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TO THE FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
NEW YORK, 19 OCTOBER 1999**

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

It would have given me great pleasure, Ambassador Gonzalez, to have been able, in person, to see you presiding over the work of this Committee. Unfortunately it seems to have proven impossible for those members of the Secretariat responsible for advising and assisting you in the conduct of the work of the First Committee to extend to the Executive Head of the OPCW the basic courtesy of addressing delegations from the podium: a courtesy, I might add, extended to the Executive Heads of other organisations in other Committees. It is even more difficult for me, the Director-General of an established international organisation, to accept the suggested reasoning for this extraordinary advice. As I understand it, the advice was to the effect that, if I were to be allowed to address delegates from the podium, some members of the Committee - most of whom are also members of the OPCW - might object.

The OPCW is neither a delegate nor simply an observer to the First Committee. It is a child of the Conference on Disarmament and, as such, has a direct connection to the First Committee. Therefore, if I, as Director-General of the OPCW, make myself available to report to you on the progress made and concerns faced by the Organisation, it is because I believe that the relevance of our mandate to the work of the First Committee requires my presence at this august gathering. It would appear, however, in the minds of the UN Secretariat and its legal advisers, that this is not the case. Let me assure you, Mr Chairman and distinguished delegates, that I remain ready to return to address the First Committee whenever the OPCW is accorded the recognition and the place it deserves. It would appear that for this to happen, however, there will need to be a breath of fresh air sent through the bureaucratic corridors of the United Nations Secretariat: Something which, despite the Secretary General's unrelenting efforts to make the United Nations more adaptable and ready to face the rapidly changing world, does not seem to have filtered down to those responsible for your Committee. In any case, on behalf of the OPCW and its Member States, I would like to wish you well in your task of guiding the important work of First Committee to a successful conclusion.

This year has seen the one hundredth anniversary of the First Hague Peace Conference of 1899. This landmark Conference established a number of important precedents in the field of disarmament, including the adoption, by 26 nations, of a declaration against the use of poison gas in warfare. Tragically, only 15 years later, the horrors of the First World War demonstrated that, despite the noble intentions behind this declaration, nations were, in reality, not yet ready to fulfil its purpose. This inability on the part of the international community to bridge the gap between ideal aspirations and multilateral reality has persisted for much of this century. Very recent events in the field of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have the potential to mean that we may be embarking on a new millennium which - if individual governments and the international community as a whole are unable to sustain initiatives to strengthen and reinforce multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament - may be characterised by the enhanced probability of the use, or the threat of the use, of weapons of mass destruction to resolve bilateral, regional, and even international conflicts. In this context the Chemical Weapons Convention, with its growing base of multilateral support, and its pioneering, professional and effective verification regime, is both an inspiring example and a beacon of hope for us all.

Almost 100 years after the First Hague Peace Conference, however, a very concrete and innovative possibility of eliminating, forever, the scourge of chemical weapons finally became a reality with the entry into force, on 29 April 1997, of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Today 126 States have fully committed themselves to its goals, while a further 44 States have, by signing the Convention, demonstrated at least a political commitment to its objectives. Let me once more remind you all that the Convention is a unique instrument of both disarmament and non-proliferation in the field of weapons of mass destruction. It is a single regime, with the same rules for all. It is credible. It is verifiable. In the words of the UN Secretary-General, H.E. Mr Kofi Annan, it is also fully consistent with the strategy of "preventive disarmament". Let me outline, further, the progress that has been made since that memorable day in April 1997.

Firstly, the world's largest known stockpiles of chemical weapons are now fully subject to the Convention's verification and destruction regime.

Secondly, the Convention's coverage extends to almost all countries with important chemical industries. Nearly 1,000 facilities have been declared by States Parties as dealing with the "dual-use" chemicals listed in the three Schedules - or lists of chemicals - to the Convention. Over 3,500 plant sites related to other "discrete" organic chemical production facilities - the so called DOCs - have also been declared. These plant sites - the DOCs - are particularly important because, although they were built to meet legitimate commercial needs, the very nature of their design makes it possible for them to be rapidly reconfigured to produce either chemical weapons or their precursors. Moreover they can be found in almost every country of the world. All of this represents an enormous verification task for the OPCW, which began its inspection programme in early June 1997 - a little over one month after the entry into force of the Convention.

