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MALAYSIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. DR FAUZIAH MOHAMAD TAIB
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA TO THE OPCW AT THE
SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairman,
Director-General,
Members of the Bureau,
Distinguished Delegates,

Novelist Marcel Proust once wrote, “Remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they were”. Yet I remember very distinctly that one year ago this Conference adopted a decision that specified the commitments for Possessor States on the steps they would take if they faulted on the final extended deadline for the destruction of their chemical weapons stockpile. Etched into my delegation’s memory are the long hours of negotiation and the grudging compromise that was reached. My delegation – and I suspect many other delegations in this hall - supported the decision because we understood the complexity and the intensity of the matter. It involved heavy finances, safety issues, legal hurdles, and environmental considerations that were beyond the expectation of the possessor States. We took comfort in the assurance that steps will be taken in a transparent manner to inform and assure States Parties that destruction will continue until the last chemical weapon in their possession is destroyed “in the shortest time possible”. We look forward to the day when our trust is rewarded.

Now that we have dealt with one aspect of the Convention, let us turn our attention to the spirit of the Convention itself – that of the need to eliminate chemical weapons worldwide. Article I of the Convention is a primary obligation all State Parties have to undertake.

History has shown that States work in mysterious ways. We cannot tell what lies before us or in what form and how the next tension in the world will present itself. However, new dangers and perplexities there will surely be. We must not forget the cruelty of the First World War when chemical weapons were used. Sir Winston Churchill best described in his writings “how bombs from the air were cast down indiscriminately. Poison gas in many forms stifled or seared the soldiers. Liquid fire was projected upon their bodies. Men fell from the air in flames, or were smothered, often slowly, in the dark recesses of the sea. Europe, and large parts of Asia and Africa became one vast battlefield on which after years of struggle, not armies, but nations broke and ran”.



Let us not be naïve to think even for a moment that the danger of another chemical attack is past. The Technical Secretariat's thoughtful gift of gas masks to the National Authorities last week will undoubtedly come in handy then.

In an uncertain world that we are in, we can at least be reassured that as signatories of many disarmament conventions, including the Chemical Weapons Convention, we are bound by the commitment we made. Signing on to a convention is a serious matter. It implies complying with the clauses we promised to undertake.

All State Parties are obliged to contribute financially to the OPCW every year. As bureaucrats, we owe it to our taxpayers back home to carry out the promises our governments made when they signed on to this Convention. Today, 99 States Parties are still without the comprehensive legislation required of them by Article VII of the Convention. My delegation calls upon the Technical Secretariat to tempt and to cajole these States to move at the same pace as the others. It is only when everyone is on board that there is a level playing field. My delegation, in particular my National Authority will be glad to participate with all States Parties to ensure a victory. We are bound, having gone so far, to go forward together without flinching to the very end.

Chemical and chemical products represent an important contribution to Malaysia's economy. Last year alone the export of chemicals and chemical products accounted for 10.6% of Malaysia's revenue with a monetary worth of some 665 million dollars. In terms of inspectable OCPF facilities, we are the largest in South-east Asia and the fourteenth largest in the world.

The Convention allows inspections of OCPFs at random as a confidence-building measure. In terms of numbers, Malaysia has not a hundred, five hundred, or one thousand, but only forty-nine declarable OCPFs. Unfortunately for my country, we have already had twelve inspections in the past five years. I am assured that the choosing of the inspections is as random as it ever was. At the high rate that Malaysia has been randomly selected, maybe we should have a club for those States which need to take a hiatus from the OCPF lottery to allow the inspectors to focus on bigger fish in the sea.

The proposal to initiate sampling and analysis for Schedule 3 facilities and OCPFs is as hazy as the morning mist. We know perfectly well that the Verification Division of the Technical Secretariat ought to develop, ought not to be stereotyped, ought to be given the flexibility to enter into a new field, and to try new experiments. We do not wish to tie or trammel the Secretariat, but we wish that it would focus on something that is as solid as what the Convention says it "should" do, not "may" do.

With the limited resources available, with more and more inspectors leaving the building every year, my delegation doubts very much the wisdom of pressing on this idea at the present time. Should not the Secretariat focus on ensuring the destruction of the remaining chemical weapons in the possessor States and States with old and abandoned chemical weapons, rather than try to find a needle in a haystack? Why is the Secretariat taking us on a process that is not only inconvenient, but also very expensive? Just because there may be water on Mars does not mean we want to move there tomorrow.

My delegation hopes that in many years to come, historians will find the time to sieve through and select the documents we come out with, in order to tell their stories about how

we in this World Forum try to meet the requirements of the Convention. And it is for this reason that I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Conference – so that the remembrance of what has passed here today is exactly as it was.

Mr Chairman, my delegation is of course delighted to see you in the Chair, and happy to see that the sunglasses alluded to in an earlier session of the Executive Council is not needed after all.

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