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**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES
AT ITS SEVENTH SESSION**

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates

1. Allow me at the outset to join my voice to that of the Chairman of the Conference to express our deep sense of sadness over the passing of His Royal Highness Prince Claus. I would like to convey to the government and people of our host nation, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, our fullest sympathy in this moment of grief. I would respectfully request the delegation of the Netherlands to transmit this message on behalf of the Organisation to Her Majesty Queen Beatrix.
2. The last time I addressed this Conference, we were convened in a Special Session. At that time, you honoured me by appointing me to become Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.
3. We are here again, but this time, the occasion is not special or extraordinary in nature. This time, the Member States of the OPCW are meeting to deal with their ordinary business. We can say that, after a difficult time and after a trial by fire, the Organisation is now in the process of getting back on its feet.
4. For those delegations that attended the last session of the Executive Council, it will come as no surprise when I say that my intention is – and will continue to be – to concentrate on practical matters, given that on what I have simplistically described as philosophical levels, we are in full agreement.
5. We all want to get rid of chemical weapons, and we want to do it as quickly and as effectively as possible. We all want to see to it that the verification mechanisms set in motion by the Convention and put into practice by our inspectorate functions well, to the satisfaction of the inspected States and the Member States as a whole. We all want to make sure that the benefits of international cooperation on the peaceful uses of chemistry, and assistance in cases of attacks with chemical weapons or the threat of use of chemical weapons reach all States.
6. The question, distinguished delegates and friends, is how to do this.

Remaining questions in relation to “housekeeping”

7. A couple of weeks ago, I said that a number of things had been piling up for a long time and needed immediate attention. Consultations have, indeed, continued in the past few days, and even though we have not yet found a solution to questions which remain open in relation to personnel and finance, I have sensed the presence of enormous good will, and of a recognition that, in some cases at least, the absence of any solutions to some of these problems would place us in an impossible situation. Our efforts are continuing and, this time, we will have to deliver. Together, we can.

The budget

8. Consultations have continued under the able, and I should say at this point, seasoned guidance of the facilitator from Germany, Mr Peter Beerwerth. During the process, participants have been able to narrow considerably the difficulties existing between them.
9. The first and most welcome conclusion is that the draft proposal we submitted to the Executive Council has, by and large, been taken as a good basis for our discussions. I have said this before, and I will say it again, that this is not the budget I would have tabled had I been involved in this exercise from the beginning, but this budget is based on past experience, and reflects the adjustments we deemed necessary and advisable.
10. My contribution to these discussions was marginal, and was aimed specifically at increasing the allocations for International Cooperation and Assistance. The overall percentage increase of 11.3% we originally proposed was considered by some Member States to be beyond their capabilities, and the ensuing consultations have allowed us to arrive at a single digit figure, which seems to embody a reasonable point of convergence.
11. What remains now is a final reading of the distribution of expenditures against programmes, bearing in mind the aspiration of a number of Member States to increase the sums to be devoted to ICA. My personal impression is that we are tantalisingly close to a compromise. With the necessary good will, I am confident that a formula will be agreed upon which will allow for a substantial increase in the chapter on International Cooperation, which is so crucial for many countries, while maintaining a balance with other operational programmes.
12. In the financial area, there are other important matters still under discussion, such as the Financial Regulations that we requested to be reviewed in order to give us the necessary flexibility to use cash surpluses for the prior year for a specific period. We are satisfied with the overwhelmingly favourable response we have received from the Member States which recognised the predicament we were in, and which have indicated their willingness to give the Technical Secretariat the capacity it needs to operate in a better manner. This being said, I acknowledge that a few Member States still need more time to work on a permanent “fix”, having indicated their willingness to help facilitate the achievement of a solution for this year; it is essential to use the late 2001 Article IV and V reimbursements in 2003.

13. I urge you to continue working in this direction, and here I should also recognise the generous contribution which the delegation of the United Kingdom has made, specifically through Mr Geoff Cole, in his capacity as facilitator for Article IV and V matters.
14. Other consultations are currently under way, on such delicate matters as tenure or the Staff Regulations, and I look forward to your guidance on all these fronts, given that the time to act has finally come.
15. Once the Conference is over, it is my firm intention to make an overall assessment of the Organisation, five years after the entry into force of the Convention, to look into the concrete steps we can take to make our institution a better performing and more efficient institution.

Distinguished delegates,

16. In the past few days, some Member States have formally confirmed their intention to provide voluntary contributions to our budget. I would like to mention and recognise the recent announcement of the Government of the United States of America, stating that it will, in this regard, contribute 2 million US dollars. While recognising that these funds can in no way replace the regular OPCW budget, which is designed to fund our mandated tasks, such gestures of commitment must be underscored, as they are tangible proofs of support for both the Convention and the OPCW that cannot remain unacknowledged.

Verification

17. The destruction of chemical weapon stockpiles is ongoing. Possessor States have been making significant efforts to accelerate Category 1 CW destruction. As of 1 October 2002, approximately 7,050 metric tonnes of chemical agents (Category 1, Category 2, and binary component agents), or more than 10%, of the total stockpiles declared by four State Parties have already been destroyed under OPCW verification.
18. Two of the four, the United States and India, have met their obligations to destroy twenty percent of their declared chemical weapons stockpiles within five years' after the entry into force of the Convention. All States Parties which have declared Category 2 and 3 chemical weapons have fulfilled their obligation within the five-year timeframe established by the Convention.
19. The Russian Federation is very close to the day when the first kilogram of Category 1 chemical weapons will be destroyed at the brand-new destruction facility in the village of Gorny in the Saratov region. This is indeed promising.
20. At its last session, the Executive Council expressed the view that the Conference should call upon Russia to undertake all possible steps to ensure the implementation of the new schedule for destruction. It also called upon the States Parties supporting the Russian Federation to continue providing any assistance which would make this feasible.

