



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FIRST COMMITTEE
(DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY)

STATEMENT BY

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THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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Mr Chairman,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates

It is a great pleasure for me to address once again the First Committee the OPCW attaches a particular importance to its cooperation with the cooperation to the United Nations.

In April next year, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) will complete fifteen years of its operation. During this period of time, this unprecedented multilateral treaty has brought significant benefits and advanced the objectives of international security.

It is the only international agreement that has led to the roll back of chemical weapons programmes. It has established a regime for the verification of the global chemical industry to ensure that chemical weapons are never produced again. International cooperation activities, both for assistance and protection against chemical weapons as well as promotion of chemistry for peaceful purposes, are an essential feature of the Convention.

Thus far chemical disarmament had remained the principal core objective for the OPCW. 85% of its inspection resources have traditionally been devoted to disarmament verifying to date the destruction of nearly 70% of the total declared stockpiles of chemical weapons.

Three of the declared possessor States - Albania, A State Party and India have completed the elimination of their stockpiles.

The two largest possessor States, namely, the Russian Federation and the United States of America continue to make progress towards the complete destruction of their chemical weapons.

The Russian Federation has so far destroyed over 22,000 metric tonnes of chemical warfare agents. This represents 55% of its chemical weapons stockpiles. The figure for the United States is 25,000 metric tonnes or 90% of its stockpiles.

A concern for the international community over the last few months was the situation in Libya. The Secretariat has closely followed the situation and remained in regular contact with the Libyan Representatives to the OPCW, as well as with the National Authority. We have received assurances that the Libyan chemical weapons stockpile is under the effective control of the National Transitional Council forces. The Secretariat is currently in discussions with Libya regarding the resumption of destruction of its remaining chemical weapons.

The final extended deadline for the destruction of all declared chemical weapons will expire in April next year. The Russian Federation and the United States of America have both indicated that they will not be able to complete the destruction of all their chemical weapons by that date. Significant technical, financial and safety hurdles and challenges have been the cause of the delay. Over the past year, the Executive Council has been deliberating this issue intensively.

In statements issued as recently as 4 October the Foreign Minister of Russia and the Secretary of State of the United States have reaffirmed

their strong commitment to the Convention and their obligation to eliminate the remaining stockpiles as soon as possible.

I feel confident that the policy making organs of the OPCW will take full account of the commitment of the two possessor States and will soon adopt a forward looking decision based on the considerable work that has already been done in this regard. The gist of the emerging approach is to enable the two possessor States to complete their destruction programmes while they on their part agree to implement an enhanced package of transparency and confidence building measures.

Mr Chairman,

By April 2012, three-quarters of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles are expected to have been destroyed and by the year 2016 only 1 percent will remain to be eliminated.

As a consequence, we envisage significant reductions in inspections to verify the destruction of chemical weapons in the coming years. In 2012, the size of the OPCW inspectorate will be reduced by nearly a quarter.

The long term objective of the CWC, namely, permanent security against the threat of chemical weapons will, however, endure. To serve that end, the Organisation will need to transition from one that has so far primarily dealt with eliminating existing arsenals to one that prevents their re-emergence in the future. The OPCW will also promote security and protection against the misuse of toxic chemicals.

An Advisory Panel on future priorities of the OPCW that I had commissioned has submitted its report. This was recently discussed informally with Permanent Representatives of States Parties at a specially organised retreat. States Parties have underlined their strong support for the Convention as well as its core objectives. At the same time, it was recognised that adaptation was necessary to ensure that the Organisation is able to respond to a fast changing world. A comprehensive debate on future priorities of the OPCW will continue in the coming months. Contributions of States Parties to those discussions of a strategic nature will be most valuable. In this context, it would be useful to hold a meeting of senior disarmament officials from capitals early next year, in The Hague.

A key area to strengthen is effective domestic implementation of the Convention globally. More than 50 percent of States Parties need to take action to ensure that their legislation covers all key areas of the Convention. Among the many changes in the security environment is the threat posed by non-State actors. This calls for vigilance and for States Parties to enact and enforce effective controls covering the manufacture, transfer and use of dual use materials. This safety net needs to be anchored within their internal legal systems.

Preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons as well as their misuse is a multidimensional undertaking. Not only does it entail a strengthening of the industry verification regime of the Convention, but also a sustained effort to keep abreast of developments in science and technology. These could lead to the discovery of new types of chemical weapons as well as novel methods of production that could include processes emerging from the convergence occurring in life sciences.

A broader approach to security also underlines the need to focus on chemical safety and security issues. Only last month, the Organisation hosted a major Conference on International Cooperation and Chemical Safety & Security, as a contribution to the International Year of Chemistry proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly. A key result of the Conference is the clear recognition by States Parties that the OPCW is a forum suited to and appropriate for concerted action in the field of chemical safety and security.

We must be prepared to deal with the threat of use of chemicals weapons or use of toxic chemicals as weapons. The Convention is not yet universally accepted and today there exist new threats such as terrorism. The OPCW must therefore continue to retain core competencies particularly the expertise to handle chemical demilitarisation, conduct challenge inspections and investigations of alleged use.

We must also strengthen our ability to respond to the growing interest amongst our Members to increase their national capacities for emergency response and consequence mitigation. The provisions of the Convention that entitle our States Parties to receive assistance and protection in emergency situations will continue to remain of high importance.

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of chemistry was an important incentive for many countries to join the Convention and remains a major motivation for them to remain engaged. We look forward to deepening our international cooperation programmes while ensuring that these are optimised to also serve the Convention's effective implementation.

Mr Chairman,

The near universal acceptance of the CWC with its 188 Members is cause for satisfaction. However, the goal of a world free from chemical weapons is not assured without the remaining 8 members of the United Nations who have not yet joined the Convention.

I wish to take this opportunity to appeal to all those States to accede to the Convention at the earliest. The CWC offers both a security guarantee and has a humanitarian purpose. Its acceptance should be considered independent of regional considerations or other linkages. The inhumane nature of chemical weapons and the long effort that led to their total prohibition have established a global norm. Accepting to be legally bound by this norm will signify support for the principles and purposes of the UN Charter and will promote regional security in regions such as the North East Asia and the Middle East.

In this context, the OPCW remains prepared to contribute to the conference to be convened in 2012 on the Middle East WMD free zone as decided by the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Mr Chairman,

The General Assembly adopts by consensus an annual resolution on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. I wish to thank Poland for its consistent contribution towards the adoption of this resolution which manifests the strong support that we receive from the United Nations.

I am pleased to state that the United Nations Secretary-General, H.E. Mr Ban Ki-moon, has accepted my invitation to attend a session of the Conference of the States Parties. He has long considered a visit to the OPCW, and has tentatively agreed to address the closing meeting of the Sixteenth Session of the Conference later this year.

Given the importance of charting a future course while it adapts its programmes to contemporary needs, the OPCW will seek to organise a meeting during the high-level segment of the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly next year. The purpose of this Meeting will be to strengthen the traditional support that the OPCW has enjoyed at the United Nations while benefiting from the vision and advice of senior officials who will be present in New York. The occasion will also lend support to our preparations for the 3rd Review Conference of the CWC that is envisaged in 2013.

Thank you Mr Chairman.
