

Opening Remarks by
The Director-General AHMET UZUMCU

Information Session

“Article X Programmes – Opportunities for the OPCW Member States”

9 July 2012, The Hague

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this gathering. We have scheduled it together with the facilitator to coincide with the 69th Session of the Executive Council in order to take advantage of the presence of visiting delegates. I appreciate their presence which assures a beneficial exchange of views.

The title of this event is ‘Article X Programmes – Opportunities for the OPCW Member States’. However, while the Secretariat will present to you updates and perspectives gained from experience in implementing the given mandate, I consider it equally important that we benefit from your contributions on how our programmes can be made more responsive to your needs.

Article X, as you are all aware, is one of the fundamental pillars of the Convention. It is also unique in a disarmament treaty because assistance and protection is codified as a fundamental legal right of States Parties. In most other instances, a country in distress can only rely on the goodwill of the international community.

However, as with other facets of the Convention which broke new ground in multilateral disarmament, its provisions needed to be translated into workable regimes. The obvious example is verification. But in this sense, Article X is no different.

Provision of timely, adequate, and efficient assistance to a State Party that requests assistance under Article X is a complex undertaking. It starts with attention to certain prerequisites: States Parties are required to submit annual declarations on national protective programmes and information on the type of assistance measures that can be offered through the Organisation to respond to a chemical weapons attack in a Member State.

A standardised format for submissions facilitates the compilation of data necessary for preparing tailor-made protective capacity-building projects. The information contained in these declarations is also indispensable for the delivery of assistance operations. As the effective operation of Article X relies heavily on the information that is gathered from these declarations, their regular submission by all States Parties is indispensable.

The Voluntary Fund for Assistance provides the lifeline to the effectiveness of Article X. As of today, 45 States Parties have contributed to the Voluntary Fund for Assistance totalling almost 1.5 million Euros. Two States Parties have concluded bilateral agreements on provision of assistance, and 44 states declared unilateral offers of assistance. Active participation of Member States and their contributions are essential for the successful implementation of Article X.

Together with building a resource base, operational imperatives have far reaching demands as well. A quick and efficient response is the key to countering the impact of an attack with chemical weapons or toxic chemicals. This effectiveness can only be achieved by a full national or regional response to the incident. To fulfil this challenging task, the Secretariat needs support from recipient and donor countries. Cooperation between Member States and the Secretariat is vital to the success of capacity building projects. By working together and sharing experiences, States Parties can improve the effectiveness of their response mechanisms and design a more systematic and cost effective approach to their protection programs.

The Secretariat has developed the concept of regional training centres to train and prepare trainers within a region and to improve regional cooperation and national protective capacity. This regional concept requires tools, including guidelines, training modules and also equipment that can only be provided by those Member States that already have more advanced national protective programmes.

Coordination with regional and international organizations is not only desirable but in some scenarios necessary. The creation of regional networks with the involvement of regional organizations and structures will assure high level of preparedness at the regional level. It will be our endeavour to work closely together to achieve this ambitious goal. Furthermore, in most realistic scenarios UN Agencies such as UNOCHA are likely to take the lead in emergency situations. Hence, the need to coordinate with them and in fact prepare ourselves together through workshops and exercises for emergency responses.

In regard to capacity building activities, the Secretariat is developing a ‘train the trainers’ programme here in The Hague. We will share OPCW procedures and expertise in protection against chemical weapons with all interested States Parties who seek to improve their national capabilities. The call for nominations for this programme will be issued soon. We hope that in responding to this invitation, States Parties will nominate experts who can gain the most from this course. They should be experts who are then able subsequently to organise programmes within their respective countries thus creating a multiplier effect.

Let me take this opportunity to thank Mr. Maciej Karasinski who facilitates discussions at the OPCW on Article X issues. His hard work and commitment have been invaluable to the advancement of the objectives of Article X.

I feel confident that this meeting today will lead to a fruitful exchange of views and ideas concerning the effective implementation of Article X of the Convention. This is a challenging time for the Organisation. At a time of financial constraint, we need to make the best use of available resources. We can accomplish this by clearly identifying priorities and bringing greater efficiencies to existing programmes without compromising on the fundamental importance of Article X. All of you can and I am sure will contribute to this effort.

I once again thank you for your presence and wish you success.

Thank you for your attention.