

**ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL
WEAPONS (OPCW)**



**Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of
the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological
(Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction.**

**Statement by H.E. Mrs Grace Asirwatham
Deputy Director-General**

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Geneva, Switzerland**

Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to participate in this high-level exchange on the occasion of the 2012 Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

On behalf of Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, I wish to thank you for the kind invitation extended to the OPCW to participate in this meeting.

This is yet another opportunity for the OPCW to contribute to the work of the BWC through knowledge-sharing and exchange of views.

Many parallels exist in the implementation of the BWC and the CWC. These two regimes are committed to banning two of the three categories of weapons of mass destruction known to humankind.

Descending from the early accords of the 1899 Hague Declaration and the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the BWC and CWC represent a vital advance over these initiatory regimes, particularly the Geneva Protocol, that prohibited the use of both biological and chemical weapons but not their development, production or stockpiling.

The establishment of the BWC and the CWC is indeed an important accomplishment by the international community and a result of decades of negotiations and efforts to achieve long-lasting and effective prohibitions.

Taken together, these two treaties have established a crucial barrier preventing the use of disease or poison against humanity. The norms that these treaties uphold are therefore worthy of every effort to protect and strengthen them.

As a relatively young regime, the Chemical Weapons Convention marked fifteen years of operation in April of this year. This milestone in the work of our Organisation is also an opportunity to reflect on our successes as well as to address future challenges. I would now like to briefly highlight to you the progress that has been made in the key areas of our work over the last year, as well as point out some of the main areas of convergence between the CWC and the BWC.

Mr Chairman,

The verified destruction of existing chemical weapons and of the destruction or conversion for peaceful purposes of the facilities used to produce them, remains among the main activities currently undertaken by the Technical Secretariat. The CWC verification regime is a key component of our work and indeed a unique characteristic of the CWC when compared to the BWC regime.

Significant progress has been made by Member States in their efforts to destroy the declared CW stockpiles. In total, 69,430 metric tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons have been declared by the seven possessor States as of 1 November 2012. Of this amount, 54,258 metric tonnes, or 78%, have been destroyed under strict verification by the Secretariat.

Furthermore, our verification activities related to the prevention of chemical weapons re-emergence are continuing uninterrupted. We have completed more than 2,300 industry inspections, and aim to gradually increase the focus, intensity and quality of our effort in this area.

Over 98% of the world's chemical industry is located on the territory of States Parties to the Convention. We recognize

and applaud the support the world's chemical industry has given to the objectives of the Convention. Such support boosts the Convention's confidence-building function.

The negotiators of the Chemical Weapons Convention provided States Parties with a four-pillared foundation. Apart from the two pillars of disarmament and non-proliferation which I have already addressed, upon joining the Convention States Parties agree to provide each other with assistance and protection against chemical weapons; and are committed to promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry under the umbrella of international cooperation activities.

Assistance and protection in the case of use of chemical or biological weapons is indeed an area of common interest for the CWC and the BWC regimes. As the possibility of use of chemical weapons or toxic chemicals by terrorist groups or even in warfare cannot be completely excluded, our States Parties will continue to rely on the OPCW to play an active role in matters of both assistance and protection against chemical weapons as well as safety and security of toxic chemicals.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat organises courses and workshops aimed at providing training to first responders, government experts and emergency response units. The purpose of these programmes is to build and develop national and regional capacities and emergency response systems against the use, or threat of use, of chemical weapons. To date, over 2,200 participants have benefited from these programmes.

Another area in which our experiences may be shared is national implementation, which is a clear prerequisite for the effective functioning of both treaties.

Article VII of the CWC obliges States Parties to ensure that the provisions of the Convention are fully implemented on their territory or anywhere under their jurisdiction or control. It

is the cornerstone of the CWC verification system for the chemical industry, which depends on having the necessary national legislation and regulations in place, as well as an effective National Authority.

At the moment, the OPCW is systematically closing the gaps among the remainder of the membership – country by country and law by law. We have a very clear success criterion- 100% effective legislation.

The efforts of the OPCW and the BWC Implementation Support Unit to achieve effective implementation parallel very smoothly the United Nations' own efforts to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The OPCW has shared its expertise and experiences at forums organized by the United Nations to support the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540. In addition, the CWC foresees placing the resources and expertise of the OPCW at the disposal of the United Nations in cases of the alleged use of chemical weapons in States not Party to the CWC. Together with the United Nations, we are creating a safety net of prohibitions that can reliably constrain attempts to make or use these deadly materials.

The lessons learned in promoting the fundamental objectives of one treaty can be of relevance and use in the case of the other, especially in areas where strong commonalities exist. This is most relevant in the area of advances in science and technology. Both the BWC and CWC are disarmament treaties tied closely to science. At the same time, the global trade and manufacture of chemicals is developing at a fast rate. The dynamic nature and the swift pace of advances in science and technology have a direct impact on our own work.

New chemical compounds and production methods are constantly being researched and discovered, affording the global community many benefits but also bringing with them certain risks. The need to understand these changes and to

bring them to the attention of our States Parties continues to be one of our key objectives. It is, therefore, our responsibility to adequately assess and address new developments that may affect the implementation of the Convention.

