

Briefing to non-Residential Permanent Representations
Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao, OPCW Deputy Director-General
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Brussels, Belgium

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the Director-General, I would like to welcome you to this briefing for Permanent Representations of States Parties based outside of The Hague, and thank you for sparing time from your busy schedules to attend this briefing.

This is the first time I am addressing this group as the OPCW Deputy-Director General, and I look forward to working closely with you and your colleagues.

The purpose of this briefing is to help you prepare for the 20th Session of the Conference of the States Parties, which will take place from 30 November to 4 December in The Hague.

This year, the Conference will consider a number of important decisions, first and foremost among which will be the Programme and Budget for 2016. As it stands, the Draft Programme and Budget for 2016 is EUR 67.1 million, which is down by EUR 2.2 million compared to the 2015 Programme and Budget. There is no increase in assessed annual contributions by States Parties.

To cover the cost of special missions and to mitigate the potential impact of future unplanned missions on the annual Programme and Budget, a proposal has been made on the establishment of a Special Fund for Special Missions, utilising the 2013 cash surplus, which will also be considered by the Conference.

On the other hand, I would like to bring your attention to the cash situation that the Technical Secretariat is currently facing. As at 31 October, 94.5% of annual contributions had been collected for 2015, against 94.4% by the same date last year. You may also note that the collected annual contributions for 2014 are still not complete, as the current collection rate only stands at 95.5%. I would appeal to those States Parties that have not fully paid their assessed contributions to do so without further delay.

Among other agenda items worth noting at the Conference is a decision to establish an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, based on the recommendations received earlier this year from the Scientific Advisory Board's Temporary Working Group on education and outreach. The Secretariat continues to expand its work in the area of education and outreach by rolling out new materials and e-learning tools to heighten awareness of the risks posed by the misuse of dual-use technology. The proposed Advisory Board will help guide these and future efforts in this area.

Last year's Conference of the States Parties endorsed an initiative to advance Ethical guidelines for chemistry professionals in relation to CWC obligations. After two workshops "The Hague Ethical Guidelines," which is a set of standards that call for the exclusively peaceful use of science among chemistry practitioners across the globe have been issued and will be discussed at this year's Conference. I wish to encourage you to share these guidelines, which are available in the OPCW public website, with your National Authorities and other stakeholders to advance

understanding of the importance of nurturing responsible and ethical scientific development.

This year's Conference will also include, for the first time, an agenda item on engagement with chemical industry and the scientific community. Further to recommendations of the Third Review Conference, the OPCW has sought to establish a more structured and systematic engagement with the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) and the Chemical Industry Coordination Group was established as a result.

The second annual OPCW-The Hague Award will also be presented during the Conference. You may recall that this award was established utilising the Nobel Peace Prize money, to honour outstanding contributions in advancing the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Other notable agenda items of the Conference include: fostering international cooperation for peaceful purposes in the field of chemical activities; the OPCW Programme for Africa; an update on progress towards universality; and a comprehensive update on the status of the implementation of the Convention, including destruction progress and our work in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Let me now turn to activities being undertaken by the OPCW in relation to the Syrian Arab Republic as well as in other chemical weapons destruction activities.

Joint Investigative Mechanism

As you are aware, on 7 August, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2235 (2015), authorising the establishment of an OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). The purpose of the JIM is to identify those responsible for carrying out attacks with toxic chemicals in Syria.

On 10 September, the Security Council authorised recommendations on the establishment and operation of the mechanism, including elements for terms of reference, which were submitted by the Secretary General in coordination with the OPCW Director-General, as required by the resolution.

Ms Virginia Gamba, Director and Deputy to the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, was subsequently appointed to head the JIM. Mr Adrian Neritani of Albania and Mr Eberhard Schanze of Germany have assumed their roles to serve as deputies.

Ambassador Schanze, you might recall, previously served as Germany's Permanent Representative to the OPCW.

The JIM will be an independent body based in New York, with a component in The Hague. It is expected to become operational this month and will report to the United Nations Security Council and keep the OPCW informed of its progress.

The OPCW will provide specific technical and analytical expertise and will temporarily assign some staff members to the Mechanism.

Fact-Finding Mission

The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) will continue its work in establishing the facts concerning allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria, under the authority of the Director-General. Its reports and ongoing activities will form an important resource for the JIM.

The latest findings of the FFM – related to information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic alleging the use of toxic chemicals as weapons – were shared with States Parties last week. As part of the Director-General's monthly report, these findings will also be provided to the United Nations Secretary General in accordance with Council decision EC M 48/DEC.1 (dated 4 February 2015).

The OPCW will continue its work in the Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with relevant Executive Council decisions and United Nations Security Council resolutions, paying due regard to considerations of safety and security.

This will require ongoing support from the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). We will downsize our requirements to a point where we can ensure adequate on-the-ground support for as long as the OPCW will continue its work. A new trust fund for missions in Syria is being established to support the continuation of our activities.

