



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Fifteenth Session
29 November – 3 December 2010

C-15/NAT.3
29 November 2010
ENGLISH only

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ROBERT P. MIKULAK
UNITED STATES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AT THE
FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairman, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to be here among so many colleagues at the Fifteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. I warmly welcome our new Chairman, Ambassador Julio Roberto Palomo Silva. I have every confidence in his ability to guide us skilfully through our full agenda this week, and I pledge my own support and that of the entire United States delegation to making this a productive and successful session. I also extend my deep appreciation to our outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Vaidotas Verba of Lithuania, and thank him for his dedication and exemplary service to this Organisation over the past year.

Mr Chairman,

This is the first Conference of the States Parties for our new Director-General Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü. His vision and guidance will be critical to the ongoing success of this Organisation, and we welcome his leadership.

The many accomplishments that this Organisation has achieved within the bounds of fiscal responsibility are directly related to the hard work of the staff of the Technical Secretariat and I thank them as well.

The first priority this week must be to bring the 2011 budget negotiation to a successful conclusion, drawing on our culture of cooperation and consensus building. The United States delegation supports the proposal by the Director-General for a small increase in both OCPF inspections and in funding for international cooperation and assistance. Some other delegations do not support this proposal. My delegation pledges its commitment to finding a balanced political solution that will strengthen both industry verification and international cooperation and assistance. Both elements are important for achieving the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We must give the Technical Secretariat the tools it needs to fulfil the object and purpose of the treaty so that never again will mankind face the evil of chemical weapons.



Mr Chairman,

Bringing the seven remaining non-Member States, particularly those that may possess chemical weapons, into the Convention, is essential to realise fully its objectives. Experience has made clear that persuading them to join will not be easy. All Member States, working together with the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat, should continue to signal that being a part of this Convention is part of being a full member in the community of nations.

Joining the Convention is only the beginning of the story, however, and not the end. The United States recognises that in many States Parties the work to fully implement Article VII obligations is far from finished. The Director-General's annual report on Article VII implementation that is before us this week makes that clear. In responding to the Director-General's report, we as Member States must consider what more can be done to remedy the current situation. The United States stands ready to provide Article VII support and technical assistance to any State Party requesting it. It is also important to note that fulfilment of Article VII obligations also satisfies part of a Chemical Weapons Convention State Party's obligations under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 of 2004. The United States encourages all States Parties to take advantage of this mutually beneficial linkage. When a State Party takes this important step, another gap is closed, and our collective security is enhanced.

Mr Chairman,

As 2011 ushers in the greatest transition the Organisation has yet faced, the Director-General and his senior management will need to re-align the Organisation's activities, personnel, and budget while maintaining the support of the States Parties. Indeed, the OPCW faces a critical period of transition that should be smooth, orderly, and transparent. The United States looks forward to refinement by the States Parties of the tenure policy to provide the Director-General with necessary flexibility to retain or rehire the staff members he needs to run the Organisation most effectively.

As possessor States continue working hard to complete the destruction of the remaining stockpiles, the OPCW's focus will naturally transition from disarmament to preventing acquisition of chemical weapons. The provisions of Article VI are key tools for ensuring the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. It will be essential for all States Parties to work cooperatively to achieve an effective balance among the different parts of the industrial verification regime, including that of the regime for other chemical production facilities. This regime was created by the negotiators of the Convention to capture a range of industrial facilities that were not Schedule 1, 2 or 3 facilities, but that still potentially posed some risk. Some of these facilities could be suitable for the illicit production of chemical weapons or even contain an embedded chemical weapons production mobilisation capability. The regime is neither perfect nor complete, and it now falls to us to complete the task and develop a regime that is focused on those facilities that pose the greatest risk. This should be a priority task for the Council in the coming year.

The United States also believes that Articles IX, X, and XI are important for the future of the OPCW. The recently concluded ASSISTEX 3 exercise in Tunisia demonstrates the potential importance of Chemical Weapons Convention States Parties coming together to provide much needed international assistance in the event of a chemical attack by terrorists or another

State. Likewise, the OPCW also offers an excellent forum for discussing chemical safety and security issues. The United States also fully supports the on-going work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, and we congratulate Mr Mike Byers of Australia for his successful stewardship of the OEWG.

Article XI also deserves increased attention. The United States welcomes the just-concluded Article XI workshop, which considered ideas for more robust implementation of Article XI of the Convention. Participants offered a broad range of ideas to increase awareness and understanding of the goals of Article XI and how to promote linkages and information exchanges among States Parties and relevant subject matter experts. Such forward-looking sessions are to be encouraged as we grapple with today's and tomorrow's opportunities, as well as with threats and challenges to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr Chairman,

I have spoken about a number of important items on our agenda. I would now like to address a fundamental goal of this Organisation that is certainly on everyone's mind this week: the total destruction of chemical weapons. For the United States, the safe and environmentally sound destruction of more than 27,000 metric tonnes of assorted chemical weapons is an enormous challenge. It is one that the United States has made significant strides towards accomplishing, and I am proud to report on these achievements.

The United States has met the 1%, 20%, and 45% treaty milestones. To date we have destroyed more than 81% of our Category 1 chemical weapons, which includes the destruction of over 82% of our chemical rockets, the destruction of 96.6% of our nerve agent, and the destruction of all of our binary chemical weapons. The United States has also destroyed all of our former chemical weapons production facilities.