Thirdly, as of Monday, 18 October 1999, the Organisation had conducted 561 inspections in 31 States Parties. Whilst, as you might normally expect, our inspection resources have been devoted primarily to the inspection of declared chemical weapons-related facilities, it should

be noted that the number of routine inspections already carried out in commercial chemical facilities on the territory of States Parties now exceeds 180.

Fourthly, all of the 60 chemical weapons production facilities which have been declared by our Member States have been inspected, and their inactivation has been confirmed. Fourteen of these production facilities have already been certified as destroyed, and five have been approved for conversion to use for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. Every effort is being made to ensure that the complete destruction or conversion of the remaining production facilities is completed in accordance with the timelines set down in the Convention.

Fifthly, progress continues to be made in relation to the destruction of declared chemical weapons. By the end of this year three of the four States Parties which declared possession of existing stockpiles of chemical weapons will have operating destruction facilities, and will have begun to actively destroy their chemical weapons. OPCW inspectors have so far monitored the destruction of approximately 3,500 tonnes of chemical agents and almost one million munitions.

These are major achievements for an organisation as young as ours. There is no room for complacency, however, as we are still dealing with the tip of the iceberg, as far as the destruction of chemical weapons is concerned. As I reported last year, more than eight million chemical munitions have been declared world wide. The Convention requires them all to be destroyed by April 2007. A key to the achievement of this target will, of course, be the effective implementation of a chemical weapons destruction programme within the Russian Federation - something which is already a major challenge, not only for the Russian Federation, but also for the OPCW and the international community as a whole. It is now clear that, as a result of the continuing economic difficulties being experienced by the Russian Federation, the destruction of Russian chemical weapons stockpiles (consisting of over 40,000 tonnes of chemical weapons/agents) will definitely require a considerable financial effort on a global scale. The time has come, if we are to meet the timelines foreseen in the Convention, to accept this reality and face up to this challenge which will ultimately benefit the world as a whole.

OPCW inspection teams and inspection methods, though strict and thorough, have been widely accepted by its Member States, as well as by the industries which they represent. The long-term success of this Convention, however, depends on the continuing political commitment of its States Parties, and, in particular, the sustained involvement of their chemical industries, without whose co-operation and support we simply cannot succeed. Thanks to the exemplary support of the chemical industry, the effective implementation of the Convention's verification regime in this critically important sector has so far been one of our greatest achievements. To ensure that this commitment is maintained and strengthened, the OPCW successfully hosted, in June of this year, the first annual joint meeting of representatives from National Authorities in charge of implementing the Convention at the national level and the chemical industry.

During the last year the Organisation has on a number of occasions developed and tested its procedures for implementing the "challenge" inspection mechanism established under the Convention. This unique mechanism - which is also being considered for inclusion in the

proposed verification regime for the Biological Weapons Convention - provides the means for any State Party with a concern in relation to another State Party's compliance with its obligations under the Convention to request a short notice inspection to address this issue and clarify matters. Such an inspection may take place at any location, declared or otherwise, on the territory of the challenged State Party, and cannot be refused. However, the realistic testing of these intrusive procedures requires the active co-operation of Member States. Earlier this year the Organisation once again participated in a challenge inspection exercise organised by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland at a military site. The commitment of the chemical industry to the object and purpose of the Convention was once again amply demonstrated when a private Brazilian chemical company recently agreed to participate in a mock challenge inspection, and to provide access to a commercial plant site for the purposes of testing OPCW procedures and of training OPCW inspectors. This mock challenge inspection exercise has just been successfully completed, and the inspection team has now returned to The Hague. The lessons learned from the exercise have been extremely valuable for the credibility of the verification regime under the Chemical Weapons Convention and to verification in general. Exercises such as this prove that the challenge mechanism can not only work but can also be made to work effectively. I wish to register my gratitude to both the Government of Brazil and the chemical company (Formil Quimica) which made this exercise both possible and a success story.

