



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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ANNUAL NATO CONFERENCE ON WMD ARMS
CONTROL, DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION

ADDRESS BY

AMBASSADOR AHMET ÜZÜMCÜ

DIRECTOR-GENERAL

ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL
WEAPONS (OPCW)

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Excellencies,
Ladies and gentleman,
Dear Friends,

Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to be speaking today at this Annual NATO Conference. This Conference brings together senior officials and experts from a variety of backgrounds and a wide range of countries. The programme for the Conference covers the entire gamut of disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

It is therefore a particular honour for me to be given the opportunity to share at such a distinguished forum the experience of a regime that has performed quite well. I wish to offer some reflections on the OPCW and its relationship to global peace and security that I hope you will find of interest and perhaps one with lessons that can be emulated elsewhere in dealing with the complexities of non-proliferation.

Although the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) was concluded relatively recently - in 1992 - and entered into force in 1997, the quest to find a durable solution to the problem of chemical weapons goes back a century. Prior to this, a number of legal instruments were agreed upon but did not last or were breached.

The most obvious example of a substantive effort that fell short is the Geneva Protocol which was concluded after the horrors witnessed during World War I, when over 1.3 million people became casualties of chemical weapons. During World War II, chemical weapons were only used in the Pacific War. However, huge stockpiles of chemical weapons, including a new generation of nerve agents, remained. Subsequently,

during the Cold War, the latent threat of chemical warfare added to the anxieties generated by the nuclear arms race.

The probability of use of chemical weapons in a global confrontation receded dramatically with the end of the Cold War. However, it came to the fore as a regional as well as a terrorist threat. The early nineties saw the use of chemical weapons by the former regime in Iraq in its war with Iran as well as against civilians in Halabja and Sardasht. In Japan, a doomsday cult was able to secretly produce chemical weapons and used them in terrorist incidents. These episodes clearly showed that chemical weapons remained a threat.

The regime banning chemical weapons drew from the lessons learnt over a hundred years, and incorporated principles of arms control and disarmament that by then had been widely accepted. These include the necessity of verification in order to provide teeth to the regime; the creation of not just international obligations but obligations to be implemented within domestic jurisdictions for more effective controls over relevant materials and technology; and, the establishment of a treaty-based multilateral structure for oversight and consultations.

The Chemical Weapons Convention, which was negotiated within a multilateral framework, is the first and only international treaty that bans an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, with a non-discriminatory verification regime that is equally applicable to all States Parties. The Convention establishes rights and obligations of far-reaching scope to ensure that chemical weapons are effectively banned and never re-emerge, and that chemistry is used for only peaceful purposes.

The destruction of all chemical weapons is a core objective of the OPCW. Within 30 days of joining the Convention, every State Party that possesses chemical weapons must provide a detailed declaration of its stockpiles to the OPCW. Destruction operations must be approved by the OPCW and remain subject to continuous on-site verification by our inspectors until they are completed. Verification also applies to chemical weapons production facilities, which must either be completely destroyed or converted for purposes not prohibited by the Convention.

Parallel to these activities, the Technical Secretariat conducts regular inspections of industrial facilities which produce dual use toxic chemicals and precursors that under the Convention are grouped into three Schedules. The OPCW is also giving greater attention now to what we call Other Chemical Production Facilities (OCPFs), which do not produce Scheduled chemicals but have an inherent capability to do so.

To date, seven States Parties to the Convention have declared chemical weapons stockpiles. Three have finished destroying their arsenals completely, namely Albania, India and a State Party that has requested anonymity. In aggregate, more than 65% of the total of 71,000 metric tonnes of declared chemical-warfare agents have now been destroyed. This is a time-consuming, labour intensive, dangerous and costly undertaking. Equally important, 95 percent of all declared chemical weapons production facilities have been completely destroyed or converted to peaceful uses. OPCW inspectors have verified all of these demilitarisation activities.

A second core and long-term objective of the Convention and of the OPCW is the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. I believe the

foundations of the Convention are solid and the Organisation is capable of addressing any new proliferation challenges that arise.

Let me also stress the critical importance of the OPCW's other two areas of activity – assistance and protection, and international cooperation - because I believe they effectively contribute to the Convention's universal appeal. All of our Member States share a concern for the safety and security of their citizens. The OPCW contributes to that objective by training, technical expertise and assistance to safeguard against the use, or threat of use, of chemical weapons. Over the years we have organised training courses for first responders, government experts and emergency response units from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, which have strengthened national and regional capabilities.