I am pleased to announce that on 12 November 2010, the United States completed destruction of all chemical agent filled munitions at the Pine Bluff Chemical Agent Disposal Facility. This brings the number of stockpile chemical weapons destruction facilities that have completed operations to four.

Currently, the United States has chemical weapons destruction facilities operating in Alabama, Oregon, and Utah at a cost of nearly USD 1 billion per annum with two additional sites under construction. To date, the United States has expended an estimated USD 22.1 billion for the destruction of chemical weapons in the United States.

Over an extended period of time, the United States has confronted and successfully overcome a wide range of complex safety and environmental concerns raised by state and local authorities, as well as local citizens living near our chemical weapons storage and destruction facilities. Technical issues that arose in the course of destruction operations have also been surmounted. We have made, and will continue to make, every effort to ensure that our chemical weapons are destroyed consistent with the Convention: safely, without harm to workers, people living near the facility, or the environment; verifiably, under the eyes of OPCW inspectors; and as rapidly as feasible.

Mr Chairman,

Let me assure you that the United States understands our obligations under the Convention, and we are fully committed to meeting the Convention's objectives, including verified destruction of 100% of our stockpile as rapidly and as safely as possible. The Obama Administration is examining all viable options to accelerate our chemical weapons destruction activities further, consistent with the Convention and applicable United States safety, technical, and environmental requirements. In 2006, the United States reported only 66% of its stockpile was expected to be destroyed by 2012, but we are now on pace to destroy 90% by that time. We are continuing to seek ways to accelerate the programme further.

We are also committed to proactive disclosure of our chemical weapons destruction programme, so that Member States can evaluate our efforts for themselves. To that end, we have provided 90-day reports for the past four and one-half years that track our progress in three-month intervals. We have also made informal destruction presentations at every informal meeting of the Executive Council on chemical weapons destruction to offer frank and honest information on our programme. We have invited Executive Council representatives to make site visits to our facilities—which allow an opportunity for these representatives to observe first-hand the enormity and technical complexity of ongoing United States destruction, and construction efforts at the two chemical weapons destruction facilities. In fact, arrangements for an Executive Council visit to two United States facilities in March 2011 are well under way, with invitations already received by participants and observers. We are optimistic that this will be another productive visit.

Tomorrow, (30 November) at 2:00 pm, the United States delegation will provide an informal presentation on the status of United States chemical weapons destruction efforts, which will be delivered by Mr Andrew Weber, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Chemical and Biological Defense Programs. We offered a similar presentation last year, which garnered considerable interest and attention. This year Mr Weber has returned to demonstrate our continuing commitment to transparency and 100% destruction.

The United States will continue to provide the transparency measures necessary to ensure that the Member States of this Organisation have confidence in our chemical weapons destruction efforts.

Mr Chairman,

As the States Parties consider the issue of managing the 2012 extended destruction deadline, the United States wants to reassure States Parties that we agree that rewriting or reinterpreting of the Convention is not an acceptable means for resolving this issue. In fact, we believe that this point should be reflected in the Conference report.

The United States is interested in hearing other delegations' proposals for a political solution within the legal framework of the Convention. In this regard, we note the interesting approach put forward by the Brazilian delegation. We are actively considering what the United States can do to increase the confidence of the other States Parties that we will complete the safe destruction of our chemical weapons stockpile in a timely manner.

Mr Chairman,

Although there is considerable attention to what must still be done, we should not lose sight of the enormous accomplishments already achieved towards the aim of complete destruction of chemical weapons. It is important that we acknowledge and appreciate the efforts made by possessor States Parties and encourage continued efforts in a constructive and cooperative atmosphere. This year marked the commencement of chemical weapons destruction in Libya as well as the beginning of the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons in China by Japan. We understand that the Technical Secretariat and the Republic of Iraq have made significant strides toward developing a strategy for the destruction of chemical weapons remnants in Iraq. The largest single possessor of chemical weapons, the Russian Federation, has destroyed almost half of its chemical weapons stockpile. And as I mentioned earlier, the United States has destroyed more than 81% of its chemical weapons. These accomplishments, coupled with the previous achievements of complete destruction by A State Party, India, and Albania, represent massive efforts that should not be overshadowed by emphasis on what remains to be done. These efforts demonstrate that this Convention is working and fulfilling its purpose. This Organisation is succeeding, and without a doubt, it will continue to do so until the core objective of the Convention is met: a world free of chemical weapons.

Finally, we must all begin to consider together what kind of OPCW we want in the future. The budget for 2012 will need to begin to reflect that vision. We need to consider the challenges that are already looming, such as the need to adapt OPCW activities to advances in science and technology and to changes in the chemical industry. We need to discuss and reach agreement on a programme of activities that provides real value for States Parties. The United States commends the Director-General for seeking the advice of an outside panel of experts and looks forward to reviewing and discussing their recommendations.

Lastly, Mr Chairman,

One delegation recently alleged that the United States was not in compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention in the manner in which it recovered and destroyed pre-1991-era chemical weapons in Iraq. Our immediate destruction of these weapons did not violate the treaty and indeed was necessary to support the object and purpose of the treaty. It was also necessary to protect our forces, the local populace, the environment and the stability of Iraq. Our actions were fully consistent with our Article I obligations to “never under any circumstances develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons.” The United States rejects as totally unfounded any allegation that it violated the Chemical Weapons Convention in these unusual and unforeseen circumstances.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document to the Conference. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

- - - 0 - - -