Unfortunately, the continuing support and commitment of the chemical industry for the implementation of the Convention is still under a cloud, due to the continuing absence of an industry declaration from the United States of America. As this State Party is the only major industrial country which has not yet made such a declaration, the chemical industries of the other major industrial States have consequently had to bear the full brunt of the industry inspections carried out so far. The resulting major imbalance in the application of the Convention's verification regime is, therefore, placing an increasing strain on the Organisation and in particular on the patience of those States Parties which are fully meeting their treaty obligations by subjecting their chemical industries to routine inspection. It is very clear that they will not be willing to accept a continuation of the current situation for yet another year. If this were to happen I have no doubt that the very soul of the Convention's verification regime would be at stake. It is, therefore, incumbent on the United States of America to fulfil its obligations under the Convention and provide the OPCW with its industry declaration as soon as possible, and thereby re-establish its natural and appropriate leadership role in the implementation of this key international instrument for the strengthening of the current system of international security, of which that country is one of the founding fathers.

The effective implementation of the Convention's verification regime is, of course, only one of the Organisation's many tasks. The current year has also seen considerable progress in other, equally important areas. Our programmes under Article X of the Convention relating to the provision of assistance and protection against chemical weapons have been placed on a firm foundation. A "chemical weapons protection network" has been established. The aim of this network is to ensure that Member States seeking advice or assistance in the field of protection against chemical weapons can rapidly gain access to experts and expertise on this topic. The Organisation has also provided, and will continue to provide, training courses for Member States in protection against the use of chemical weapons. Particular efforts have also been made to ensure the Organisation's state of readiness to co-ordinate the provision of

assistance and to investigate any alleged use of chemical weapons against a Member State. In this connection, with the full support and co-operation of the Czech authorities, for which I am very grateful, a comprehensive exercise designed to test and adjust our procedures for investigations of alleged use and for the provision of appropriate assistance is currently underway in the Czech Republic.

The drafters of the Convention clearly envisaged such attacks emanating from States, and framed its provisions accordingly. However, the potential use of chemical weapons by factions within a State, or by terrorist groups, is now seen by many as an even greater risk. The Organisation will eventually need to adapt in order to accommodate this changing reality and I am prepared to engage in a joint brainstorming exercise with our Member States on this sensitive issue in the search for an appropriate way forward.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

Achieving universal membership of the Convention continues to be a major preoccupation of the OPCW. Despite our obvious successes in this field since the entry into force of the Convention, progress in this area during 1999 has been disappointing. Only five states - Estonia, the Holy See, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nigeria, and Sudan - have joined us so far this year. I know that there are a number of other states very close to joining the Organisation, and I urge them to do so as soon as possible

Now that 126 states, roughly two thirds of all United Nations members and permanent observers, are Member States of the OPCW, the single, major question which may well be asked by those other States which have not yet taken the final step of ratifying, or acceding to, the Convention is: "What is in it for my country?" More particularly, the question has been raised in the following way:

"What is in it for my country - particularly as we neither possess, nor have we ever possessed, chemical weapons and, though we may have some industry in the chemical and related fields, it is neither significant nor advanced compared to other countries?"

I take this opportunity now to inform those States which are not yet party to the Convention that each and every State has much to gain from the Convention. It serves both political and humanitarian goals and security needs, as well as national and multilateral requirements in fields as diverse as trade, the environment, economic development, and international co-operation.

The global and individual security benefits are clear. The Convention could not have been adopted without them. A window of opportunity presented itself in the aftermath of the Cold War. Most States, in their wisdom, seized it with both hands. The Convention provides international assistance in the event of a chemical weapons attack, and co-operation on a multilateral and regional basis, while also reinforcing systems of protection and preparedness.

But the Chemical Weapons Convention also contains provisions regarding trade, both in terms of economic development and in terms of restrictions on trade in chemicals which pose a threat to the object and purpose of the Convention. The OPCW and its Member States are concerned that these present trade provisions, including additional restrictions which will

come into force very soon, will inexorably impact on the import of certain fundamental chemicals by States which are not party to the Convention. This is of particular concern because these non-member states are, without exception, all developing countries where the need to import chemicals for use in pharmaceutical, agricultural and basic products such as textiles is absolutely essential. While much of the world is apparently spellbound by the symbolism of 1 January 2000, the OPCW is focusing on the practical implications of 29 April 2000 - the date, only six months away, when the next group of restrictions on trade in chemicals listed in one schedule of the Convention will take effect.

