



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION  
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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SIXTY-SEVENTH SESSION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATEMENT BY

AMBASSADOR AHMET ÜZÜMCÜ  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL  
OF THE ORGANISATION FOR  
THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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Mr President of the General Assembly,  
Excellencies,  
Dear Colleagues,

Please accept my congratulations and best wishes on your election as President of this session of the General Assembly.

The annual report of the activities and programmes of the OPCW and the implementation of the convention in 2010 and the draft report for 2011 have been circulated earlier.

I will summarise the salient aspects of our work which over the years has made the OPCW one of the most successful examples of multilateralism. I will also address your attention to the need to sustain our collective efforts to ensure that the Organisation will adapt to deal effectively with future challenges.

Mr President,

Fifteen years ago a new chapter was opened in the history of disarmament. The first ever treaty to establish a complete ban on an entire category of weapons of mass destruction under international verification had come into effect. As a legal document the convention was in itself a remarkable achievement. The complex machinery and mechanics of verification included in the Convention was then transformed into an operational regime. With the hard work of scores of men and women supported by the political will consistently shown by States Parties, we stand today poised to realise the vision of a world that is free from the threat of chemical weapons.

This year we commemorated the fifteenth anniversary of the entry into force of the convention.

Amongst the various events organised during the year we celebrated, this landmark here in New York last month, at the OPCW High Level Meeting. A large number of States Parties participated in the meeting in testimony to their steadfast commitment to the goals of the Convention. The meeting also underscored the value that the international community attaches to the Chemical Weapons Convention as one of the most successful multilateral instruments in disarmament and non-proliferation.

I would especially like to express my appreciation to the UN Secretary General, H.E. Mr Ban Ki-moon, for his support for this event. His participation symbolised the continued support by the United Nations for the Convention and added strength to our mission to rid the world permanently from the threat of chemical weapons.

The theme of the OPCW high level meeting was “Fifteen years of the CWC: Celebrating success, Committing to the future”. It is not often that a project in disarmament elicits acknowledgments of unqualified success.

You the members of the international community represented here at the apex world body deserve full appreciation for the unflinching support you have provided to the implementation of the Convention. Another strong symbol of that support is the annual consensus resolution adopted by the General Assembly.

As a result of our collective endeavours, the aspiration of a world free of chemical weapons is today closer to realisation.

In total, nearly 70,000 metric tonnes (MTs) of Category 1 chemical weapons have been declared by the possessor states. Of this amount, as of 31 October 2012, nearly 55,000 MT's, or 78%, have been destroyed under strict verification by the Secretariat.

Given the large quantity of toxic agents; the high costs and the human and environmental considerations involved, in certain cases the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles has proved to be very challenging.

The two major possessor States - the Russian Federation and the United States - continue to make progress towards completing the destruction of their respective stockpiles. Libya, which had stopped the destruction of their CW stocks in 2011 is likely to resume it in 2013. The States were however not able to meet the final deadline for the destruction of their chemical weapons. During the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of States Parties held last year, States Parties agreed on a constructive and forward-looking solution to enable them to continue their destruction activities under conditions of increased transparency measures and enhanced reporting.

In taking this decision, the Conference took into account the steadfast commitment that has been shown by these States Parties towards the complete destruction of their declared stockpiles. I have no doubt that they will also fully respect the spirit of that decision and will steadily move to complete the task in the shortest time possible.

The destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China continued throughout the year. Both China and Japan reported that the mobile destruction facility (MDF) in Nanjing completed the destruction of all the over 35,000 items.

China and Japan continue to work together to facilitate the redeployment of the mobile destruction facility from Nanjing to Wuhan and preparing for test operations in Shijiazhuang. Preparations are also ongoing for the start of the excavation and recovery operations in Haerbaling.

Our verification efforts related to the prevention of re-emergence of chemical weapons are continuing uninterrupted.

We have completed more than 2300 industry inspections, and aim at gradually increasing the focus, the intensity and the quality of our effort in this area.

Over 98% of the world's chemical industry is located on the territory of States Parties to the Convention. We recognize and applaud the support of the world's chemical industry for the objectives of the Convention. Such support boosts the Convention's confidence building function.

The negotiators of the Convention provided States Parties with a four-pillared foundation. Apart from the two pillars of disarmament and non-proliferation, States Parties, joining the Convention agree to provide each other with assistance and protection against chemical weapons; and are committed to the promotion of the peaceful uses of chemistry under the umbrella of international cooperation activities.

From the Convention's entry into force until the end of 2011, there have been 3,800 beneficiaries of the OPCW's international cooperation programmes.

In the area of assistance and protection against chemical weapons, the OPCW Technical Secretariat organises courses and workshops aimed at providing training to government experts and emergency response units. The purpose of these programmes is to build and develop national and regional capacities and emergency response systems against the use, or threat of use, of chemical weapons. Over 2,200 participants have so far benefited from these programmes.

Mr President,

While these are achievements for which our States Parties can rightly take credit, we must also remain cognisant of the challenges that lie ahead.

These challenges are both organisational as well as strategic.

Thus far a major part of our resources have been dedicated to verifying the destruction of chemical weapons. The significant progress already registered in the destruction means a progressive phasing out of this activity. This will impact our human resource requirements and oblige internal changes in the Secretariat. The task ahead of us is to ensure operational effectiveness and an unaffected ability to respond to contingencies. These include the responsibility to conduct challenge inspections at short notice as well as investigations of alleged use of chemical weapons when required.

An overarching objective for all States Parties is to ensure that the CWC will remain relevant and effective in accomplishing all its goals as well as responsive to future challenges. The Convention was negotiated nearly two decades ago. During this period, science and technology have seen major advances. It is therefore crucial to take stock of the current state of the science and the production technologies that are covered by the Convention and adapt our industry verification regime accordingly.

