

NGO Joint Statement
Completion of Chemical Weapons Destruction in the United States

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The Fifth Five-Year Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention
15-19 May 2023
The Hague, The Netherlands

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director General, Distinguished Delegates and Guests,

With only a few months to go before all chemical weapons in Pueblo, Colorado and Blue Grass, Kentucky, will be destroyed, the workforce is moving rapidly to achieve this goal. Several milestones have been reached in this program over the spent several years, but today approximately 96% of all chemical weapons originally stored at the Pueblo Chemical Depot have been destroyed which amounts to over 2,500 US tons of agent (as of April 14, 2023) out of the original stockpile of 2,613 US tons. Less than 100 US tons and 300,000 weapons remain to be destroyed including leakers and over-packed munitions. Pueblo continues with the successful destruction of the 4.2-inch mortars through the use of the Improved Cavity Access Machine at the main facility and the Static Detonation Chambers. In Blue Grass similar success has been realized with 84.3% of the stockpile now safely destroyed (as of April 14, 2023) – about 439 US tons out of the original stockpile of 523 US tons. The final GB nerve agent rocket campaign continues with 68% of the destruction complete. Destruction at both of these last two stockpile sites has been accomplished without injury to the workers, the community and the environment. It is the many innovations used at Pueblo and Blue Grass that ensures that the current treaty deadline of September 30, 2023 will be met.

Under the auspices of the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives Program and the United States Department of Defense, the PCAPP complex and BGCAPP are carrying out the OPCW principles of citizen and community involvement, including a Citizens Advisory Commission, and worker, stakeholder and environmental safety and transparency. These principles are often difficult to maintain over a long period of time, so constant vigilance is necessary. These principles, emphasizing public involvement and dialogue, were initiated early in the planning process and will be continued throughout the remainder of operations and the closure process.

The PCAPP and BGCAPP facilities are already planning for closure and the future of these sites. As operations end in the summer and fall of 2023, cleanup, decontamination, equipment removal and demolition will begin. This process will take a minimum of 18 to 24 months. The workforce is also preparing for their future by re-training and up-grading professional skills.

The accomplishments at Blue Grass and Pueblo could not have happened without integration and cooperation between the military, regulators, elected officials, the communities, and the OPCW

Technical Secretariat. This model of transparency and dialogue between all interested parties establishes a unique and successful model for addressing complex issues through cooperation rather than confrontation.

Remember too that the US began its chemical weapons destruction program three years before the Chemical Weapons Convention was opened for signature in 1993 and had already unilaterally destroyed almost 1,600 US tons before the treaty entered into force in 1997. The US met all CWC deadlines until the final 2007 and 2012 deadlines, and seven of the nine declared US stockpile sites completed safe destruction several years ago.

We all look forward to celebrating the successful completion of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles later this year, including at CSP-28 in November, and we urge all States Parties to continue to work for a world free of chemical weapons.

Thank you, for the opportunity to provide you with a glimpse into the US chemical weapons destruction program in Pueblo and Blue Grass. We request that this statement be a part of the record of the 5th Review Conference.

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