Likewise, all of our Member States want to enjoy the benefits of belonging to the Convention, and the OPCW facilitates international cooperation in the peaceful uses of chemistry. Conducting workshops, providing laboratory support, offering research grants, organising internships and an Associate Programme are some of our international cooperation activities. These are important incentives also for achieving the universality of the Convention.

In order to make the prohibitions sustainable over time, the Convention has established a multi-dimensional system to ensure the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. Extending verification to the industry is fundamental to this non-proliferation effort. States Parties have declared over 5,000 chemical facilities that deal with chemicals or use technologies that are deemed relevant for the purposes of the Convention.

And the chemical industry is producing an ever broader variety of new compounds.

The OPCW performs verification of States Parties' industry declarations through a combination of data monitoring and on-site verification. The inspections serve the purposes of deterrent, confidence-building measures and means to raise awareness among National Authorities as well as chemical industry, of the security risks associated with toxic chemicals. The OPCW inspection regime is global in scale and is undertaken in every country where inspectable activities occur. So far the OPCW has conducted over 2,000 such inspections in more than 80 countries.

Analysing exports and imports of scheduled chemicals is another key component of the Convention's industry verification regime. Transfer discrepancies are addressed, as the Technical Secretariat tries to reconcile such differences with the States Parties concerned.

Today the Convention has 188 States Parties and now covers over 98% of the worldwide chemical industry relevant to it. It is, therefore, obvious that the industry around the world has a vital role to play in ensuring the Convention's lasting success.

The OPCW enjoys a very productive cooperation with the chemical industry. This is a unique and mutually beneficial partnership which is essential in promoting the full implementation of the Convention's provisions.

During the negotiations for the Chemical Weapons Convention, the chemical industry agreed to a "declaration and verification process by

inspection” to provide assurances that toxic and dual use chemicals are not used for weapons production. This was a major commitment and represents the backbone of the non-proliferation provisions of the Convention. In fact, industry inspections not only provide transparency but also reinforce the industry’s image as a responsible partner supporting the objectives of global peace and security.

It is important that the chemical industry views the full implementation of the CWC not just as an obligation, but also as a benefit to itself and indeed to global society. The full implementation of the Convention would offer a high degree of assurance that chemicals that are relevant to the Convention and their production facilities are meant only for peaceful purposes.

At the same time, the Convention ensures balance in the inspection process. This is one of the crucial factors that make the treaty practical, workable and effective. Key provisions in the Convention take into account industry concerns in the areas of protecting confidential information. Inspections under the Convention are carried out in the least intrusive manner possible and according to specific guidelines for access to relevant information and facilities during verification activities for which specific time limitations are also established.

Our Member States are generally satisfied that the OPCW has established a verification system that serves the Convention’s non-proliferation and confidence building goals. They are, however, also aware that the Organisation faces certain challenges in this area. Discussions will continue in the policy-making organs on matters like the frequency of inspections of the different categories of facilities.

The Technical Secretariat is pursuing efforts aimed at ensuring an equitable distribution of inspections. Other measures currently being examined relate to putting forward a proposal that will lead to the increased probability of selecting plant sites for inspection that are more relevant to the Convention.

In order for the industry verification regime to work effectively and efficiently, it is of utmost importance that all States Parties submit their initial declarations in complete and accurate form and notify changes and amendments in a timely manner. In order to facilitate this, the OPCW regularly provides training courses and workshops for National Authorities, customs officials and industry personnel to explain the declaration and verification requirements under the Convention. The OPCW has also developed a number of tools to facilitate the declaration process, including databases of scheduled chemicals to help identify declarable activities, a handbook explaining the declaration requirements, and an electronic tool to help National Authorities to make declarations electronically.

Ultimately, however, accurate and complete declarations require that each State Party implement the Convention on the national level, enacting the Convention's prohibitions into law and empowering the National Authorities to collect the information required for declaration purposes. All OPCW States Parties realize today that national implementation measures are critical in preventing the development, production or transfer of chemical weapons or the misuse of toxic chemicals.

An important challenge that the OPCW faces in implementing the CWC's verification regime is to keep abreast of advances in science and technology. To study new developments in science and technology and to help us understand what they mean for the Convention and its implementation is an undertaking of great importance. For this purpose, a body of eminent professionals and experts, called the Scientific Advisory Board, meets regularly to consider such issues and to render its considered advice.

Allow me to take a few moments now to summarize what I see as the OPCW's main achievements. An over-arching one is reaching near-universality, which is fundamental to the success of the OPCW. The OPCW today boasts a membership of 188 countries with 98 percent of the world's population, giving it the fastest rate of accession in history for any disarmament treaty. Only seven UN Member States remain outside the Convention.