During my bilateral consultations with non-Member States it has become increasingly clear to me that many are not aware of the extent to which these import controls will affect them. They are frequently blissfully unaware that many of the chemicals or mixtures of chemicals which they import for use in pharmaceuticals, pesticides, and even for such mundane items such as inks and dyes, will be affected by the export controls which will be imposed by the States Parties to the Convention, which include in their ranks all of the world's major producers of chemicals. It is for this reason that I have written to the Foreign Ministers of all signatory and non-signatory States, informing them of these provisions and of the imperatives which they represent for acceding to the Convention at the earliest opportunity.

Amongst the questions which these States need to ask themselves are the following: Can my industry afford not to have access to the chemicals which fall within the purview of the Convention? Is it still true that I can afford not to join the Convention? At the economic level, the Convention will also provide a boost for any country with a chemical trade or with various chemical and related industries. Additional restrictions against non-Member States will be considered in the near future. For example, in April 2002 Member States will consider whether to extend trade restrictions to the chemicals listed under Schedule 3 of the Convention. Such actions will have a severe impact on the import by non-Member States of some essential chemicals, including many with a wide range of commercial applications.

Let me provide you with a rough, raw statistic. Five and a half billion, or more than 90%, of the world's just over six billion people - consumers - live in countries which have ratified, or acceded to, the Chemical Weapons Convention. In the context of the imminent trade restrictions which I have just referred to, if the seven most populous countries remaining outside the regime of the Chemical Weapons Convention - Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, Egypt, Myanmar, Syria and Thailand, - were soon to join the Convention, this percentage would rise to more than 95%. Three of those five countries - Colombia, Myanmar, and Thailand - are already signatory States.

The rationale for joining the Convention is, therefore, compelling. All States will, in one way or another, need chemicals for their development. Let me once again emphasise that the benefits of joining the Convention apply in equal measure to smaller nations and to those without chemical weapons or significant chemical industries of their own. For those States with limited resources or capacity, regional co-ordination and consultation, in both the adoption and the implementation of the Convention, may also help in identifying common strategies and ensuring positive trade outcomes for the development and use of chemicals for peaceful purposes.

A process of strategic dialogue and responsiveness may also assist us to seize the opportunities offered by new periods of hope and optimism - as we are witnessing today in the Middle East. That region continues to remain an area of particular concern for the ultimate success of the Convention. A number of States in the region - Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and the Syrian Arab Republic, for example - continue to link their membership of the Chemical Weapons Convention to Israel's adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The achievement of universality in the elimination of chemical weapons - under a Convention which was negotiated as a complete package on its own - should not be held back by such linkages, which quite frankly benefit no one. Continued inaction by these States may rather be seen by some simply as a means of enabling them to maintain a clandestine chemical weapons capability. The best way for such States to counter accusations of this kind is to join the Convention. A number of other States in the wider region - Bahrain, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and, most recently, Sudan - have preferred the way forward that is offered by the Convention, and the contribution which it makes to the cause of greater global and regional peace and security. Let me reiterate this once more - the Chemical Weapons Convention is more than a disarmament and non-proliferation regime; it is par excellence a unique confidence building measure and one which operates within a clear legal framework.

The election of a new government in Israel, already a signatory State to the Convention, brings fresh hope for the achievement of a durable peace in this region. I therefore appeal to - Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen to join the Chemical Weapons Convention as soon as possible, thus paving the way for the establishment of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. Last but not least, I appeal to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to at least establish a dialogue with the OPCW.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

The Chemical Weapons Convention has so far proved to be one of the few functioning treaties on the recent disarmament agenda. It contains balanced, confidence-building features. It is a positive, unprecedented model, which should encourage and strengthen current initiatives in the disarmament and non-proliferation field to achieve tangible results.

The OPCW subscribes fully to a strategic vision which encompasses the following: international co-operation, the strengthening of global institutions; the fostering of a sensitively managed climate of transparency; and, most importantly, the pursuit of a culture of prevention - all of which apply at least as much to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction as they do to the non-proliferation of small arms. The Convention's contribution to the goal of reducing human suffering will ultimately be measured in terms of its universal acceptance and implementation by States.

