of the object and purpose of the Convention, the Second Review Conference welcomed the statements of possessor States reiterating their commitment to meeting the final, extended deadlines for destroying chemical weapons stockpiles.

The Second Review Conference also reiterated that universality of the Convention is essential to achieve its object and purpose, and strongly urged the world's remaining States not Party to ratify or accede to it "as a matter of urgency and without preconditions".

Furthermore, it reaffirmed that full and effective national implementation of the obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention is essential for realising its object and purpose and re-emphasised the continuing relevance and importance of the provisions of Article X of the Convention for assistance and protection against chemical weapons.

Similarly, the Conference stressed the importance of the provisions of Article XI on the economic and technological development of States Parties, and recalled that the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of this provision is essential for the realisation of the goals of the Convention.

Given the sensitivity of security perceptions, any multilateral conference dealing with the important issues of disarmament and non-proliferation is bound to encounter divergences and disagreements. The Second Review Conference had its challenging moments in bridging the differences on a number of critical issues. However, in the end, the consensus that emerged bears testimony to the wisdom and constructive spirit of our States Parties. It is good news for disarmament and non-proliferation and indeed good news for multilateralism.

Allow me now to briefly recount the progress that the OPCW has made in pursuit of its mission and mandate and which underpins such a sense of optimism and purpose.

Destruction

As at 30 September 2008, the OPCW had verified the destruction of more than 28,600 metric tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons. This represents 41.25% of the total stockpiles declared by six States Parties, namely Albania, India, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Russian Federation, the United States of America (US) and A State Party, which has requested anonymity. 915 metric tonnes (or 51.80%) of the declared Category 2 chemical weapons have similarly been destroyed to date. In addition, all States Parties, which declared Category 3 chemical weapons, had completed the destruction of these weapons.

Since I reported to the Committee last year, A State Party, India, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America – all of which have been granted extensions for completing the destruction of their Category 1 chemical weapons – have continued to fulfil their reporting obligations under the Convention.

China and Japan, on their part, each submitted two reports on the progress made towards the destruction of all chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China. I wish to commend the exemplary cooperation between the two countries in dealing with this historical legacy, and in this regard, reaffirm the readiness of the Technical Secretariat to provide all possible assistance. Indeed, we can all look forward to the early commencement of the process of destruction of these weapons.

Last year I had the pleasure to inform the Committee about Albania's completion of its destruction undertaking. In 2008 another milestone was marked in the history of chemical disarmament when, on 10 July, A State Party completed the destruction of its entire chemical weapons stockpile. The Secretariat, having confirmed the declaration by this State Party that it had fulfilled its obligations, has consequently ceased its systematic verification thereof of destruction activities.

I have wholeheartedly congratulated this second OPCW Member for its achievement and for the unwavering commitment it has shown in reaching this important goal. The achievement of this State Party takes us a step closer to the goal of complete chemical disarmament and reinforces the validity of the CWC.

However, we remain of course aware that the 2012 final deadline for completing the destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles poses significant challenges, especially in the context of the two major possessors, the United States and the Russian Federation.

The Russian Federation has to date completed the destruction of more than 11,600 metric tonnes or 29% of its Category 1 chemical weapons. The commissioning of new destruction facilities, as well as construction of additional ones, highlight the commitment expressed by the Russian Federation to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention within the established timelines. Such commitment and the concrete steps being taken by Russia are highlighted in a report from a recent visit to this country by a Delegation of the OPCW Executive Council. The assistance provided by the G8 countries and other donors in support of the Russian Federation's destruction programme has been crucial to the 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 already destroyed nearly 15,400 metric tonnes or 55.4% of its declared stockpiles. New destruction facilities are under construction which will add to the existing US capacity to destroy chemical weapons, thereby further supporting the resolve of this State Party to meet its obligations under the Convention. It is also to be noted that the US contribution to the goals of the Convention is not restricted only to its own disarmament progress. The US has also provided critically needed assistance to other countries in their destruction efforts.

Both the United States and the Russian Federation have hosted visits by delegations of the Executive Council to their chemical weapons destruction facilities. These visits have enabled representatives of the Council to gain first hand knowledge both about the scale of the operations at destruction facilities and the overall magnitude of the undertaking of these two countries. After its visit to the Shchuchye chemical weapons destruction facility last month, the delegation stated in its report that its overall impression was "that the Russian Federation was firmly committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Convention within the established timelines and that it was taking concrete steps to that end".

Given the large quantities of chemical weapons that the Russian Federation and the U.S. need to eliminate in a safe and environmentally sound manner and the inordinately large expenditure this obligation entails, these visits have enabled a better understanding of the challenges that both States face as well as the political will that they have demonstrated in dealing with these difficulties.

I reiterate my deep appreciation to both these possessor States for this firm commitment to uphold and fulfil their obligations under the CWC.

