



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION  
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

**United Nations General Assembly  
First Committee  
“Exchange with the High Representative and Other High-Level Officials in the Field of  
Arms Control and Disarmament”  
15 October 2012**

**Statement by Mrs Grace Asirwatham,  
Deputy Director-General of the OPCW**

Mr. Chairman,

1. Allow me first of all to convey to you my felicitations on your election to chair the First Committee. I am confident that with your well known diplomatic skills and rich multilateral experience, you will guide the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.
2. The year 2012 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Last month, at a high level meeting held here at the United Nations to celebrate this landmark, States Parties reaffirmed their commitment to the goals and objectives of the Convention. The Secretary-General of the United Nations opened the meeting with the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). His support for this event was crucial for its success.
3. Having completed fifteen years of the operation of the Convention we in the OPCW Technical Secretariat together with the States Parties recognise with pride the progress that has been made in eliminating an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.
4. The CWC is the first multilateral treaty to comprehensively ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction on a non-discriminatory basis and under conditions of strict verification. Within a short span of time, the OPCW has proved the value of multilateralism in realising the objectives of disarmament.
5. As a multi-dimensional instrument, the Convention's goals include complete disarmament, non-proliferation, promotion of international cooperation for peaceful

application of chemistry and providing assistance and protection to States Parties against chemical weapons.

6. The OPCW, according to the Convention, provides to its States Parties a forum for consultation and cooperation and, when needed, provides clarification, facilitates cooperation and conducts fact-finding that contribute to confidence building amongst the States Parties.
7. Destruction of chemical weapons being one of our core objectives, the Organisation has thus far verified the destruction of nearly 75 % of the 71,000 metric tonnes of chemical weapons stockpiles that were declared by States Parties. Despite having missed the destruction deadline, the two major possessor states, the Russian Federation and the United States of America are on track, making steady progress towards that end. The States Parties carefully considered the possible impact of the missed deadline and took a decision based on foresight and wisdom encouraging them to complete the task while keeping progress under close review.
8. Three other countries, which had declared possession of chemical weapons, have commendably fulfilled their obligation to destroy their entire stockpile of chemical weapons. To date, all of the 70 declared Chemical Weapons Production Facilities have been inactivated, and over 90 per cent of them have either been destroyed or permanently converted for peaceful purposes. These were facilities specifically built to produce chemical weapons.
9. Due to the possibility of chemical warfare agents being produced in commercial facilities, the Convention extends the reach of verification to the global chemical industry. This should be seen as a confidence building measure that does not in any way reflect a measure driven by suspicion. The contribution and support of the global chemical industry is an outstanding feature in the success of the Convention. Without such cooperation, the goals of the Convention would have remained elusive.
10. We are aware that the future of the CWC will place new demands on the Organisation. As we approach the completion of the destruction of declared arsenals of chemical weapons, progressively greater attention will have to focus on the objective of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Reviewing the industry verification regime to ensure that it will continue to promote confidence in compliance will be important. The regime will need to keep pace with developments in the global chemical industry. States Parties will be called upon to improve surveillance of transfers and trade in chemicals. On the whole, the CWC regime will need to ensure that it remains an effective guarantor of security against both conventional and non-conventional chemical threats.