One important precondition for the success of the Convention is, however, the resolution of questions relating to the fostering of international co-operation, and particularly to the issue of maintaining a balance between the non-proliferation requirements of the Convention and the equally important need to promote the unrestricted transfer of chemicals between States Parties. The Convention itself provides the means for checking proliferation and, by its very nature, lends itself to being applied in a dynamic manner which is not only responsive, but

also preventive, positive and flexible. In Article XI, the Convention provides for the facilitation of exchanges for non-prohibited purposes, and limits barriers to trade and development for a range of peaceful purposes. As the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr Jayantha Dhanapala, stated recently, in delivering the 1999 Olof Palme Memorial Lecture:

“We should take the relationship between ‘disarmament and development’ seriously and work harder on bridging the gap between rich and poor between and within countries. We should not, however, hold progress on disarmament hostage to solving all the problems of development - or vice versa.’

It must be remembered that history has already demonstrated that “technology denial” will not, of itself, prevent proliferation.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

The OPCW is a lean organisation, ready and willing to fulfil its mandate. Operating on a very modest annual budget of approximately 70 million US dollars, it has learnt to maximise its use of the available resources whilst at the same time remaining flexible and responsive to the needs of the moment in their allocation. Its staff of slightly in excess of 500 people have a well-deserved reputation for integrity, impartiality and professionalism. It is perhaps worth noting that this number includes over 200 inspectors and inspection assistants, and that 60% of staff in the Secretariat are directly involved in implementing the Convention’s verification regime.

The OPCW is rapidly maturing as an international organisation. It is slowly, if somewhat painfully, being accorded the international recognition which, I believe, it rightly deserves. Our abilities were amply demonstrated in July of this year when, in response to a request from the United Nations Secretary-General, OPCW inspectors successfully completed a mission to close down UNSCOM’s laboratory in Baghdad. Iraq is not a Member State of the OPCW. And the OPCW is not a part of the United Nations system. The fact that, despite these constraints, we were nevertheless able to undertake this mission, highlights the significant confidence-building mechanisms which the OPCW and the Chemical Weapons Convention are capable of supporting. The Baghdad mission also enabled us to demonstrate to the wider international community the skill, efficiency and impartiality of OPCW staff. The OPCW mission to Iraq has also highlighted the need for the United Nations and the OPCW to conclude a relationship agreement between them without delay. I wish to appeal to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Mr Kofi Annan, to devote his personal attention and unique political power to this important problem which, until now, has eluded resolution.

As an organisation that is now firmly established as a member of the family of international organisations, the OPCW expects and requires an increasingly mature approach from its Member States. Recognition of the Organisation and the important role it plays in the disarmament and non-proliferation fields is, after all, one of the keys to ensuring universal membership, a fact which is still not fully grasped even by some of our own Member States. We are not, as some, including some government spokespersons and members of the media have described the OPCW, “other relevant expertise” or a “Hague based group of experts”.



We are very much a full-fledged international organisation based in The Hague with a unique mandate which is still to be equalled by any other organisation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. Failure to recognise the wider role of the Organisation in the international community is clearly a major obstacle in our drive for universal adherence. My staff and I are doing our best to rectify this problem but in order to succeed we need the committed and active support of our Member States. Only when they accord the Organisation the status, the importance and the recognition it deserves will others then follow their example.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is one of the few functioning treaties on the current disarmament agenda. It is a positive, unprecedented model, which, despite recent comments to the contrary by some members of the Senate of the United States of America, does have a workable and effective verification regime. The lessons learned from the establishment and the successful implementation of the Convention should encourage other comparable initiatives in the fields of disarmament and non-proliferation field to achieve equally tangible results - including the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the negotiations for a Verification Protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention. Without the achievement of a wider recognition of the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention's pioneering regime these other regimes are likely to be doomed to failure. The Chemical Weapons Convention itself will not survive to reach its full maturity if the benign neglect currently shown by some of its major actors continues unabated. It is vital that these major actors refocus on the OPCW, accept it as their own creation, recognise its unique merits and put their trust in the regime they helped to create. It is equally important that Member States of the Organisation avoid concentrating on the micro-management of the work of the Organisation and instead focus on the macro dimensions of the problem, such as the political role of the OPCW and its place within the international community as a major instrument in the achievement of peace and international security.

Thank you for your attention.

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