



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS
Ceremony marking the closure of Kizner Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility

Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao, Deputy Director-General, OPCW

Udmurt Republic, Russian Federation

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REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the OPCW Director-General, it gives me great pleasure to be present here today.

We have gathered to mark a momentous occasion – the conclusion of destruction operations at the Kizner chemical weapons destruction facility.

But it is more than that. It also signals the full elimination of all chemical weapons stockpiles declared by the Russian Federation.

This truly is a historic milestone for the Russian Federation, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the international community.

Nearly 40.000 metric tonnes of the deadliest toxic chemicals have now been destroyed, including here at Kizner - the seventh and last destruction facility to successfully complete its work.

Since this facility was commissioned in December 2013, a dedicated team of specialists and support staff have carried out the challenging task of destroying a large portion of Russia's chemical weapons legacy.

In the four years that this facility has operated, the results have been remarkable.

In this relatively short time frame, the Kizner facility performed destruction operations on many fronts with no major interruptions or setbacks.

Large stocks of nerve and blister agents, including sarin, soman, VX and lewisite have been destroyed here in Kizner.

Additionally, this facility was responsible for the destruction of more than 2 million munitions in various calibres.

In all, Kizner dismantled more than 14% of the Russian Federation's declared chemical agent stockpile.

The completion of operations at this facility represents the conclusion of all chemical weapons destruction activities in the Russian Federation which took place during the course of fifteen years.

This is a remarkable achievement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Russian Federation has been one of the original signatories of the CWC and has declared one of the largest chemical weapons stockpiles in the world.

It is most fitting that this important milestone is attained in the twentieth anniversary year since the entry into force of the Convention and since Russia became an OPCW Member State.

This joint success further contributes to strengthening the provisions of the Convention and highlights its effectiveness as a bulwark against chemical weapons.

It also showcases Russia's steadfast commitment and contribution to disarmament and non-proliferation.

It has been a remarkable journey – and not least a Herculean task – to which many professionals and colleagues have dedicated their time, effort and energy.

I would like to note my particular appreciation to H.E. Mr Georgyi Kalamanov, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, Mr Mikhail Babich, Chairman of the State Commission on Chemical Disarmament, General Kapashin, General Kholstov and of course the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OPCW, Ambassador Shulgin for their contributions towards completing the destruction of the Russian Federation's stockpile.

I further acknowledge the numerous financial, in-kind and technical contributions made to this operation by OPCW Member States, some of which are represented here today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To meet the many challenges of destruction, the Russian Federation has set and adhered to appropriate standards for protection of people and the environment throughout this operation, at par with ethical obligations and measures enshrined in international law.

The fact that the elimination of all declared stockpiles has been achieved before the planned completion date speaks for itself.

In the past years, the timing of destruction operations had been delayed due to new and more stringent regulations that called for modifications to destruction facilities.

Furthermore the destruction programme came at enormous financial cost.

And yet, the Russian authorities and the Technical Secretariat, with the support of Member States, have continued to stringently work together throughout every phase of the destruction process.

For its part, the OPCW has played its role in verification of destruction activities in the Russian Federation.

I am pleased to note that the OPCW and the Russian Federation have overcome any and all difficulties with a spirit of continuous cooperation.

In fact our work in Russia led to new innovations in verification, as new analytical procedures were developed to determine specific chemical agents that were present in munitions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

History will favourably judge the legacy of Russia's chemical weapons destruction programme. It is a legacy that marks a tangible and concrete achievement in the annals of chemical disarmament.

The Russian Federation's success in destroying its declared stockpiles inspires hope and provides the necessary confidence for our mission to rid the world of chemical weapons once and for all.

What has been achieved demonstrates how collective action and political will can rid the world of some of the most deadly weapons ever created.

Let us further build on this positive legacy, to ensure that the Convention's provisions remain intact and fully operational in the years ahead.

In working together, we can indeed achieve great heights and make permanent the gains of global chemical weapons disarmament for generations to follow.

I offer my sincere appreciation and warm congratulations to all who have worked in the demilitarisation process in the Russian Federation and have made this remarkable success a reality.

I congratulate the authorities of the Russian Federation, the staff, my colleagues from the Technical Secretariat and our Member States for achieving this remarkable milestone.

I wish you every success in your future ventures and look forward to working together with all of you in building a better and a safer world free of chemical weapons.

Thank you.
