



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Third Review Conference
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AUSTRALIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR NEIL MULES
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE THIRD REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Mr Chairman,

More than fifteen years after entry-into-force, the Chemical Weapons Convention remains one of the most successful multilateral disarmament treaties ever.

We can be proud of our achievement, but not complacent. While over 78% of declared chemical weapons stockpiles have been destroyed and we have near universal adherence to the treaty, many challenges remain, including threats of the use of chemical weapons.

Therefore, it is our duty, to not only review the operations of the Convention over the past five years but to also chart a course for the future that ensures the OPCW is ready to respond to new and emerging security challenges.

Australia has been alarmed by allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria over the past five months. The use of chemical weapons by anyone would be reprehensible and in violation of international law.

We welcome the decision by the United Nations Secretary-General to launch an investigation into these allegations. We commend the OPCW for its commitment to assist and support the United Nations mission and thank Director-General Üzümcü for ensuring that the necessary arrangements with the United Nations are in place.

We encourage the United Nations Secretary-General to ensure the investigation commences as soon as possible, and covers all of the serious allegations that have been made about the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

On 28 January 2013, the Australia Group released a statement on behalf of the 40 participating countries and the European Union calling upon all parties to the conflict in Syria, to renounce the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances.

The gravity of the existence of large chemical weapons stockpiles and allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria, and the serious threat that this poses to international peace and security, warrant an expression of grave concern in the Review Conference outcomes document. This conference must urge Syria to ensure that its chemical weapons stockpiles remain secure, until such time that they can be destroyed under international verification.



The Chemical Weapons Convention makes a vital contribution to international efforts to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We commend Director-General Üzümcü, and his staff for their ongoing efforts and dedication to this important work.

We are encouraged by continuing progress in destruction activities which has resulted in the verified destruction of more than three quarters of declared chemical weapon stockpiles and the complete elimination of chemical weapons in three former possessor States. We welcome Libya's recent statement to the Executive Council including the pending recommencement of its chemical weapons destruction activities and reassurances that there is no evidence of any further undeclared chemical weapon stockpiles. We urge all remaining possessor States to make every effort to meet their extended deadlines for chemical weapon destruction.

It is anticipated that only 1% of the declared chemical weapon stockpiles will remain by the time of the next Review Conference in 2018. This provides a strong incentive for this Conference to chart a course ahead to ensure that the OPCW is well equipped to respond to emerging security challenges with an increasing degree of focus on the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

We are pleased to note that the goal of universality for the Convention is somewhat closer now than at the time of the Second Review Conference—with membership having increased by five to 188 States Parties. But full universality remains elusive. Australia calls upon the eight States remaining outside the Convention to ratify or accede as a matter of urgency—noting the many positive security, economic and technological benefits that membership brings.

While universality is important, its value will not be truly realised if States Parties do not fully implement their obligations under the Convention. Toward this end, Australia is continuing its efforts to promote effective and comprehensive implementation of the Convention, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. We encourage sustained support and follow-up from the Technical Secretariat and States Parties in the provision of guidance and support to States Parties, if requested, in fully meeting their obligations under the Convention.

We also note the importance of education and outreach to all relevant stakeholders in national implementation and welcome the work being undertaken by the temporary working group on education and outreach in this regard.

Australia commends the Technical Secretariat's extensive verification work—evidenced by the successful conduct of more than 5,000 inspections at declared facilities. Australia welcomes the Technical Secretariat's modifications to the OCPF site-selection methodology which will result in a more appropriate distribution of inspections among States Parties. In Australia's view, with advances in production technologies and the increasing globalisation of chemical industry, the OCPF regime will become an even more important element of the routine verification of the Convention in years to come. Australia also supports the possible future introduction of sampling and analysis inspections to Schedule 3 and other chemical production facilities in accordance with the relevant inspection time frames under the Convention and in a manner that will ensure its implementation is as unobtrusive as possible.

Australia views continuing improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of verification activities as an issue of strategic importance to the continuing success of the Convention. We

acknowledge the important role of the Scientific Advisory Board and associated temporary working groups in helping the OPCW address the advances in science and technology relevant to the Convention. We are encouraged by the efforts of the OPCW and States Parties to achieve improvements to sampling and analysis techniques, the introduction of techniques for detecting ricin and saxitoxin, and the ongoing work in establishing methodologies for the analysis of biomedical samples, in which Australia's Schedule 1 facility for protective purposes is actively involved.

We also note the improvements in verification efficiency that can be achieved through the acceptance of sequential inspections and encourage all States Parties to give due consideration to wider acceptance of sequential inspections.

Australia supports the expansion of the OPCW analytical database to include degradation products from the Convention schedules of chemicals and riot control agents, as such measures would assist the OPCW preparedness to conduct investigations of alleged use.

It seems evident that there is also a growing desire among States Parties to enhance their capacity and capability to protect their citizens from, and effectively respond to, any deliberate use of toxic chemicals for non-peaceful purposes, by State or non-State actors. We believe that the Technical Secretariat together with States Parties can make a strong contribution to this work under the auspices of Article X. Australia stands ready to assist to support these efforts.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to Ambassador Baghli and her team for their tireless work during preparations for the Third Review Conference. We call upon States Parties to work together constructively to produce a comprehensive and forward-looking outcomes document, including guidance to the operation of the Convention in the next five years and beyond.

Mr Chairman, in welcoming you to the Chair, I pledge the ongoing support of the Australian delegation in helping to ensure that the Third Review Conference is successful in achieving outcomes that support our shared goals to have a world free of chemical weapons and to enhance international peace and security. Thank You.

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