



**ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

**Briefing to Permanent Representations based outside of The Hague**

**Remarks by the Deputy Director-General**

**Brussels, Belgium**

**10 November 2017**

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*REMARKS AS DELIVERED*

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome all delegations to this annual briefing for non-resident Permanent Representations to the OPCW based outside of The Hague. I thank you for sparing time from your busy schedules to attend.

The purpose of this meeting is to brief you on the activities of the Organisation and to assist you in the preparation for the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties (CSP), which will take place from the 27 November to 1 December in The Hague.

The Conference will consider a number of other important issues, including the draft Programme and Budget for 2018. The regular budget of the OPCW for 2018 totals €67,248,655.00, which is 0.8% (€549,545.00) lower than the budget for 2017. With preparations for the Fourth Review Conference on the agenda, the CSP will also consider establishing a special fund for the conference. This fund will be based on a transfer of a portion of the 2015 cash surplus.

The CSP will also include an agenda item on the OPCW's Africa Programme. The Secretariat continues to implement a wide range of capacity-building activities tailored to the needs of African States Parties, and a report detailing the programme's past initiatives has been submitted.

Other notable items on the Conference's agenda will include: A comprehensive update on the status of implementation of the Convention, including the progress of stockpile destruction; the activities of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism; and our work in the Syrian Arab Republic.

This year the Conference will appoint a new Director-General, who will assume the post on 25 July 2018. The Executive Council in October recommended by consensus the appointment of Ambassador Fernando Arias, Spain's Permanent Representative to the OPCW and Ambassador to the Netherlands as the next Director-General.

Nominations for the fourth annual OPCW-The Hague Award closed on 15 October and the selection panel is concluding its deliberations. 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.

Let me now turn to developments and activities being undertaken by the OPCW in relation to chemical weapons stockpile destruction.

### Chemical demilitarization

On the overall progress of chemical demilitarization, I am pleased to report that the total amount of weapons destroyed under international verification currently stands at 69,628 metric tonnes (MT) or 96.3% of all stocks declared to the OPCW.

On 27 September, the National Authority of the Russian Federation announced that it had completely eliminated its chemical weapon stockpile – almost 40,000 MT. I participated in the ceremony marking the completion of the demilitarisation operations, which took place at the Kizner Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility.

The United States of America has destroyed 25,154 MT or 90.6% of its total declared Category 1 chemical weapons. The US commenced destruction operations at the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP) in September 2016. Destruction of remaining stocks is scheduled to be completed by September 2023.

Turning to Libya, it has completed the destruction of all its Category 1 and Category 3 chemical weapons. Approximately 93.4% of its Category 2 chemical weapons have been destroyed, and neutralisation of the remainder is progressing according to plan at a German destruction facility (GEKA mbH).

The contents of the remaining tank at the Ruwagha Tank Farm that experienced an exothermic reaction during reloading have been destroyed. The Secretariat was able to verify the destruction remotely and is planning to obtain soil samples from the site.

In Iraq the encapsulation of Bunker 13 has been completed, while approximately 75% of the work for Bunker 41 has been achieved. During a recent technical assistance visit to Iraq the Secretariat received a comprehensive technical update.

China and Japan continue to work together on recovery and destruction operations for abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) in China, including at Haerbaling. The Secretariat is working closely with Chinese and Japanese authorities, and a trilateral meeting in Beijing is planned for December 2017.

The recovery of old chemical weapons (OCW) goes on in a number of States Parties. Since last year, Panama has informed the Secretariat that all of its eight declared OCWs have been destroyed. The Secretariat deployed an inspection team to Panama to observe the destruction process.

### Syria related issues

#### Fact Finding Mission

Moving now to issues related to Syria. Under the authority of the Director-General, the OPCW-Fact Finding Mission (FFM) continues its operations following further reports of the alleged use of chemicals as weapons. You may note that the report of the FFM regarding an alleged incident in Ltamenah on 30 March 2017 was issued on 2 November. In this report, the FFM concluded that sarin was more likely used as a chemical weapon in Ltamenah.

## Joint Investigative Mechanism

On the subject of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2235 (2015), the JIM continues its work to identify those responsible for carrying out attacks with toxic chemicals in Syria.

The seventh report of the JIM was issued on 26 October. It is very disturbing that yet again chemical weapons have been used in Syria. It is vital and in the interest of all States Parties that the norm against the use of chemical weapons is always upheld.

In this regard a special meeting of the Executive Council was convened yesterday and the discussions were inconclusive and will be resumed sometime next week.

## Declaration Assessment Team (DAT)

The Secretariat has engaged with the Syrian Arab Republic in order to clarify all the outstanding issues identified in relation to its initial declaration and related submissions. Despite the high-level consultations with the Syrian authorities, the Secretariat has not been able to resolve the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in the declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic.

