



**THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION: MAKING
DISARMAMENT HAPPEN**

VIENNA CENTER FOR DISARMAMENT AND NON-
PROLIFERATION

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VIENNA,

19TH MARCH, 2013

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be at the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-proliferation. I thank the Centre for inviting me and appreciate very much your presence here today.

Supported by the Austrian government and affiliated to the renowned James Martin Center on Non-Proliferation Studies of the Monterey Institute, this

Center adds to Vienna's reputation as a place for many an important deliberation for making our world a safer place.

I have always regarded academic discourse as vital to both policy formulation and implementation. Our work can benefit immensely from informed and sustained interaction with experts, academics, scientists and other parts of the civil society.

The OPCW has reached a juncture where we seek revitalised engagement on two broad fronts.

One, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a science based treaty and science is advancing rapidly. We watch unfolding discoveries with fascination. They promise new and exciting possibilities and unprecedented prospects for human advancement. But science without ethics has brought grief to mankind. We need to maintain vigilance. And for this, we need the support of scientists who keep a keen eye on the implications of their evolving vocation.

Secondly, with a key part of our mission as an Organisation nearing completion, we have a future ahead of us where goals need to be retooled to contemporary and future security needs. It took a hundred years to reach a point where nations agreed to a total prohibition on chemical weapons and to destroy their stockpiles. Maintaining this prohibition is not a matter of political commitment alone. It translates into four broad areas of work, namely, disarmament, non-proliferation, assistance and protection against chemical weapons and international cooperation to promote peaceful

chemistry. While in their own right, these are four distinct pillars of the Convention, their complex interaction, both political and technical, creates a broad canvass of programme areas.

We are today on the verge of reaching global zero on chemical weapons and must think about preserving the effectiveness of the instrument that brought this about, namely, the Chemical Weapons Convention. Our States Parties, the global chemical industry and various other stakeholders within our membership need to be fully engaged in order to determine well-considered and sustainable policy directions. We must seek a path that will strengthen the global ban on chemical weapons; and avoid the one that could lead to a state of complacency which sometimes results from anticipating or reaching a major landmark.

I consider my presence here today as part of my commitment to offer to the international community an objective assessment of where we stand and to solicit its support for the goals of the Convention and its future.

The theme of my presentation is: “The Chemical Weapons Convention: Making Disarmament Happen”. It is an apt topic considering that the Convention stands out as a most successful instrument of disarmament and non-proliferation. It is hard to find an equivalent example of the complementarity of the two notions in action.

Multilateral disarmament is a longstanding part of the international agenda. Its fortunes have followed the agonising twists of modern history. In its wider scope; going beyond the extant humanitarian treaties, its objectives

can be traced back to the failed efforts of the League of Nations. Rising from the ashes of the Second World War, a new endeavour for collective security arose in the form of the Charter of the United Nations. Central to this seminal framework for preserving and promoting global peace and security is the recognition that limitation on arms and eliminating the most destructive ones is indispensable to the realisation of its principles and purposes. Therefore, the very first resolution that the United Nations adopted in January 1946 following the establishment of the world body gave expression to the collective wish to address the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. The resolution called for measures aimed at the “goal of eliminating nuclear weapons and all other weapons adaptable to mass destruction”.

The modern multilateral disarmament agenda has its roots in the spirit of that landmark resolution.

Today, in the face of continuing crisis and conflicts; be those political, economic or financial, a negative outlook for the future seems irresistible. Ignoring the otherwise great strides that have been made in virtually every sphere of human activity, the effectiveness of multilateralism is sometimes questioned. Such doubts can easily extend to the quest to find solutions to the crucial problems of weapons of mass destruction. Eliminating such weapons and preventing their proliferation fortunately continues to enjoy international consensus. However, progress may not always be satisfactory against declared expectations. And this can lead to skepticism.

The case of chemical weapons should provide hope and encouragement to international efforts relating to weapons of mass destruction. Chemical weapons today stand totally banned under the Chemical Weapons Convention. And, multilateral cooperation manifest in the work of the OPCW ensures that the treaty functions effectively and to the benefit of each of its Members. What makes this project not only unique but quite remarkable is the fact that of all the weapons of mass destruction, chemical weapons have historically been used the most often.

There was a time when conventional wisdom regarded the problem of chemical weapons as essentially one belonging to the bipolar confrontation of the Cold War; as the two superpowers of the time were also known to possess the largest stockpiles. The extensive use of chemical weapons by the former regime in Iraq targeting civilians illustrated in recent times a more sinister nature of the threat. In the mid-nineties and before the Convention entered into force, terrorists used chemical weapons in Tokyo, exposing yet another type of danger from these weapons.

