



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

BRAZILIAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
(ABIQUIM)

STATEMENT BY

H.E. AMBASSADOR AHMET ÜZÜMCÜ
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
OF THE
ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL
WEAPONS

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Fernando Figueiredo, CEO of ABIQUIM

It is a great pleasure for me to be here in Sao Paulo.

This is my first visit as OPCW Director-General to Brazil. It is a visit that is well overdue, given Brazil's long history of activism on chemical disarmament and close engagement with the OPCW.

Brazil played a key role in negotiation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, especially working within GRULAC to obtain cross-regional support on several pivotal issues. ABIQUIM was an important partner in this regard, advising on workable solutions for industry as part of the Brazilian delegation.

In September 1991, almost two years before the Convention was concluded and opened for signature, Brazil signed the Mendoza Declaration committing it, alongside Argentina and Chile, not to use, develop, produce, acquire, stockpile or transfer chemical or biological weapons. Brazil is also part of the first group of countries to sign the Convention and develop national implementing legislation.

This front-footed engagement has been reflected in the quality of Brazilian officials who have contributed to the OPCW. Marcelo Kos, also formerly of ABIQUIM, currently heads up the Inspectorate – a weighty responsibility in light of the mission in Syria.

Brazil's expertise continues to inform the OPCW's work right up to the present. I am especially pleased that a Brazilian member of the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board, Dr Nicia Mourao, is with us here today.

The OPCW values highly its cooperation with Brazil, both with government officials no less than with industry. I hope my visit will help push this cooperation into new areas for the benefit of all Member States.

The past year has seen truly historic developments for the Chemical Weapons Convention and the work of the OPCW.

The mission to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons programme has tested the OPCW with unprecedented challenges. This experience has only reconfirmed to me that our ability to rise to such challenges owes to the commitment shown by our States Parties as well as to the professionalism, experience and dedication of our staff.

These skills and qualities were forged over time, and they have been the bedrock of the impressive successes that the OPCW has recorded since the Chemical Weapons Convention came into force in 1997.

It was a source of immense pride for all of us working at the OPCW, now and in past years, to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of our contribution to global peace and security. Brazil, like other States Parties,

has played no small part in the collective effort that made this achievement possible.

What was particularly gratifying about this award was the Nobel Committee's acknowledgement of the tangible nature of what the OPCW has helped to achieve.

Now, after just seventeen years, we are well within reach of achieving a world free of chemical weapons. The facts speak for themselves.

Some 82% of all chemical weapons declared to the OPCW have been destroyed to date.

Three of the eight possessor states – Albania, India and another State Party requesting anonymity – have completed destruction of their stockpiles. Libya most recently did likewise, with only some component chemicals left to be eliminated, and Iraq is proceeding with a plan to destroy remnants of chemical weapons.

The two major possessor states, Russia and the United States, are well on track to achieving their destruction targets, in accordance with a revised decision adopted by our Member States in 2011.

And the removal of chemical weapons from Syria – in preparation for destruction – is well advanced, with some 92% of chemicals now out of the country.

What all this shows is that global zero for chemical weapons is by no means a distant prospect – it is an imminent reality.

But the OPCW is doing much more than verifying destruction of chemical weapons. It is also working assiduously to prevent their re-emergence.

Under the Chemical Weapons Convention, industry in States Parties which produce chemicals and precursors that could be used to make chemical weapons are subject to inspections.

The OPCW must verify that the production and consumption of such chemicals are solely for legitimate purposes. To this end, we have so far conducted over 2,500 industry inspections in more than 80 countries.

This is the unique strength of the Convention – not only does it ban outright an entire class of weapons of mass destruction, with no exceptions for any State, it also ensures that this ban is enforced, through international monitoring and verification. No other multilateral disarmament treaty has as comprehensive and tangible a reach.

Nonetheless, the Chemical Weapons Convention is not a two-legged stool. Its durability and comprehensiveness come from a broad platform firmly resting on four pillars. These comprise not only disarmament and non-proliferation, as I have just mentioned, but also assistance and protection, as well as international cooperation on peaceful uses of chemistry.