The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of the OPCW is mandated to assess relevant scientific and technological developments and advise the Director-General on these subjects. I am confident that the SAB will play its part in creating the necessary bridge between science and policy.

Our industry verification regime together with data monitoring of trade in relevant chemicals is the backbone of the Convention's non-proliferation objectives. Reinforcing the industry verification regime is necessary for maintaining the confidence in the Convention's effectiveness against the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Continued refinement and higher intensity of our industry verification efforts with a focus on facilities most relevant to the object and purpose of the Convention remains a crucial undertaking for the CWC community.

Another important aspect that requires us to remain focused on industry verification is the rapid evolution in the global chemical industry. Developments that need to be carefully followed are increasing overlaps and possible convergence between chemical and biological sciences, the integration of chemical engineering into the life sciences, and the fusion between these and information technology.

New technologies, such as nanotechnology or the creation of new chemical manufacturing methodologies need to be kept under study and review for therein also lies the potential of abuse.

Together with industry verification, monitoring of imports and exports of relevant chemicals forms an essential plank of the Convention's non-proliferation regime. The CWC requires its States Parties to control and report annually to the OPCW all exports and imports of scheduled chemicals above certain thresholds. In certain cases, trade is restricted to States that are not parties to the Convention. With the information received from States Parties, the OPCW implements a monitoring regime over the global exports and imports of scheduled chemicals. This monitoring is an important aspect of the implementation of the Convention and will remain crucial in the coming years. States Parties are expected to reinforce their domestic rules and procedures as part of an enhanced CWC enforcement effort.

Industry verification and trade controls are, however, not the only means of promoting non-proliferation. Deterrence against the possible acquisition, development and misuse of toxic chemicals and their precursors needs to be firmly and efficiently established within the domestic jurisdiction of our Member States. They have to ensure that the prohibitions under the Convention are translated into domestic rules applicable to any individual or other entities operating within their jurisdiction or control.

We still have to cover considerable ground before reaching a stage where all States Parties will establish the necessary tools for the effective



domestic implementation of the Convention's prohibitions and provisions. What is noteworthy, however, is that the institutional support provided by the OPCW through a variety of support programmes is having a positive impact on its States Parties. The role of the European Union and other donors in supporting various programmes designed to improve the implementation of the Convention worldwide, has been crucial in this endeavour.

Another issue that is vital for the ultimate success of the CWC is universality. With 188 members, the Convention has come close to but not yet attained full universality. A few days ago, the Secretary-General and I have jointly addressed letters to the heads of State or government of the 8 countries who are not yet members of the Convention. We have stressed the imperative of their joining the Convention as part of the internationally endorsed objective of creating a chemical-weapons-free world.

The shared goal has motivated every other nation to accept the obligations enshrined in the CWC. Whether it is States possessing chemical weapons or those with nothing to declare, all have expended their energies and precious resources to demonstrate their commitment to this vision.

It is naturally disconcerting for them to know that there remain those few who chose not to participate in this project of great significance both from the point of view of security as well as the noble humanitarian impulse that it is designed to serve.

It therefore seems natural for concerns to be raised regarding the possible continued existence of chemical weapons in certain parts of the world once the declared possessors have completely destroyed their known stockpiles. A recent declaration by a country in the Middle East regarding possession of chemical weapons flew in face of the universally accepted international norm that regards any use or threat of use of chemical weapons as unacceptable.

In the region of the Middle East, three countries are non-members. As per an important decision adopted by the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, a Conference on the establishment of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction was scheduled for this year. The OPCW has been asked to contribute to this process. As a first step we have provided to the Facilitator of this effort with our written inputs. We remain prepared to contribute further as required. It is my hope that this endeavour will serve to focus attention on the issue of universality of the Convention in this delicate region.

We will also continue our efforts with other remaining non-members; a task that can be considerably helped by those States Parties that enjoy friendly and cooperative relations in the regions to which the remaining countries belong.

Mr President,

In five years, it is expected that 99% of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles will have been destroyed. This fact together with the challenges that I have just enumerated will require a refocusing of our

resources and efforts to ensuring that the Convention will remain a bulwark against the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

At the same time we have to be responsive to the expectations of our States Parties who are cognisant of the new security environment and the challenges it gives rise to. The threat posed by non-State actors is a major concern. The OPCW enjoys a number of advantages to offer assistance to States Parties in dealing with such threats.

The discipline of a comprehensive and well functioning regime against chemical weapons is accompanied by the knowledge and expertise that is either available with us or accessible. Our work with States Parties and their National Authorities creates channels of communication and networks that can facilitate national efforts in the larger context of anti-terrorism efforts or the specific context of chemical safety and security issues – an area where our number of programmes is progressively increasing.

Security against the wider notion of a chemical threat is also an area where OPCW's cooperation with the UN manifests itself in concrete terms. This includes our support for the UN's efforts towards the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540 and the work of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF); to name just two, albeit, important areas. The OPCW has also recently concluded with the UN a Supplementary Arrangement to our Relationship Agreement. The Arrangement establishes the necessary modalities for conducting an investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons in a State not party, if requested by the UN Secretary General.

Mr President,

The Third Review Conference of the CWC which will be held in April of next year, will provide the OPCW with an important opportunity to continue to refine its priorities, goals and objectives and to chart a course for the mid to long term future. Given the transition that awaits the Organisation, the Third Review Conference obviously assumes critical importance.

I am confident that the General Assembly where most OPCW States Parties are represented will continue to extend its full support towards our continuing efforts to ensure that the CWC will forever remain a solid barrier against the re-emergence or use of chemical weapons anywhere in the world.

Thank you Mr President.