The Convention was concluded in 1993, and entered into force in 1997. It has since then, through the work of the OPCW, worked towards the elimination of all declared stockpiles of chemical weapons. Our work covers not only verification of destruction of chemical weapons but also inspections at commercial chemical plants; monitoring imports and exports of designated chemicals; assistance and protection against chemical weapons; encouraging and facilitating accession to the Convention by states; undertaking tasks in international cooperation; capacity building, and

knowledge sharing, and promoting the peaceful use of chemistry as well as engagement with the global chemical industry and the public.

The success of the OPCW as a multilateral institution is evident in the 16 years of the operation of the Convention and the apparatus of its implementation. Today 188 states are parties to the Convention, and nearly 80% of all declared stockpiles of chemical weapons have been successfully destroyed by States Parties. Progress continues to be made on the destruction of remaining stockpiles and on promoting the universality of the Convention through engagement with the 8 states which remain outside of its ambit. Of the many objectives that are contained in the Convention, these are the only two that have an end point; complete destruction of chemical weapons and universal adherence to the Convention.

As the Convention moves steadily towards their attainment, what is to be the future of the prohibition on chemical weapons? Should we consider our goals to have been successfully fulfilled? Will our role in disarmament change in any significant way? In the post destruction phase, will the existence of the Convention be more important or less important to the future?

At the conceptual level, the answers to these questions are simple. The Convention constitutes a permanent prohibition and line of defence. It is an answer to the historic search to outlaw the use of poison as a means of warfare. In our present day world, it offers a vanguard against the use of toxic chemicals for purposes of terrorism. The chemical weapons ban is not only the Convention, but the norm which informs it. It has, in fact, become

essential to our deliberations on international peace and security. To work for the preservation of this norm is a fundamental and shared responsibility for the larger international community.

At the practical level, the answers require deeper reflection and close deliberation. A major share of our resources has so far been dedicated to chemical demilitarisation. Already, and over the next few years more steadily, this share will significantly decline. A dramatic reduction of resources for any institution can rapidly erode its capacities, its expertise, its institutional memory and indeed its ability to carry on the remaining tasks. The capabilities that the OPCW has developed over the years, especially in the context of its verification regime, are rare and cannot be easily found elsewhere.

The Convention had not been designed to simply eliminate declared stockpiles of chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities. The Convention in reality represents a permanent guarantee against chemical weapons.

Therefore, progress towards accomplishing a major objective of the Convention sets the stage to consider how best its other core objectives can continue to be effectively served.

As a treaty with verification and related transparency and confidence building measures at its heart, programmatic elements for preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons will acquire much greater salience in the future. This is a notion that is much wider than mere non-proliferation. In the

context of the CWC, it covers industry verification, data monitoring; nationally and by the Organisation; transfer controls; effective national implementation and dissemination of the ethical norms of the Convention through outreach, education and public diplomacy. As I had alluded to at the beginning of my statement, scientific and technological developments are important for the implementation of our Convention; their possible implications for the verification mechanism must be closely followed.

The OPCW industry verification regime depends for its smooth functioning on national declarations of relevant activities and facilities in States Parties. Improving the completeness, the quality and the accuracy of declarations together with the timeliness with which they are submitted remains an important objective. The focus and intensity of inspections of the chemical industry also needs to be kept under review. In short, the key question that we face is how to reinforce the value of our industry inspections in a manner where States Parties are generally confident in the effectiveness of the regime; now and in the future.

The Convention primarily serves a security purpose and the OPCW is a security organisation. This character will not change. A key factor in the success of our multilateral endeavour, however, is the support from our larger membership which are developing countries or countries in transition; barring a few, they have not been possessors of chemical weapons nor extensive industry. Our programmes in the area of international cooperation have been crucial in eliciting their support for the overall goals of the Convention and in attracting such wide membership. Continued attention and improvements in our international cooperation activities serves the aims

of the Convention. It will also help to enhance its effective domestic implementation.

Implementation of the Convention's allied provisions on assistance and protection against chemical weapons represents an excellent example of how we can make adjustments to accommodate evolving conditions, perceptions and demands. Over the years the approach of States Parties to assistance and protection issues seems to have shifted from the classical concern about the use of chemical weapons in a battlefield situation to lower intensity incidents mostly in the form of threats from non-state actors. This could include the possible use of industrial toxic chemicals. There is a clear increase in expectations from the OPCW in the context of developing the capacity of national response teams and systems.