I will not fail to praise another possessor state, namely, India which has consistently demonstrated its resolve to complete the destruction of its stockpiles within the extended April 2009 deadline. As a result, India has already destroyed over 97% of its Category I chemical weapons stockpile and is expected to reach its 100% target before the cut-off date.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya's plans to ensure the destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile are on track. The required processes involving technical reviews and approval of relevant plans by the OPCW Executive Council concerning the destruction facility and activities are expected to be completed soon. This will set the stage for the destruction of Libya's chemical weapons so as to complete this process by 2011.

Non-proliferation

Mr Chairman,

Together with the goal of disarmament, it is vital to ensure that the non-proliferation regime under the Convention is implemented effectively and to its full potential.

The effective and efficient industry inspection regime that has been established under the Convention is key to this non-proliferation effort and to the promotion of confidence among States Parties in the chemical industry's legitimate and peaceful activities.

Progress in disarmament will gradually lead to increasing attention to and enhancement of the Art VI verification tools of the Convention. In this way, the Convention will retain its long-term viability and further strengthen its role in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

Continued refinement and higher intensity of the industry verification efforts is crucial to this objective. This will ensure 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. These are matters that are now before the

policy making organs of the OPCW. The Technical Secretariat, on its part, remains committed to providing all necessary information and support to facilitate their consideration of these important issues.

Like any other industry sector, chemical industry also continues to evolve. We see increasing overlaps between chemical and biological sciences, the integration of chemical engineering into the life sciences, and the fusion between these and information technology: these are all factors that have an impact on a number of areas of crucial relevance to the purposes of the Convention.

Furthermore, in the context of future challenges, we would also need to take into account emerging 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 verification mechanism to maintain its relevance and effectiveness, the OPCW will have to adapt it to rapidly changing environment 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.

National Implementation

The Chemical Weapons Convention now covers over 98% of the worldwide chemical industry relevant to it, and a similar percentage of the world's population.

In order to ensure permanence and durability to the norms in the Convention, it is necessary to strengthen the domestic legal and administrative systems in member countries. It is thus imperative that each State Party establishes the administrative and legislative measures to detect, pursue, and prosecute any breach of the Convention by its nationals on its territory.

The existence of loopholes could encourage possible criminal and terrorist uses of chemistry and its products.

National implementation of the Convention's provisions and reporting on steps taken in this regard constitutes clear obligations for our States Parties. In an environment of heightened concerns about proliferation and possible terrorist acts involving the use of chemical weapons, the adoption and implementation of such measures acquires an added necessity and urgency.

As a result of particular attention paid to the issue of national implementation measures since the adoption by the First Review Conference of the Action Plan on the implementation of Article VII, the number of States Parties that have enacted legislation covering all key areas had increased from 51 in October 2003 to 82 by 10 October 2008, and 126 States Parties had informed the Secretariat of the legislative and administrative measures they had adopted. Of these, 112 had submitted texts of adopted measures.

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 to 177, or 96% of all States Parties.

Implementation support is one of the most active programme areas for the Secretariat. It includes technical assistance visits to member countries; meetings with parliamentarians and thematic workshops, covering such areas as legal drafting, outreach to parliamentarians; courses

for customs authorities and for personnel from National Authorities; as well as the submission of declarations and notifications.

The financial support offered by States Parties has enabled these productive activities to be sustained. Recent examples of how our Member States contribute in this area are the offers by the Governments of Turkey and China to host events on industry-related issues that are relevant to the Convention, which will be held in 2009 in Istanbul and Hong Kong, respectively.

In this context, I wish also to acknowledge the generous contributions made by the European Union under its Joint Action programmes on support for OPCW activities. In particular, the EU will sponsor a one day event on the national implementation of the CWC that will be held on 1st December in The Hague, in the margins of the 13th Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC.

OPCW's outreach efforts 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. I am pleased to note that during the regional and sub-regional outreach activities organised by the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and the 1540 Committee, OPCW's presentations covering its work and experience in this field have been found to be of particular relevance and utility.

OPCW contribution to global anti-terrorism efforts

The OPCW, while not an anti-terrorist organisation, has nonetheless an important contribution to make in this area by virtue of its mandate to ensure non-use of chemical weapons under any circumstances. The OPCW Executive Council and subsequent decisions of the Conference of States Parties including the Second Review Conference have affirmed the importance of national implementation measures as an essential safeguard against terrorism.

Apart from resolution 1540, whose provisions are fully consistent with the obligations established under the CWC, the Organisation's role has also been clearly recognised in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006, which the Assembly has reaffirmed as recently as 5th September 2008.

OPCW will continue to respond to the call both by the UN Security Council and the General Assembly to play its due part in addressing the serious challenges that terrorism poses to international peace and security.

Assistance and protection, and international cooperation

Mr Chairman,

I would now touch upon two other important areas of OPCW's work that relate to international cooperation and assistance based on Articles X and XI of the Convention.

