



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Seventeenth Workshop on Coordination of Assistance and Protection

under Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention

Opening Remarks by the Deputy Director-General

28 June 2017

REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Distinguished participants,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to extend to all of you a warm welcome to the Seventeenth Workshop on Coordination of Assistance and Protection, and to the OPCW. This Workshop is an important forum for States Parties to share their experiences in the implementation of Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

This event has drawn together officials and experts from National Authorities, government ministries, the chemical industry, and other relevant organisations. These different perspectives will create a well-rounded picture of the challenges and opportunities of OPCW's assistance and protection programme.

As you may be aware, this year marks the 20th anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the founding of the Organisation of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). An anniversary is an appropriate time for reflecting on progress, and preparing for the future.

On several fronts, our achievements have been impressive. Today, 192 nations are States Parties to the Convention. This is very near universal application. The CWC is a unique convention banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

Since 1997, States Parties have been working tirelessly to ensure the treaty's successful implementation. The OPCW has verified the destruction of tens of thousands of tonnes of chemical warfare agents. Thanks to the CWC, over 95 percent of declared chemical weapons stockpiles have gone, along with their production facilities.

In recognition of this achievement the OPCW was awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize. This has helped raising awareness about the important mission of the OPCW.

Distinguished Participants,

The architects of the CWC set out to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons. The Convention requires all States Parties to accept a set of far-reaching disarmament obligations. By joining the Convention they must renounce the use, development or transfer of chemical weapons.

Assistance and protection is one of the key pillars of the Convention. Under Article X of the Convention, States Parties can request OPCW or other States Parties to provide assistance and protection against the use, or threat of use, of chemical weapons. Such assistance may include the provision of protective equipment such as chemical agent detectors, protective clothing, decontamination equipment, and medical support.

In return, State Parties have two key obligations, which are 1) submission of annual declarations on national protective programmes and 2) provision of information on the type of assistance they can offer in response to a chemical weapons attack in another State Party.

This assistance can be provided through the OPCW in various ways:

- States Parties may make financial contribution to the Voluntary Fund for Assistance,
- They can conclude an agreement with the OPCW specifying the kind of assistance they would be able to deliver on request, or
- They can declare the kind of assistance they would be able to provide in response to an appeal by the OPCW.

These would contribute significantly towards ensuring meaningful implementation of Article X.

Distinguished Participants,

The OPCW is required to be prepared to provide timely and efficient help to a State Party that requests assistance against the use or threat of use of chemical weapons. The threat posed by non-State actors has only increased States Parties' interest in the OPCW's role in emergency assistance.

It was with this in mind that a Rapid Reaction and Assistance Mission (RRAM) was recently established by the Director-General. Through this mechanism, the Organisation will increase its capacity and readiness to respond to a request from a State Party for emergency measures of assistance against the use of chemical weapons.

The OPCW is entering a period of transformation in the coming years which may reinforce the focus on protection-related tasks. This development offers an opportunity for the OPCW to better address future needs and requirements, especially in the regions and countries that lack protection capacities against chemical weapons.

Speed and efficiency are essential to countering the impact of an attack with chemical weapons or toxic chemicals. Targeted training programmes and the creation of regional networks are key elements to maintaining a high level of preparedness at a national as well as regional level. The Secretariat has been providing a range of regional projects to improve States Parties' protection-related programmes thanks to generous support provided by some States Parties.

Here, cooperation among States Parties themselves is vital to the success of these capacity building projects. By working together and sharing experiences, States Parties can improve the effectiveness of their response mechanisms and design more effective and sustainable protection programmes.

Distinguished Participants,

In closing, I hope your participation in this course is fruitful and productive, and I trust it will lead to interesting exchanges and deliberations. Please also share any feedback you may have on the Workshop with my colleagues in ICA, so we can continue to improve our efforts. We rely on your continuous work and contributions to enhancing your home countries' assistance and protection capacities, and look forward to working with you.

I thank you for your attention.