Some of these countries have yet to indicate any intention of joining the OPCW, which is a cause of understandable concern to States Parties. The absence of any State from the Convention whether big or small, rich or poor, but particularly one that might have an active chemical weapons programme or stockpiles, could greatly undermine the goal of achieving a total prohibition of chemical weapons. The Middle East is one region of particular concern where Egypt, Israel and Syria are not parties to the Convention, and only Israel has signed it. Another area of concern is north-east Asia, where the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has so far declined to have any contact with the OPCW.

The collective view of the OPCW's members is that, regional conflicts notwithstanding, there is no moral, ethical or strategic justification today for not joining the Chemical Weapons Convention - all the more so when chemical weapons are today considered of doubtful strategic significance and remain basically instruments of terror against civilians. Quite appropriately, therefore, the policy making organs of the OPCW have strongly urged the remaining states to join the Convention as a matter of urgency and without preconditions. We must relentlessly continue to raise this issue with those countries.

As I have already outlined, concrete progress has been achieved in eliminating what were inordinately large stockpiles of chemical weapons. Two major possessor States, the Russian Federation and the United States, account for more than 90% of the declared global stockpiles. Despite significant technical and financial investments, they are unlikely to achieve complete disarmament within the April 2012 deadline established in the Convention.

While States Parties are presently discussing this destruction deadline issue, primary concern remains to preserve the credibility and integrity of the CWC regime. We might then expect both a viable and reasonable solution that takes into account the significant efforts that have already been made by both the United States and the Russian Federation. Their resolve and transparency should be commended as they continue to adhere to their commitment to completely destroy their chemical weapons despite the challenges that they have faced.

The situation with regard to Libya has evoked concerns about the fate of its chemical weapons. The Executive Council has called upon this State

Party to take every step necessary to ensure the continued safety of the stockpiles and to ensure that its verified destruction is carried out in accordance with the provisions and obligations of the Convention. The Council, taking note of Libya's recent request, decided to recommend that the Conference of States Parties which will meet later this year grant an extension of the deadline to 29 April 2012.

With a major part of the declared stockpiles of chemical weapons already destroyed, and by the year 2016 with only 1% of this arsenal remaining to be eliminated, the Organisation will need to transition into a body that approaches security issues from a different perspective.

Non-proliferation will remain as a major preoccupation. There is, of course, no end point to this objective.

Closer monitoring of the global industry and trade in chemicals of relevance to the Convention assumes greater importance precisely for its non-proliferation value. Our States Parties will have to be proactive in identifying security risks that arise from production and trade in toxic chemicals. This is so because in the future the use of chemical weapons in a conventional military sense is remote. The misuse on the other hand of toxic chemicals, especially in an asymmetric sense, appears to be more the more likely scenario.

Our key challenge for the future therefore is to ensure that the legal prohibitions based on the Convention are viewed as comprehensive enough for States Parties to take action in identifying potential new threats and adopting the measures to prevent them. We should also be able to extend the reach of verification to new chemicals and new means

and methods of production that are continually coming online as a result of breakthroughs in science and technology.

In deepening our programmes by reallocating the resources that will be freed up by reduced on-site verification of destruction, we will seek to provide greater substance to our cooperative programmes as well. These include not just national implementation measures, which are a crucial plank for effective treaty enforcement, but our assistance and protection and international cooperation programmes as well. These programmes bind our States Parties together and promote a sense of ownership in the OPCW.

The possibility that terrorists may use chemical weapons has created renewed interest in the ability of the OPCW to coordinate the delivery of emergency assistance in the event of an attack, or the threat of such an attack. The ease with which some commonly available toxic chemical compounds can be used for nefarious purposes, using rudimentary but widely available knowledge to weaponise them, makes it incumbent on all States to be aware of and address the existing dangers. Full implementation of the Convention by all States Parties, working together in all regions and with all stakeholders, is an essential means to address the threat of chemical terrorism.

Resolutions and decisions of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 and the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy recognise the central role of the OPCW in promoting counter-terrorism in the context of chemical weapons. Moreover, scenarios involving terrorist use formed the basis for several OPCW assistance and protection exercises,

including the 2005 ASSISTEX-2, which was carried out in collaboration with the government of the Ukraine and with NATO.

I wish to conclude by saying that there are a number of key features that have made the CWC a successful disarmament and non-proliferation project. These include the comprehensive nature of the Convention; verification; international cooperation and assistance, and, our collaborative relationship with industry. Although the challenges ahead of us are significant, the OPCW tradition of consensus building promises to assure a future for the Organisation that will be as successful as its past.

Thank You.