



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Stakeholders Forum for States Parties in Africa on Adoption of national Implementing legislation

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Opening remarks on day two

Director-General of the OPCW

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REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Her Excellency Ambassador Melono
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be given the opportunity to address you today at this Stakeholders Forum for States Parties in Africa on the Adoption of National Implementing Legislation. I thank the Ministry of External Relations for hosting this important forum and I extend a warm welcome to all participants. I also wish to convey my appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Cameroon for inviting me to Yaoundé.

The network of disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and the organisations that oversee their operation is one of the key features of the modern international system. For its part, the OPCW contributes to global peace and security through its mandate to rid the world of chemical weapons and to prevent their re-emergence. Today's inter-connected and inter-dependant world makes it necessary to deal with collective threats and dangers through a collective response. The risks posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to international security are as urgent today as they have ever been, while the realities of combatting them have grown increasingly more complex.

This Forum aims to help the African States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to advance the status of their legislation related to the Convention. During these three days you will be given guidance on how to take forward and improve the implementation of the CWC. It will also give you an opportunity to share information and best practices on the development and adoption of legislation. You will listen to experts from the OPCW and experienced practitioners from around the region. It is our hope that this forum will lead to specific and practical roadmaps for the completion of implementing legislation in your countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the CWC and the founding of the OPCW. Today, the Convention remains the cornerstone of the international community's commitment to eliminate the scourge of chemical weapons. The Convention contains a unique combination of provisions that make it stand apart from other disarmament treaties. All rights and obligations apply to all States Parties equally. The Convention prohibits not only use, but also the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and transfer of chemical weapons. It has a comprehensive and robust verification regime. And the Convention has specific provisions for addressing noncompliance, including the suspension of rights and privileges.

Impressive progress has been made under the Convention in its relatively short history. 96% of some 72000 tons of declared chemical warfare agents have been destroyed under the OPCW's verification. This is a momentous achievement and a tangible contribution to global peace and security. Indeed, the extensive disarmament efforts of the Organisation were recognised by the Nobel Committee, which awarded the peace prize to the OPCW in 2013. The two largest possessor States, namely the Russian Federation and the United States, are both progressing steadily towards the end goal of the complete destruction of their stockpiles. Russia is expected to complete its destruction by the end of this year and the United States by the year 2023.

The Convention's international verification regime remains the gold standard among multilateral disarmament agreements. With nearly 3500 industry inspections, the regime is a tried and tested tool for promoting confidence in compliance with the Convention. Our ability to monitor and inspect destruction and chemical production activities – in an impartial and credible manner – has been vital for building confidence in our work, as well as between our Member States.

Our international cooperation programmes continue to assist States Parties in developing their capacities to make use of chemistry for peaceful purposes. Assistance and protection against chemical weapons is an important right enjoyed by States Parties and we continue to enrich our programmes in this area. National implementation of the Convention is showing progress. Today, 192 countries are States Parties to the Convention, accounting for 98% of the world's population. Only four countries in the world are not yet party to the Convention, among those are Egypt and South Sudan.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the destruction of the remaining military stockpiles approaches its completion the focus of the OPCW is shifting. Our work will consist of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, countering the mounting threat of chemical terrorism, and responding to the rapid advances in science and technology.

The threat of chemical terrorism is a real concern, and one that cannot be easily addressed with current approaches to non-proliferation. We have already seen the willingness and ability of some terrorist groups to acquire and use chemical weapons. Countering this threat will require action on many fronts using available tools, including multilateral coordination and legislative means.

We take this threat seriously at the OPCW. The OPCW's Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism has been tasked with identifying opportunities for enhanced interaction and coordination with relevant international bodies. A Sub-Working Group focuses particular attention on the problem of non-state actors. Last week this sub-working group was briefed by Mr Larry Gbevlo, the Director for the African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism in Algiers. The purpose of his presentation and discussions which followed it were aimed to explore possibilities for collaboration with regional organisations in Africa. We already have an active partnership with the United Nations Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force, which helps us and over a dozen other international organisations practice and coordinate responses to biological and chemical weapons threats. Together with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the OPCW co-chairs the working group on preventing and responding to WMD terrorist attacks with chemical or biological weapons.

Africa is no stranger to terrorism and the destruction that it can inflict. Violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram, which respect no borders, pose dangers to the whole region. As the chemical industry in Africa increases in scale and sophistication, the potential for non-state actors to gain access to toxic chemicals grows. Therefore, ensuring that all our States Parties have effective legal and other regulatory measures in place, and supporting internal structures to administer them is absolutely critical. These legal frameworks provide the foundation for preventing non-state actors from gaining access to materials that could aid the development of chemical weapons.

Effective enforcement of this framework would serve to criminalise the development, production, stockpiling and transfer of chemical weapons or the use of toxic chemicals as weapons by all natural or legal persons under the jurisdiction of individual States Parties. It creates the domestic capacity to monitor, to report, and to guide activities involving chemicals along peaceful and productive lines. It is a key focus of our efforts around the continent to ensure all States Parties are equipped with not just any national legislation for implementing the provisions of the Convention, but the right legislation.

One of the key objectives of the OPCW's Africa Programme – the main framework through which the Organisation is providing support to African States Parties – has been to ensure that all States Parties have fully implemented the Convention and have designated National Authorities to coordinate national implementation as well as to liaise with OPCW and other States Parties. To date 50 African states have established or designated National Authorities. 49% of African States Parties have adopted comprehensive Convention legislation. It is significant to note, however, that of the States Parties that have not enacted or only have legislation that includes partial measures for putting into force the CWC, 21 have developed comprehensive draft national legislation, which of course need to be ratified and enforced.

We assist our States Parties in this crucial area through training programmes, information exchange, and capacity-building activities. These are designed to promote best practices in legal processes and enforcement. The OPCW reviews drafts of implementing legislation to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Convention. As such the OPCW's Internship Programme for Legal Drafters and National Authority Representatives lends support to States Parties in drafting implementing legislation. The programme enhances the technical skills of the

participants to enable them to complete a draft of national implementing legislation. In fact, in August this year, a legal expert from Cameroon travelled to the OPCW Headquarters in The Hague to share his country's experiences of developing and enacting CWC legislation with other African countries participating in the Internship Programme. I wish to express my appreciation to Cameroon for its contribution to this activity.

But legislation is not enough. Adoption and enforcement of national implementation measures is not possible without strong cooperation between National Authorities and all the relevant national stakeholders. It is the key task of the National Authority to reach out to various state agencies in the area of technological and scientific development, trade, environment, border control, and customs, in addition to security and defence, to establish effective partnerships for fulfilling the obligations of the Convention.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Preventing re-emergence of chemical weapons in this changing environment will not be a single track undertaking, but will rather require action on many fronts and enhanced engagement of key stakeholder groups. However, adoption of necessary national legislative and administrative measures remains pivotal as a first step to ensuring proper implementation of the CWC. It is therefore events such as this that strengthens the very bedrock of our Convention. This Forum is one of many important steps we have to take together to ensure that all CWC States Parties have implementing legislation. There is still a long way to go in raising awareness of others, building partnerships and pushing the process of adoption of the legislation forward. We will continue providing necessary assistance to the States Parties in this regard, but we rely on their commitment to implement the Convention fully and effectively. I wish you a productive meeting and continued success.