11. The total number of facilities around the world considered relevant for the purposes of the Convention is in the range of 5,000. These are liable to be inspected and indeed those producing chemicals deemed to be of most relevance are regularly inspected by the Secretariat. So far, more than 2,200 such inspections have been carried out in 81 countries.
12. Further, as part of our objective to prevent the re emergence of chemical weapons, the CWC regime monitors global exports and imports of chemicals covered by the Convention. In certain types of chemicals of greater concern, States Parties have to declare their transfers to the Technical Secretariat. Furthermore, such trade is either conditional or prohibited with States that are not parties to the Convention. States Parties are required to carefully monitor such transfers and to report relevant information to the OPCW. To streamline procedures and to make this monitoring tool more effective, the Organisation works closely with the World Customs Organisation (WCO).
13. This disarmament treaty is tied closely to science, and the dynamic nature of science has a direct impact on our work. We are facing a time of rapid advances in science and technology. Further, the topic of growing convergence between chemistry and biology has direct relevance to the CWC. It is, therefore, our responsibility to adequately assess and address new developments in science and technology that may affect the implementation of the Convention.
14. The Convention is not intended at all to hamper the scientific, economic or technological development of its Parties. On the contrary, under its Article XI, the Convention provides for the promotion of international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for peaceful purposes. The OPCW has for this purpose established a wide range of programmes for creating awareness, building capacities and exchange of best practices and information.
15. OPCW programmes in the areas of assistance and protection against chemical weapons as well as international cooperation offer strong incentives to our larger membership to remain engaged and benefit from their participation in the OPCW.
16. That the Convention is widely considered as a valuable and worthy instrument is evident from the number of countries that have joined it in such short a period of time. 188 States Parties subscribe to the global ban on chemical weapons. Such overwhelming endorsement by the international community represents a decisive seal of authority on the global prohibition on chemical weapons.
17. Our single most important challenge, however, is convincing those few countries that have not yet joined the Convention to do so. This is a matter of serious concern. States that do not join the Convention prevent their capabilities from being declared and

verified. Any chemical weapons present in this group will not be eliminated under international verification. In these circumstances the vision of a chemical weapons free world will remain elusive. There was recently a declaration emanating from a State not Party to the Convention alluding to the astonishing possibility of the use of chemical weapons. We must deplore this development. It is a severe blow to the sentiment of the global community that regards chemical weapons as abhorrent and unacceptable.

18. We must therefore redouble our efforts to convince the remaining eight States to join the Convention. This is critical for there to be complete confidence that chemical weapons have indeed been eliminated from every country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

19. Together with universal acceptance it is crucial that all our States Parties continue to make steady progress towards full and effective domestic implementation, which is a clear prerequisite for the good functioning of the Convention. Effective implementation of the CWC not only builds confidence in the international community, it also brings home the security benefits of the Convention. Our experience has demonstrated that, rather than an imposition, national implementation should be seen as an advantage. A legal framework through legislation and the means to enforce it create the domestic capacity to monitor, to report on, and to guide activities involving chemicals along peaceful and productive lines.
20. More than 50 per cent of States Parties still need to take action to ensure that their legislation covers all key areas of the Convention. This means that we need to redouble our efforts in assisting States Parties in their implementation of the Convention. At the Executive Council Session which was held in The Hague last month those States Parties which have not yet completed national implementation measures were urged to do so expeditiously and the Technical Secretariat and other States Parties were encouraged to provide technical support to them to conclude this process.
21. Over the past 15 years, the Chemical Weapons Convention has proved its value and adeptness. The work of the OPCW demonstrates what we can accomplish together. The CWC and the OPCW offer a model that can indeed spur progress in other areas of global policy.
22. The culture of cooperation, constructive engagement and consensus that marks the OPCW multilateral experience promises to be our greatest resource not only to complete the current tasks, but also in the context of future challenges. A transition awaits the OPCW as it has already fulfilled a major part of one of its core responsibilities. The verified destruction of chemical weapons declared by States

Parties is well on track. By the year 2016, only one per cent of such weapons will remain to be destroyed. The Convention has brought significant benefits and advanced the objectives of international security. We are now required to adjust our priorities to better meet the challenges of the future. Progress made in the destruction of chemical weapons is an important but not the only factor that defines the transition for the Organisation. All issues related to the operation and implementation of the CWC will be reviewed at the forthcoming Third Review Conference in April 2013. An Open Ended Working Group to prepare for the Review Conference is currently carrying out its work.

Mr Chairman,

23. In conclusion, allow me to recall that the Convention has received consistent support from the United Nations. It is our hope that we will continue to work closely together in promoting our common goals of promoting international peace and security.