

Algeria: Statement of H.E. Ambassador Salima Abdelhak, Permanent Representative of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria to the OPCW at the 107th session of the Executive Council under agenda item 6(b) on the Destruction of Abandoned Chemical Weapons in China

The Hague, October 09, 2024

Thank you Mr chairperson

This is the first time my delegation addresses ACW item as it has often seemed to be merely a bilateral issue to be resolved by the parties involved. However, the recent visit clearly demonstrated that this is a global concern requiring our full attention. The ACW destruction is as crucial as the destruction of stockpiles; indeed, it is no coincidence that both are mentioned in the Convention.

While the affected parties are undoubtedly the most impacted, we must stand by their side to help overcome this tragedy. During our on-site visit, we were able to measure the extent of the danger of ACW for communities and the significant economic losses for China, on one hand. On the other hand, we have observed the strong sense of responsibility of Japan as it took stock of the damage caused and has borne considerable investments in reparation efforts.

The task is heavy but still within reach, to our point of view. We have indeed witnessed a sincere commitment from both China and Japan to address and put an end to the relics of past conflicts. We commend the efforts made by the two governments and applaud their efficient cooperation to implement the agreed action plan aiming to conclude the process of destruction by 2027 under the supervision of the OPCW.

The deadlines are quickly approaching. Will they be met? There is reason for optimism, given the financial and human investments engaged by Japan and the determination of China to effectively assist in the different processes. We are indeed encouraged by the absolute numbers of items excavated, rehabilitated, and destroyed that have doubled or even tripled at times after COVID. However, the portion they represent bring us back to the reality of the challenges, especially with regard to the deadlines.

Moreover, due to the non-exploitability of archives from the imperial era, which dates back 70 years, invoked by Japan, the process of detection is not yet fully complete. New sites continue to be discovered, causing the process to restart repeatedly.

We need a clear diagnosis of the situation to propose innovative solutions to ease the burden on both parties and support them in overcoming their persistent challenges. Our Organization which already plays a role, must further facilitate and accelerate the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) through strengthened cooperation and advanced technologies that may assist in detecting

potential sites or analysing archives to identify areas where chemical weapons may have been abandoned or stocked. We should also consider whether artificial intelligence could play a role in supporting these efforts.

As the ACW challenge is significant for China and Japan, dialogue and consultation must continue to prevail, under the supervision of the Secretary-General to consider solutions, the proposals on the table.

My delegation reiterates its appreciation to both China and Japan, as well as the technical secretariat for the successful visit realized last September 2024 to the facilities of destruction of ACW in China and for the information they have provided us, during our visit.