



**STATEMENT
TO THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF
THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

BY

H.E. MS LYDIA MORTON

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW

THE HAGUE, 3 December 2008

(check against delivery)

Mr Chairman

Let me join other speakers in congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the thirteenth Conference of the States Parties.

The Australian delegation looks forward to working with you to help ensure this Conference concludes successfully with outcomes supporting the full achievement of the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr Chairman

The Second Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention held in April this year has reaffirmed the continuing relevance and importance of this Treaty to our shared goals of complete chemical weapons disarmament and non-proliferation. States Parties renewed their commitment to the Convention and we applaud the efforts made by States Parties in producing a consensus report under difficult circumstances. We especially appreciate the follow-up by the Technical Secretariat in compiling an inventory of actions needed to implement the recommendations of the Review Conference, and lend our support to their realisation.

We are pleased that membership of the Convention continues to grow and is soon to reach 185 States Parties. We particularly welcome the announcement of Lebanon's pending accession to the Convention.

We are also encouraged by the recent progress in chemical weapons destruction activities, and commend "A State Party" for being the second Member State to have completely destroyed its entire declared chemical weapons stockpile since the Convention entered into force. We welcome the ongoing destruction efforts by the remaining four Chemical Weapon Possessor States. We welcome the United States and the Russian Federation's agreement to host visits by Executive Council delegations to their chemical weapons destruction facilities. Australia regards these visits as an important transparency and confidence-building measure and therefore looks forward to their continuation. There is little doubt, however, that sustained effort will be required by chemical weapon Possessor States to ensure that the outstanding 58 percent of declared chemical weapon stockpiles are verifiably destroyed within their extended deadlines.

Mr Chairman

Universality of the Convention and full adherence to all of its provisions are integral to international efforts to prevent chemical weapons from being developed or acquired. We therefore commend the Director-General, the Technical Secretariat and States Parties for their continued efforts to bring those outside the Convention into full membership and to ensure that further progress is made towards full implementation of Convention obligations by States Parties.

Implementation of Article VII, in particular, has been identified in the 2003 Action Plan and subsequent Conference decisions as requiring further attention. It is important therefore, to continue to build upon and expand on current progress in this regard. Australia will continue to do what it can to assist requesting States Parties to achieve these Convention requirements, especially in our region.

Mr Chairman

I would like to turn now to the work of the industry cluster. We especially welcome the appointment of representatives from Italy and South Africa to facilitate industry cluster consultations, on low concentration thresholds for Part A Schedule 2 chemicals and enhancement of declarations of other chemical production facilities (OCPFs), respectively. We will continue to work with delegations to reach agreement on establishing appropriate low concentration thresholds for declarations of the highly toxic Schedule 2A/2A* chemicals, in order to finally close this gap in the Convention's verification regime.

Australia strongly supports the commencement of work on revising the declaration format for OCPFs to ensure that the Technical Secretariat's limited inspection resources are directed to the most relevant facilities. In this regard, we fully support the Director-General's and Technical Secretariat's papers proposing a number of measures to achieve this end. We recognise that, at some stage, there will be a need to continue consultations on other outstanding industry cluster issues, including on a mechanism for inclusion of States Parties' proposals in the methodology, as provided for in the Verification Annex. Australia intends to implement the recommendations of the Director-General's paper in its next declaration.

In the meantime, we look forward to assessment of the effectiveness of the Director-General's revised selection methodology for inspections of OCPFs that commenced at the beginning of this year.

We welcome agreement by the 53rd Session of the Executive Council on the "Guidelines regarding declarations of import and export data for Schedule 2 and 3 chemicals" (EC-53/DEC.16, dated 27 June 2008). Australia supports the draft decision to clarify and standardise trade declarations in order to reduce discrepancies. While conscious of the complexities of this issue, we look forward to the approval by the Conference of this decision and strongly encourage States Parties to adopt the necessary domestic measures to implement these guidelines as soon as possible.

Mr Chairman

Australia views sampling and analysis (S&A) as an important verification tool that is mandated by the Convention for facilities producing or using Schedule 2 chemicals above inspection thresholds. In February this year, Australia received its first Schedule 2 inspection involving S&A. This inspection proceeded smoothly, due to the cooperation of the inspected facility and the assistance provided by Australia's Schedule 1 Protective Purposes facility, which hosted the off-site analytical laboratory for the inspection.

Given the additional cost and resources needed for S&A, Australia believes that this tool is best utilised for verification of declared facilities, including multipurpose OCPF plant sites, that pose the highest risk to the object and purpose of the Convention. We look forward to reviews of the current arrangements for S&A and to discussions among States Parties and the Technical Secretariat as to the utility of the proposal to extend S&A to Schedule 3 facilities and other chemical production facilities further into the future.

Mr Chairman

We support the Technical Secretariat's draft budget for 2009 and welcome the fact that it is once again a zero-nominal-growth budget, while also recommending an increase in OCPF inspections.

Increasing the number of OCPF inspections goes to the very heart of the non-proliferation goals of the Convention, because only 12% of the 4,500 OCPF sites declared to the OPCW have been inspected to date. With more and more OCPF sites being declared each year, the OCPF inspection rate will decline further below the already meagre current level of 2.6% per annum. Australia is concerned that this low and declining rate of inspection does not provide sufficient assurance that all State Parties are fully meeting their non-proliferation obligations under the Convention.

This budget, however, relies on States Parties meeting their financial contributions in full and on time, and we urge all member states to do so.

Australia also supports measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Convention's verification regime within the limited resources available. One means to achieve this objective is the wider acceptance by States Parties of sequential inspections. Copies of a national paper on sequential inspections (RC-2/Nat.6, dated 8/4/08) that we released at the Second Review Conference are available from the OPCW's website and external server.

Mr Chairman

The world continues to face new security challenges, including the threat or possible use of toxic chemicals by non-state actors, including terrorist groups. Article X of the Convention provides for States Parties to cooperate with the OPCW's technical assistance in responding to the hostile use of chemicals. In this regard, Australia hosted a visit by the Technical Secretariat in June this year, to clarify what might be provided in case of a request for assistance.

Article VII of the Convention is also important in this regard. States Parties contribute to reducing the risks of chemical weapons being used by non-state actors and terrorists by ensuring that they fully comply with their Convention obligations to establish national controls.

We also see opportunities for States Parties to cooperate under Article XI on promoting the safety and security of chemicals and chemical facilities and sites. We again reiterate our view that the OPCW has an important facilitative role to play. Various UN resolutions, and the OPCW itself, recognise the Technical Secretariat's capacity in this regard. We were encouraged by the Director General's announcement at the 54th Session of the Executive Council that the Technical Secretariat is preparing a paper exploring how the OPCW could make a contribution to enhancing the security of chemical facilities.

We appreciate State Party efforts to facilitate discussions, including in the Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism, and support this work.

Mr Chairman

Australia looks forward to further close cooperation with the Technical Secretariat and other States Parties in the coming year as our term on the Executive Council continues.

Thank you Mr Chairman.