Worth recalling in this regard is that the Convention is a global treaty, with a diverse membership. It encompasses 190 countries possessing chemical weapons and an advanced industrial base at one end of the spectrum, and those with rudimentary or no chemical industry at the other.

Yet, what unites States Parties is a sense of common purpose born of one essential principle – the indivisibility of chemical security. In playing its part to rid the world of chemical weapons, each and every member is also entitled to reap the full benefits that chemistry brings.

Through the OPCW's extensive programmes and cooperation and training arrangements with States Parties, any OPCW Member State can request and receive assistance for building their capacity to implement the Convention and to protect its citizens against the impact of chemical attacks or incidents.

The OPCW has likewise expanded opportunities for peaceful uses of chemistry that bring humanitarian development and economic benefits to Member States with economies in transition. These include training for chemists and engineers in best practices for safely managing dangerous chemicals in an industrial environment, as well as funding for research projects and internships at research institutions around the world.

There is an important message in the holistic regime that the Chemical Weapons Convention and the work of the OPCW represent – namely, that durable security can only be built on transparency and sustainable prosperity.

This is a message that is guiding our work at the OPCW to broaden and deepen our community of stakeholders. The reason for doing so is to ensure that we are implementing the Convention in the most effective way possible.

Key in this regard are our partnerships with industry and science.

As I mentioned earlier, ABIQUIM, alongside other industry associations from around the world, was an engaged participant in the negotiations on a global chemical weapons ban – and with good reason. Any treaty that mandates inspections of commercial industrial facilities will only work on the basis of their companies' concerns being addressed, especially those that relate to protection of commercially sensitive information.

We now need to be more proactive and creative in how we engage industry on new approaches to emerging challenges.

These could usefully address the potential proliferation implications of new production technologies and the globalization of the chemical industry, including realignments in its production base. To this end, we must adapt inspection procedures and timetables in ways that maintain the confidence of industry and governments in our confidentiality arrangements.

We could also consider broader and more imaginative ways of engaging the private sector. The OPCW would especially welcome industry perspectives on how we might bolster compliance with the Convention and engage industry in some of our outreach and training endeavours.

I understand that Brazil has a highly effective trade data monitoring system that was developed through close consultations between ABIQUIM and the Brazilian Government. There may be scope for Brazil to share its experience in this regard with other States Parties, with a view to increasing accuracy and efficiencies in the preparation of declarations.

The overall message is clear: security is not just the responsibility of governments – industry and commercial entities must play their part.

I strongly encourage you to expand dialogue between industry and government with a view to extracting new efficiencies out of existing cooperation.

Scientists are no less important a partner than is industry, and there is considerable overlap between the two.

Insights into science and technology underpin full and effective implementation of all operational articles of the Convention – from the definition of chemical weapons, to verification and monitoring activities – from investigation of alleged use, to cooperation on peaceful uses of chemistry.

The OPCW Scientific Advisory Board plays a key role in this respect. It continually reviews scientific and technological developments on the basis of their potential impact on the Convention. Board members provide

independent advice, drawing also on their own extensive networks to test thoroughly assessments shared with the OPCW.

In this way, the Board functions as a sort of early-warning system for discoveries and new technologies that could be misused. It is also a vehicle for tracking the evolution of technologies that are being adapted by the chemical industry to benefit safety and security, as well as ensuring verification methods are kept up to date. This role is only set to increase in importance over coming years.

One example that is germane to Brazil is the rapid expansion of the biochemistry sector in this country. Your researchers are well placed to consider what impact new processes and technologies emerging from the convergence between biology and chemistry could have for implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In short, what the OPCW is striving to achieve is a mutually supportive relationship with industry and science at a time when we need more innovation.

The mission to eliminate Syrian chemical weapons is a case in point.

There are many things we are doing for the first time in the challenging circumstances presented by the Syria mission. And this is the first time we are undertaking any sort of activity under such a watchful public gaze.

Let me try to draw together some of the elements of our work that I have so far highlighted on the basis of our – in many ways, unique – experience from this important mission.

Broadly, these relate to effective coordination of international assistance, design of innovative technical solutions, productive engagement of the private sector, an inventive approach to verification, and making use of messaging opportunities.