These are areas to which particular importance is attached by 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. States Parties are also keen on building their national capacities to deal with the threats or actual incidents involving the use of chemical weapons or toxic chemicals.

OPCW training courses including those for emergency responders are routinely held in all regions of the world. This effort is supplemented by periodic field exercises for the delivery of

assistance, in cooperation and coordination with other organisations including the UN. The next such exercise is scheduled to be held in Tunisia.

The OPCW also carries out a number of important 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.

In this context, the Secretariat organises a number of regular activities designed to benefit 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 the most well known and appreciated training programmes is the Associate Programme. This 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. It focuses on the promotion of the peaceful uses of chemistry and facilitates industry-related national implementation of the Convention. Another goal is to enhance national capacities in the peaceful uses of chemistry through improvements in the skills of qualified chemists and chemical engineers.

Here I wish to mention that Africa receives special attention in terms of allocation of programmes for and sponsorship of candidates from this region. Under the OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention, that was set-up under my direction, increasing attention is paid to ensuring widest possible participation from the continent in OPCW activities and attending to the particular needs of African States Parties.

Universality

Mr Chairman,

In a short period of eleven years, the CWC has enabled the international community to progress from a world in which chemical weapons as a means of warfare was a reality to a world which today will not tolerate their existence, proliferation or use. This has been possible not only because of the operational regime established for this purpose, but also the political and moral support to the norms of the Convention extended by the 184 States Parties to the Convention.

Confidence in compliance with the norms against chemical weapons remains incomplete so long as even a single country remains outside the jurisdiction of the Convention. It is, therefore, quite natural for concerns to be raised regarding those few who have not adhered to it. The goal of a world free from chemical weapons will not be reached only through the destruction of the declared chemical weapons. Unless each member of the international community has embraced the Convention's prohibitions, abstinence by some could raise questions about the possibilities of chemical weapons proliferation.

Promoting universality of the Convention, therefore, remains an important priority and challenge. Eleven States members of the UN have yet to join the Convention. Some of them show full support of the objectives of the Convention and have taken important steps towards joining. Towards this end, Iraq and Lebanon have completed the parliamentary procedures necessary under their constitutional processes. 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.

The Secretariat has also organised four training programmes for Iraq which indicates the seriousness this country attaches to joining the OPCW. The Iraqi government is in the process of publishing the corresponding legislative act in the official gazette.

Elsewhere in the Middle East, the picture is unfortunately different. Egypt, Israel- which has signed but not ratified the Convention- and Syria continue to cite regional security concerns for

remaining outside. While I respect the articulation of these perceptions, I also believe that the validity of the Convention is universal and should not be affected by regional circumstances. In fact, joining the Convention would constitute a major confidence and security building measure. It could provide an important impetus to the cause of peace and security in the Middle East just as it did in other sensitive regions of the world.

I must, however, gratefully acknowledge the dialogue with Egypt and Israel, who have not desisted from constructive engagement.

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, still need to resolve certain domestic administrative and resource constraints before they are able to accede. I urge them to do so at the earliest since eleven years represent a sufficient period of time to prepare for joining a major international treaty. I also hope that Myanmar as a signatory will 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 such intentions is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). I hope that DPRK will at an early date show positive inclination in discussing the issue of abolition of chemical weapons. This would be consistent with the requirements of UN Security Council Resolution 1718 (2006), which while dealing with the nuclear non-proliferation issue, refers also to the necessity of abandoning other categories of weapons of mass destruction in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

On its part the OPCW remains prepared to assist the DPRK in any manner it can towards its accession to the CWC.

Next year in April, the government of Turkey will host a workshop in cooperation with the OPCW for promoting the Convention's acceptance and effective implementation in the Mediterranean Basin and the Middle East Region. This event will be sponsored under the EU 2007 Joint Action on support for OPCW activities. I am grateful to the government of Turkey for agreeing to host also this important activity, as well as to the EU for its financial support.

Mr Chairman,

In conclusion, may I once again express to you and members of the Committee my deep appreciation for this opportunity to give an overview of developments from the perspective of the OPCW as it relates to the topic for this afternoon – the current state of arms control and disarmament and the role and contribution of the respective international organisations. I consider myself fortunate in saying that in the context of chemical weapons, many achievements have been recorded due to the diligence and commitment of the States Parties to the CWC who are collectively resolved to ensure the success of the Convention.

Indeed, the OPCW has proved to be a successful experiment of true multilateralism: a forum for consultations and cooperation, where States have tirelessly worked based on dialogue and consensus, to reach agreement also on sensitive and complex issues and to progress effectively towards the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Indeed there is no reason why the example of the OPCW should not inspire similar multilateral cooperation and dialogue in dealing with other contemporary global challenges in the area of disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of international peace and security.

I thank you for your attention.