## Destruction

In November 2016, the Executive Council, based on the conclusions of the third and fourth reports of the JIM, decided that the Secretariat shall conduct additional inspections. The first round of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian

Scientific Studies and Research Centre were conducted from 26 February to 5 March 2017. The Secretariat has started planning for a second round of inspections.

## International Cooperation and Assistance

On International Cooperation and Assistance, Mr Hamza Khelif, Director of the ICA Division, will shortly provide you with a detailed presentation on our activities in this area.

## Terrorism and non-state actors

As the destruction process of military stockpiles approaches its completion, the Secretariat is shifting its focus towards preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. In this regard, the threat from terrorists is of growing concern.

In recognition of this threat, the recent Executive Council adopted a decision on non-state actors.

The decision emphasizes that a number of CWC provisions are relevant to preventing acts of chemical terrorism, assisting States Parties to respond to such acts, and to holding individuals accountable for undertaking activities prohibited by the Convention.

It also encourages the sharing of information on best practices and on chemical security more broadly, as well as having a greater focus on enhancing chemical security globally.

The decision also underscores the importance of all States Parties criminalizing any activity prohibited by the CWC that is undertaken by an individual.

Additional to this decision, the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and its Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors are continuing their deliberations in order for the OPCW to further contribute to global anti-terrorism efforts within its mandate.

For its part, the OPCW's Rapid Response and Assistance Mission, which is available to any affected State Party on its request in the event of a chemical attack, underlines our readiness to assist States Parties to respond to chemical terrorism.

#### Future Priorities of the Organisation

I would like to shift our attention now to the future priorities of the Organisation. Recognising the need to formulate recommendations for the Fourth Review Conference, in July 2016 the Executive Council established the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities. Since the last briefing, the Working Group has held several meetings covering a wide range of subjects, including the general mandate and goals of the Organisation. Questions regarding the evolution of the verification regime, national implementation, capacity-building, and the challenges posed by non-state actors have also been explored.

The Working Group will compile an inventory of ideas to be circulated to all States Parties and it will be further discussed in early 2018. It is also expected to present a document consisting of its recommendations for the Fourth Review Conference.

#### Fourth Review Conference

On the subject of the Review Conference, it is being held at a critical juncture in the life of the Convention and will play a vital role in the OPCW's shift in focus from destruction to the prevention of re-emergence. Thus, it is essential that the States Parties actively participate and support in forging the long-term vision of the Organisation.

A thorough preparatory process ahead of the Review Conference is important. Consequently, the Twenty-Second Session of the CSP should adopt appropriate decisions in order to ensure a timely launch of these preparations.

As you are aware, the Review Conference and the Twenty-Third Session of the CSP will be held back-to-back between 19 and 30 November 2018.

The Twenty-Second Session of the CSP is expected to set up an Open-Ended Working Group for the Review Conference. This group will serve as the main preparatory mechanism. According to the rules of geographical rotation, the Working Group shall be chaired by a representative of Asia. All other regional groups are expected to nominate vice-chairpersons to the Bureau of the Working Group.

#### Twentieth anniversary

Moving now to the Twentieth Anniversary, I would like to thank you for participating in the events in April and October held in The Hague.

To date, 34 events to commemorate the OPCW's Twentieth Anniversary have been hosted by States Parties around the world, and a further two are planned for the remainder of the year. These events have successfully raised awareness among States Parties and other stakeholders about the mission of the OPCW and the goals of the Convention.

### CSP practical information

Before I conclude, I would like to share some practical information to help you plan for the upcoming CSP. First of all deadlines for the registration of delegations and submission of credentials for the forthcoming session of the Conference of the States Parties.

The current status of the registration is as follows: 152 delegates from 40 States Parties, one Signatory State, 4 International Organisations, 66 NGOs, 1 representative of the industry cluster, 8 original letters of credentials and 9 copies.

The Secretariat wishes to remind States Parties that according to Rule 53 of the Rules of Procedure, a quorum majority for CSP-22 will be 97 out of 192.

It is kindly requested that the members should proceed with the registration and the submission of credentials as early as possible. The deadlines are as follows: for registration of delegations – 13 November and for submission of letters of credentials – 20 November.

Questions on registration and credentials may kindly be referred to the External Relations Division/Political Affairs and Protocol Branch.

Furthermore we would like to draw your attention to the fact that the annotated provisional agenda and the tentative programme of work will be issued on Monday 13 November 2017.

We have brought booklets on the CSP with practical information that you can take back to your offices afterwards.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to convey our appreciation to all States Parties for their ongoing commitment and strong support of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the work of the Secretariat.

We welcome all delegations, including leaders and senior officials of States Parties, to schedule meetings when they visit Belgium, the Netherlands, and other neighbouring countries. We would be happy to receive them and provide briefings about the work of the OPCW.

We look forward to deepening our cooperation through your increased participation in OPCW activities at what remains a busy and important time for our collective mission. With this, I conclude my briefing and open the floor to your questions.

Thank you.

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