As you are aware, the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board continues to play a prominent role in dealing with such issues and in creating the necessary bridge between science and policy.

The Board has recently prepared its third report under its mandate and contribution to the preparations for the Third Review Conference to be held in April 2013. An important topic addressed in the report is the growing convergence between chemistry and biology. Such convergence combined with the rapid advances in the life sciences, may affect the future implementation of the Convention. The convergence of chemistry and biology is evident in the increasing commercial production of chemicals through biologically mediated processes, and the chemical synthesis of simple replicating organisms, biological parts, and agents of biological origin such as bioregulators and toxins.

These new technologies have the potential to simplify the production of certain classes of chemicals such as toxins and bioregulators. In the view of the SAB it seems unlikely that advances collected under the “umbrella” term of convergence will be applied to the production of classic chemical-warfare agents. However, this issue will further be examined by the SAB in order to assess the applicability of biologically-mediated processes to precursor-type chemicals. In addition, it has been noted that through knowledge-sharing and further outreach activities in the areas of convergence of the sciences, many benefits may be derived in the area of protection against chemical weapons.

Another such area is education and outreach in science and technology. The SAB considers education and outreach as a

critical element in the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons and the misuse of toxic chemicals. Education and outreach can serve a number of goals, for example raising awareness about the Convention among the global scientific community, raising awareness of the risks, as well as the benefits, associated with the multiple uses of chemicals and empowering our National Authorities to do their job as effectively as possible. However, as experience within the BWC has shown, improving education and outreach is a long-term process and will require concerted efforts by all stakeholders on many different levels.

To address such issues, as well as other important aspects of mutual interest, the SAB has initiated exchanges between experts on the Convention with experts from the BWC in its Temporary Working Groups on the convergence of chemistry and biology and on education and outreach. We hope to further strengthen the interaction between experts on the two treaties, and between the Secretariat and the Implementation Support Unit of the BWC. Indeed, the Chairman of the SAB and members of its Temporary Working Groups on convergence and on education and outreach are present here today and will provide more information on these topics at a side event this lunchtime to which you are all invited.

Mr Chairman,

As we aim to further build on the achievements and success of our work and the implementation of the Convention so far, we need to take into account the important challenges that lie ahead that will require us to adjust our organisational and strategic approaches.

The long-term objective of the CWC, namely, permanent security against the threat of chemical weapons will endure. To serve that end, the OPCW will need to make the transition from an organisation that has so far primarily dealt with eliminating existing arsenals to one that prevents their re-emergence in the future, and promotes security and

protection against the misuse of toxic chemicals.

In the years ahead, industry verification, along with other measures, will provide the necessary assurances of compliance with treaty obligations. This would require, inter alia, a review of both the intensity and the focus of our industry verification regime. We look forward to discussions on such issues within the policy circles as well as the global chemical industry. For this purpose, a new institutionalised dialogue with the industry is desirable. The chemical industry is an indispensable partner of the OPCW. It has played a constructive role in both the evolution and the sustenance of the verification regime. And we hope for a positive continuation of this dialogue in the future.

In a rapidly changing world it is important we ensure that the OPCW remains relevant and able to meet new challenges. The Open-ended Working Group which is making preparations for the Third Review Conference will provide an opportunity to States Parties to discuss in an inclusive manner refining and reordering the OPCW priorities, goals and objectives and charting a course for the mid to long term future. The conclusions of the OEWG will be considered by the Review Conference next year.

A condition that is indispensable to the goal of a world free of chemical weapons is attaining the universality of the Convention. Convincing the eight States not yet Party, to join the CWC remains a priority.

The overwhelming majority of members of the international community subscribe to the obligations established by the Convention. It is not in the interest of the international community to allow exceptions. The international community should unequivocally insist that there is no justification whatsoever to retain the chemical weapons option.

Similar to the work carried out within the BWC framework we will continue to extend our reach to other stakeholders, such

as professional associations, private industry, academia and civil society. Our outreach activities are aimed at promoting awareness and understanding of the requirements and goals of the Convention amongst the general public, and the scientific community, including students, chemists and chemical engineers. Our goal is to ensure that future generations will be aware of their responsibilities when dealing with materials that could present a danger to humankind.

Mr Chairman,

The OPCW's progress and successes represent the strong international consensus against chemical weapons – a consensus that is shaped by a long and terrible history involving repeated use of chemical weapons, culminated in the determination never to allow that again.

The core challenge that we face today is to preserve our unity while we deliberate on the nature, scope and impact of the transition the Organisation will go through in the years ahead. Our greatest asset in the months and years ahead will be the shared goals, resolve, commitment and reaffirmation of our States Parties and our partners to ensure that there should never be another victim of chemical weapons.

It is my hope that the experience of the OPCW will positively reflect on our work in the years ahead, and that through this multilateral cooperative environment we will be able to address future challenges.

I wish to thank you once again for the opportunity to speak here today. I wish this meeting every success and look forward to your important deliberations.

Thank you.
