



NATIONAL STATEMENT OF INDIA
BY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO OPCW
H.E. MRS. REENAT SANDHU
AT THE 104TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
10-13 October, 2023

Mr. Chairperson,
Director General
Distinguished Ambassadors and delegates,

1. The Indian delegation thanks His Excellency Lucian Fătu, Ambassador of Romania, for his leadership of the Executive Council. We assure our full cooperation and support for successful conclusion of the 104th session of the Council.
2. We applaud the commitment of the Technical Secretariat, led by Director-General Fernando Arias, towards implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.
3. My delegation associates itself with the statement submitted by NAM States Parties to this Council.
4. India attaches utmost importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention and its full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation. With the completion of destruction of declared stockpiles in July this year, universal adherence to the Convention should remain the top priority for OPCW and member states to ensure comprehensive and verifiable disarmament and non-proliferation of chemical weapons.
5. We urge all the remaining States that are not Parties to the Convention to join the Convention at the earliest. In this regard, we welcome South Sudan's ambition to accede to the Convention at an early stage.

6. We take note of the Director General's report on the status of implementation of Article VII of the Convention and encourage further engagement by the Technical Secretariat with the States Parties who are yet to adopt national legislation. India stands ready to share its experience with interested States Parties under the aegis of OPCW Mentorship programme. We are partnering with Kenya for the mentorship programme and look forward to the first bilateral visit this year.

7. During the the 21st Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties of Asia Group in Cambodia in August 2023, Head of India's National Authority shared India's experience of maintaining a strong interface with our chemical industry to facilitate reporting commitments under the Convention.

8. India's position on chemical weapons has been clear and consistent. We remain firmly opposed to the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, and under any circumstances. We continue to underline that any investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons must be conducted in strict compliance with the provisions and procedures laid down in the Convention.

9. It has been 10 years since Syrian Arab Republic joined the Convention on 14 October 2013. Throughout this period, India has encouraged sustained engagement between Syria and the Technical Secretariat to resolve all outstanding issues. India also made voluntary contribution to OPCW Trust Fund to assist in destruction of declared stockpiles. We welcome the recent consultations between the Secretariat and Syrian side, the 'limited in-country activities' and proposal of Syrian Arabic Republic to provide a roadmap to resolve declaration issues. We hope both sides will continue to work in this constructive spirit.

10. India has consistently cooperated with the OPCW for inspections of our declared industrial facilities. We, once again, emphasize the need to adapt the verification and inspection regime, in light of growing chemical industry and rapid advancements in science and technology. We appreciate further discussions under the Industry Cluster facilitation with a view to undertake a comprehensive review of the risk-assessment and plant site selection for inspection of Schedule II, Schedule III and OCPF facilities.

11. We would like to underline that Article VI inspections are confidence building measures between States Parties and should continue to be implemented in a manner which avoids hampering the economic or technological development of States Parties.

We note Secretariat's initial proposal to integrate its expertise from all the contingency missions and activities and adaptation of the Inspectorate Division to support all types of missions and training. We believe that the proposal requires further discussion and consultations with the States Parties.

12. India strongly supports International Cooperation among States Parties and promotion of peaceful uses of chemistry within the framework of the Convention. Since 2018, Indian Institute of Chemical Technology has collaborated with the Technical Secretariat for conducting Analytical Skills Development Course. The training has benefitted 126 participants from 50 States Parties and directly contributed to enhancing skills in the analysis of chemicals relevant to the Convention and knowledge sharing on laboratory best practices. The seventh batch of the training took place recently in India from 5-16 September 2023.

13. India stands ready to contribute to the ChemTech Centre's capacity building activities. We encourage the ChemTech Centre to build a network of stakeholders from academia, chemical industry, research centres and laboratories all over the world.

14. We support all efforts of the OPCW on developing best practices in the area of chemical safety and security and the counter-terrorism aspects of international trade in chemicals that will make a significant and effective contribution towards global efforts against terrorism. India welcomes the organization of a Table Top Exercise in November under the aegis of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and looks forward to contributing to it through participation at expert-level.

15. This Council has the important task of recommending the Draft decision on Programme and Budget of OPCW for 2024-2025 to the Conference of States Parties. We recognize that the organization needs adequate funding to carry out the essential tasks under the Convention. At the same time, we have to be mindful of the post-pandemic recovery and spillover effects of an extraordinary global inflation which has disproportionately impacted the developing world. While we do not wish to see cuts in programmatic activities of the organization, we do encourage the Technical Secretariat to introduce greater efficiencies in administration and executive management of the Organization.

16. We are happy to see the follow-up of some of the discussions held during the Fifth Review Conference in May this year. My delegation welcomes the establishment

of the Working Group on Geographical Representation under Chairmanship of Ambassador of Chile and looks forward to actively contributing to its discussions. We thank Ambassadors of Panama and New Zealand in co-facilitating the informal consultations on tenure policy. We also welcome the informal consultations on civil society engagement under initiative of Ambassador of Germany.

17. India emphasizes the importance of consensus-building and the need for all decisions to be taken by the States Parties in consultation and cooperation with each other.

18. I request that this statement be considered an official document of this session and posted on the external server and the public website. Thank you.