Destruction of Syrian CW programme

I am pleased to report further progress in relation to the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme.

Of 12 chemical weapons production facilities, the Secretariat has verified the destruction of all five underground structures and six of the seven aircraft hangars. The security situation continues to preclude safe access to the remaining hangar, although the Syrian authorities have advised that it will be destroyed shortly.

Progress continues to be made on the disposal of the small remaining amount of chemicals removed from Syria. Veolia ES Technical Solutions in the United States of America will complete disposal of the remaining 49 hydrogen fluoride cylinders by the end of December 2015. This will signal the complete destruction of all chemical weapons declared by Syria, currently standing at 98.8%.

Declaration Assessment Team

The Declaration Assessment Team continues its work with Syrian authorities to clarify Syria's initial declaration. It recently submitted a report covering its activities for the period from April 2014 to September 2015 (EC 80/P/S/1, dated 25 September 2015).

This report highlights the progress made towards a complete and accurate declaration of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, as well as several outstanding issues. The Secretariat hopes that continuing engagement with Syrian officials in this process will resolve these issues.

CW destruction activities

Turning now to broader chemical weapons destruction activities, I am pleased to note that significant progress continues to be made.

As at **31 October**, the total amount of Category 1 chemical weapons verified as destroyed reached 64,437 metric tonnes (MTs), or 91.41% of all declared chemical weapons.

The Russian Federation has destroyed 36,756 MTs, or 92% of its declared Category 1 stockpile. A particular highlight in this regard has been the completion of operations at four chemical weapons destruction facilities in the Russian Federation this year – Leonidovka, Pochev, Maradykovsky and Shchuchye.

Later this month, I will attend the official closing ceremony for the Shchuchye facility, which will mark the last of the four facilities which will be completed its operation.

The Kizner facility will continue operations and it is due to complete its operations by December 2020.

To date, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the United States of America of 24,925 MTs, or 89.8% of its declared Category 1 stockpile. Destruction of remaining stocks is scheduled to be completed by September 2023.

The Technical Secretariat continues to assist Libya with the implementation of the concept plan for the destruction of remaining Category 2 chemical weapons and the excavation, recovery, and destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China have continued as well.

CW use in Iraq

You must be well aware of persistent recent allegations regarding use of chemical weapons by non-state actors in Iraq.

The Government of Iraq recently accepted the OPCW's offer to send experts to contribute to ongoing investigations of chemical weapons use in that country. An OPCW team has now investigated these allegations and will soon report on its findings.

Terrorism and non-state actors

In other developments, the OPCW Working Group on Terrorism has been very active this year.

As you would recall, in July this year the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism established a Sub-Working Group (SWG) on Non-State Actors in response to keen interest of Member States to explore in more detail issues raised in discussion papers prepared by the Secretariat. These issues relate to the legal accountability of non-State actors, measures to prevent hostile uses of toxic chemicals, and ensuring an effective response to the toxic chemical events.

In addition, we have continued to engage with other international organisations through the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), which forms part of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Future of the Organisation

As you might recall, a retreat for Permanent Representatives was held on 1 October to brainstorm on important issues that will continue to shape the strategic direction of the OPCW and its mission through the post-destruction phase.

Discussion was based on positions advanced in the vision paper prepared by the Secretariat, “The OPCW in 2025: Ensuring a World Free of Chemical Weapons” (S/1252/2015, dated 6 March 2015).

The Secretariat has circulated an informal summary of these very useful discussions, which identified several issues of common interest.

I encourage you to review this survey and to share your thoughts with the Secretariat and other States Parties.

Universality

Turning now to our efforts to promote universalisation of the Convention, I am especially pleased to report that significant progress has been made this year in this regard, with the accession of two new members – Myanmar and Angola.

The Director-General has been in contact with South Sudanese officials to advance that country’s succession to the Convention.

During my recent mission to the United Nations First Committee, I met with delegations of Egypt and Israel, and appealed them to reconsider their positions and to join the Chemical Weapons Convention. As you are aware, only four States stay outside of the Convention, and I hope that your governments would also use your contacts with States not yet party to urge them to join without delay.

Public promotion of the OPCW and its work

As part of the preparations for the centenary, and throughout the year, the Technical Secretariat has continued to enhance and disseminate audio/visual materials to publicly promote the work of the Organisation. These include several new films, including *Remembering Ieper*, *Buried Memories* and *OPCW Nobel Peace Prize 2013: Back Stage*. I encourage you to draw on these valuable resources in your own outreach and awareness-raising efforts.

Closing

In closing, I would like to strongly encourage your participation in the Conference of the States Parties, and look forward to welcoming you in The Hague.

This Conference comes in a historically important year for the OPCW and its States Parties, as we consider our legacy in the wake of one hundred years of chemical warfare and disarmament.

Thank you very much for your attention.

I now turn to my colleague Mr Mark Albon, Director of International Cooperation and Assistance Division, to provide you with a briefing on ICA activities.

After his presentation, we will have a questions and answers session. Thanks.