To make our work in this area more responsive to future needs we will seek to establish more effective coordination with others; as a number of international agencies also have a mandate to deal with prevention and consequence mitigation in the event of terrorist use of biological or chemical weapons. The Secretariat will also continue to enhance its focus on developing greater coordination at the regional or sub-regional levels.

Additionally, the threat from non-state actors and of terrorism in general has created an expectation from the Organisation to play its part in promoting chemical safety and security against the hostile use of toxic chemicals or preventing chemical accidents.

The demand for the OPCW's role in this area comes from States Parties and is yet another example that in a time of rapid change, we need to adapt to continue to fulfill our role effectively. In this context, we will seek to develop further our traditionally close cooperation with the chemical industry.

The OPCW's involvement in chemical safety and security is not meant to establish any new standards or to interfere with the regimes already in place in the industry. It is simply to offer a service to our States Parties who wish to benefit from existing best practices. This is the orientation of our current programmes in safety and security and this is how it will remain in the future with benefits going primarily to small and medium size enterprises in developing countries.

Another notion that is integral to the objective of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons concerns raising the level of awareness about the ethical norms of the Convention. This is true especially for scientists and engineers and academics. In my view this aspect should constitute one of our future priorities in terms of strengthening our outreach activities contributing to education and understanding of Convention.

Together with the need to consider our response to the new challenges, we must continue to pay full attention to unfinished business. Achieving the universality of the Convention must remain a high priority. Events in a country in the Middle East have underlined how critical this goal remains. There cannot be any guarantees unless every remaining country has joined the CWC and is therefore legally bound to respect its prohibitions. Apart

from my own efforts and those of the Secretariat, achieving full universality requires the active support of our States Parties whom I have urged to use bilateral and multilateral channels for this purpose.

The other important outstanding matter concerns national implementation of the Convention. Any international treaty is as good as its domestic implementation by States Parties. Although the track record of the OPCW in this regard fares reasonably well, we still have a large number of countries who need to take action. In the times ahead, the OPCW will pay much greater attention to tailor-made approaches to help individual countries take the necessary steps to implement their national implementation obligations. We continue to institute new methods and approaches to improve the overall record.

An Advisory Panel that I had commissioned to reflect on our future priorities described the OPCW as the ‘global repository of knowledge and expertise with regard to chemical weapons disarmament, the verification of their non-possession and non-use, and a repository of knowledge about their destruction.’ It recommended that ‘the OPCW should find ways of ensuring continuity in its knowledge base and expertise in these areas’. With disarmament nearing completion and the consequent structural changes that become inevitable, such knowledge is in danger of dissipating. To ensure that it is not lost irretrievably, I propose to set up a training and research centre at the Secretariat. I do not foresee any major financial commitment to this project beyond some slight expansion in the OPCW laboratory capacity and a reordering and effective use of existing resources. The centre will become the focal point for consolidating OPCW training programmes for

both staff and States Parties and will offer modular training covering a variety of subjects. It will also provide support to regional centres of training that States Parties are encouraged to establish.

I like to think that a time of change is not only a time of challenge; but also of opportunity. This is a defining moment in the history of the chemical weapons ban. The regime is poised in a state fit for reflection upon its very many accomplishments as well as for setting its future strategic priorities. We are currently engaged in preparing for the upcoming Third Special Session of the Conference of States Parties to review the operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Review Conferences are held every five years. They take stock of how the Convention has progressed in accomplishing its goals and take a long view into the future.

Although the core objectives of the Convention are broad ranging, dominant attention has so far been rightly paid to destruction and verification. So as we look to the future, it is obvious that a common understanding about longer term priorities is needed. The Third Review Conference provides us with an opportunity to devise such a framework. This should be followed by consensus on adequate resource allocation and the structure of the Secretariat. In other words, the forthcoming Review Conference provides an invaluable opportunity to sharpen the vision for the future of the Convention and the OPCW.

The prohibition against chemical weapons shows how the international community can make disarmament happen. There are a number of factors, and perhaps ultimately, it is their sublime combination. The regime is non-

discriminatory, policy making organs have an institutional history of proceeding on the basis of consensus, and the Convention's obligations are supported by an extensive effort at implementation in which States Parties are fully assisted by the OPCW. States engaged in dialogue on sensitive issues such as the destruction and prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons have developed a culture of cooperation, and, facilitated by an accountable and transparent Secretariat, have worked towards their treaty obligations with a profound sense of commitment.

The lessons of our accomplishments are important not only for the future of our own regime, but also hold relevance for international work on disarmament. The Chemical Weapons Convention has a very important place in global disarmament and in the multilateral governance of international peace and security, and it is in the interest of all States and stakeholders to keep it constantly relevant.

I thank you for your attention.