

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

11th Conference of the States Parties

The Hague, 5 - 8 December 2006

Statement by H.E. Eva Bugge, Ambassador of Norway

Mr. Chairperson,

Allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the Eleventh Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. I am confident that we will be able to fully achieve our objectives under your able leadership and guidance. I wish to assure you of this delegation's full support and cooperation in the discharge of your responsibilities.

Mr. Chairperson,

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few points of special importance to Norway.

Firstly, a prime objective of the Chemical Weapons Convention is the destruction of the world's chemical weapons. When we have achieved this goal, we will have eliminated a whole category of weapons of mass destruction.

The destruction of chemical weapons is a challenging task. We must ensure that all chemical weapons are disposed of in a timely, safe and secure manner before the deadline set out in the Convention. This is in the interests of all states. We must ensure that the 2012 deadline, which according to the Convention is the last possible deadline, is kept. In this regard Norway urges all possessor states to do their utmost to fulfil their obligations under the Convention. We also urge full transparency on destruction activities, both ongoing and planned.

Norway is aware of the particular problems facing the Russian Federation in the construction of the necessary destruction facilities. We realise the complexity and high costs involved when chemical weapons are being destroyed. That is why we have supported the destruction activities in the Russian Federation financially.

Secondly, another issue of great importance is the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In Norway's view, it is very positive that the number of signatories to the Convention has continued to grow since last year's Conference of States Parties. This is important and must continue, not least because some of the states that have not joined the OPCW are in parts of the world where there is political tension.

Universal adherence is key to the effectiveness of the Convention. In order to ensure the ultimate success of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we must encourage and assist States in the process of signing, ratifying and implementing it. We must also eliminate any possible disincentives for new States to join the convention.

Thirdly, national implementation of the obligations under the convention is another important issue. Universality will not help if States Parties are not able to fulfil their commitments under the Convention. Norway is therefore pleased with the decision made to establish, on a temporary basis, an office of the OPCW in Africa. We recognise the contribution such an office could make to the universality of the Convention and to national implementation in Africa.

Mr. Chairperson,

Norway attaches the greatest importance to the inspection regime under the Convention and the work being done by the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We thus welcome the efforts to implement Section B of Part IX of the Verification Annex regarding modification of the methodology for selection of OCPF plants. In our view a revision of the current methodology is long overdue, given the need to achieve a more equitable geographical distribution.

Credible monitoring of compliance must also include the use of challenge inspections in relevant circumstances. We thus welcome the efforts by the Technical Secretariat to maintain its preparedness to conduct challenge inspections, as well as its advocacy role in promoting the readiness of the States Parties to receive challenge inspections if so requested in accordance with Article IX of the Convention.

Inspections cost money. However, since inspections are so important for achieving our goals, we must be able to finance them. We support the proposal for increased inspection of OCPFs. In order to finance inspections and other important activities by the OPCW, we encourage those States Parties that have not done so to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time. We also consider it important that the OPCW's budgets reflect its level of activities.

Mr. Chairperson,

In May next year, we will celebrate the OPCW's tenth anniversary. We look forward to this opportunity to mark our progress. The main message should be twofold: We are making headway towards our goal of eliminating a whole category of weapons of mass destruction. But constant vigilance is also needed to ensure that chemical weapons are never used again.

Thank you.