First and foremost, the effectiveness of the Syria mission has been underwritten by internationally sourced in-kind assistance. Removing and destroying Syria's chemical weapons is a highly complex operation, relying on many interlocking parts.

These comprise provision by more than a dozen countries of cargo and naval escort vessels for transporting chemicals, port facilities for transloading them, and facilities for destroying and treating them.

This sort of cooperation, and our ability to coordinate it, goes to the very heart of the effective multilateralism that underpins the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Secondly, faced with the absence of a land-based destruction option for Syrian chemicals, the United States mounted two of its Field Deployable Hydrolysis Systems aboard one its vessels, the MV Cape Ray, to facilitate destruction at sea. This has allowed us to ensure that there could be no technical reason for not meeting the mid-2014 destruction deadline. The

systems involve a tried-and-tested process of hydrolysis – breaking down chemical agents with hot water and a caustic compound.

Thirdly, the private sector has also made an important debut in the Syria mission. The OPCW came up with an innovative solution for dealing with the industrial chemicals used in Syria’s chemical weapons programme by putting their disposal out to commercial tender. At the end of the solicitation process, two commercial companies – Ekokem of Finland and Veolia Environment Services Technical Solutions of the United States – were awarded contracts to undertake this task.

Fourthly, the OPCW has had to be creative in how we undertake verification. In some instances, security considerations have prevented our inspectors from gaining physical access to chemical weapon production equipment and facilities. To verify the destruction of such facilities, our inspectors have had recourse to “remote verification” methodologies. Further, we have had to develop innovative verification measures for both the facilities and the ports at which the industrial chemicals will be unloaded in both Finland and the United States.

Finally, public interest in the work of the OPCW is at a historic high in the wake of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize and the ongoing Syria mission. Never before have we had to undertake our work under such intense international scrutiny.

This has created new responsibilities vis-à-vis transparency that the OPCW has worked closely with involved States Parties to meet. The OPCW has

also arranged opportunities for briefing NGOs and media on all aspects of the operation, along with involved States Parties.

These endeavours have set the tone for our commitment to expanding education and outreach more broadly to raise awareness of the Convention and its objectives, as well as broaden our community of stakeholders in government, industry, academia and civil society.

The international outcry in reaction to the sarin gas attacks on the Damascus suburb of Ghouta last August, and the subsequent heightened level of interest in chemical disarmament, should be a clarion call for those countries that have not yet joined to the Convention.

We will be redoubling our efforts to encourage those six countries still outside the Convention – Angola, Egypt, Israel, Myanmar, North Korea, South Sudan – to join without delay or preconditions.

The attention that the Nobel Peace Prize has generated in relation to chemical disarmament will, I hope, compel states not yet party to the Convention to reconsider their position, or to speed up internal processes that they may have already initiated to accede to the treaty.

Syria has clearly shown that our success cannot exceed our reach. We cannot guarantee the integrity of the global ban against chemical weapons until all countries adhere to it.

Whatever the likelihood of scenarios similar to that of Syria occurring in the future, we should not forget one thing: no-one had been able to predict the possibility of the current mission only a few months ago. Accordingly, we must be ready to react when opportunities arise, and when circumstances demand.

The Syria mission has amply demonstrated a high level of readiness on the part of the OPCW, as well as the resilience of the Chemical Weapons Convention in addressing this sort of undertaking.

We have also shown that the OPCW, working imaginatively with States Parties, can devise inventive solutions to problems arising from unforeseen challenges.

This is the best guarantee of the durability of the Convention and ongoing efforts to implement it.

For a rapidly changing strategic environment means that we must expand our reach and be attuned to new efficiencies, rather than new, hard-to-administer restrictions.

In particular, this means being alert to the challenges and opportunities arising from globalization, rapid scientific and technological advances, and a veritable revolution in communications.

There is no better time to refocus our energies than the present – on the eve of the centenary anniversary of the first large-scale use of chemical weapons, and in the wake of the international community reaffirming its abhorrence of chemical weapons, and demonstrating its willingness to act collectively.

Thank you for your attention.