21. Significant progress was achieved during the last EC session in other areas, as we approved one plan for verification of destruction which had been agreed between the Technical Secretariat and Russia, and five facility agreements with the United States regarding on-site inspections at chemical weapons destruction facilities. We are now working very closely with India to finalise the facility agreement in relation to the chemical weapons destruction facility in this State Party.
22. But that was not all, as seven destruction and conversion plans for the former chemical weapons destruction facilities were also approved, thus allowing for the beginning of the elimination of CW production capacity.
23. When it comes to verification, one should bear in mind that in this central activity, accuracy and cost efficiency should not be seen as mutually-exclusive principles. In this spirit and in cooperation with possessor States, we have initiated a process of dialogue and reflection, to explore ways of applying those cost-saving verification measures which might allow us to do more with fewer resources.
24. At the same time, we should bear in mind that verification has concentrated on monitoring the destruction of existing chemical weapons stockpiles, rather than on detecting illegal new production. More attention and resources should be devoted to monitoring the global chemical industry, and this must be done in full consultation with all interested parties, and in line with the provisions of the CWC.
25. The coming in line of new destruction facilities will considerably increase our workload in terms of inspections in the next few years. In view of this, we are already looking into the problem of finding new ways to keep our financial requirements to the minimum, whilst ensuring the degree of reliability that Member States are entitled to expect at all times from the Technical Secretariat. More automation, if introduced, should not lead to inferior verification.
26. International Cooperation is an area of the highest political and practical relevance to the objectives of the Convention. In my presentation before the Council last month, I had an opportunity to refer to this issue, and today I wish to reiterate my profound conviction that ours is a Convention for all countries, both big and small, which are concerned about, and are committed to, chemical disarmament, and which are thus entitled to benefit from cooperation activities and from the international assistance provided for in the Convention. In fact, the issues pertaining to ICA lie at the very heart of these consultations, which will, hopefully, lead to an agreed budget.
27. We are continuing with our plan of activities, in spite of our past financial difficulties. I would like to mention a few examples: the Fourth Annual Meeting of National Authorities has recently concluded. Over 80 NAs were represented in that meeting, and more than 125 bilateral consultations took place on specific practical issues related to the work being carried out in States Parties.
28. The process of regional consultations of National Authorities is consolidating, and is even expanding. Important implementation support projects will take place before the end of the year. The government of Spain has generously come forward with an offer to organise a meeting next November to discuss the tracking and reporting of scheduled chemicals. We are finally moving ahead with a Latin American seminar, to

be hosted by Mexico. The programme of action for Africa is an initiative we intend to pursue vigorously. The Associate Programme has gone from strength to strength since its creation. If the draft budget is approved, we intend to double the vacancies available in that project, so as to extend its benefits to more professionals from Member States.

29. Timely assistance under Article X is an obligation which requires the contribution of Member States willing to play an active part in this central aspect of the Convention. At the same time, the Technical Secretariat needs to acquire the relevant and specific skills.
30. These things cannot be improvised.
31. From 10 to 14 September, our first exercise, ASSISTEX 1, took place in Zadar, Croatia. Nearly a thousand people participated in an initiative that brought together the Technical Secretariat and the following Member States: Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Iran, Lithuania, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.
32. We will continue in this spirit, inviting other interested international organisations to participate in these efforts, given that the preparedness to face the consequences of an attack with CW is an imperative we cannot elude.

External Relations

33. We have a number of activities which are being prepared and which are aimed at increasing the membership of the Organisation in all regions.
34. Africa is an area of priority and a current focus of our efforts. With the help of the African delegations represented in The Hague and Brussels, we are already in consultation with the Secretariat of the African Union to make sure that we craft a programme of action that meets the requirements and priorities of the States concerned, and which takes into account their unique perspectives.
35. South East Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean will continue to be the focus of our attention in the near future, as we fulfil our programme for the next year.
36. We are beginning to see the results of our efforts in relation to outreach and promotion of the Convention. Since June 2001, four more States have joined the OPCW family of nations. I am pleased to welcome Nauru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, and Uganda.
37. Universality is not simply an aspiration, or a goal to be achieved for its own sake. In our case, it is an imperative emanating from the very nature of the Chemical Weapons Convention itself, a non-discriminatory agreement on a matter of global concern.
38. This is why we shall continue our efforts, and we will need the full support of Member States, both of those States which have already come forward, and other

States which will surely come around to assisting us in our efforts to make the CWC a dynamic and indispensable instrument of international peace and security.

Distinguished colleagues,

39. Slowly but surely, the OPCW is getting back on track. Even though I have been here for a very short time, I hope you will know by now that, in my view, ours is a joint enterprise, one in which you, the Member States, are the owners, and we at the Technical Secretariat discharge the mandate given to us in the most optimal manner possible. At all times, we strive to work with efficiency, in consultation, and in a fully transparent manner.
40. I will always be available to Member States, and I will always keep it that way.

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