



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

VIENNA DIPLOMATIC ACADEMY

“THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL
WEAPONS: ACHIEVEMENTS AND ON-GOING CHALLENGES”

ADDRESS BY

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WEAPONS

Vienna, Austria

24 February 2009

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is a great honour for me to be invited to address the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, an institution whose long tradition and reputation for academic excellence are widely acknowledged. I am delighted that members of the Vienna diplomatic corps, international organisations and civil society representatives are present in the audience as well.

2. I am of course very pleased to speak about the achievements and challenges of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and why the OPCW is an example of effective multilateralism. I believe this to be true in every sense of the term. Our experience demonstrates that success in disarmament and non-proliferation is not a utopian ideal, but an attainable objective.

3. Moreover, the Second Review Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, held successfully last April, concluded that the Convention has set new standards for global disarmament and non-proliferation through verification in a non-discriminatory and multilateral manner.

4. But, before advancing any further, let me recall that the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1992 represents the result of dedicated work spanning nearly the entire twentieth century. The earliest initiatives to control or prohibit the use of poisonous weapons were the St. Petersburg Declaration in 1868 and The Hague Declaration in 1899. Nevertheless, as we all know, chemical weapons were used on a massive scale during the First World War, and the carnage and untold suffering from these weapons led to the Geneva Protocol in 1925.

5. While the Geneva Protocol prohibited the use of chemical and biological weapons, it did not prohibit their production, development or stockpiling. This enabled countries to amass huge quantities of chemical weapons and they continued to be used in the ensuing decades, most notably by Saddam Hussein's regime during the 1980s war with Iran and against Iraqi citizens in Halabja.

Characteristics of the Convention

6. The conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention and its entry into force in 1997 proved to be a watershed in the international community's efforts to ban these weapons. The Convention was negotiated within a multilateral framework and is the first multilateral treaty that bans an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. It establishes rights and obligations of far-reaching scope to ensure that chemical weapons are effectively eliminated and never re-emerge. The complete and irreversible destruction of all existing chemical weapons and their effective non-proliferation are at its core. Thus, the Convention is comprehensive and non-discriminatory, prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling, transfer, retention and use of chemical weapons by States Parties, under conditions of strict and highly intrusive international verification.

7. Unlike the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Convention makes no exceptions in proscribing the possession of chemical weapons. All States Parties have equal rights and obligations, and those who possess chemical weapons must destroy their stockpiles according to given deadlines. States Parties are also required to ensure that, within their jurisdiction, chemistry is only used for purposes not prohibited under the Convention – that is to say, for peaceful purposes.

8. For non-proliferation purposes, under the Convention's verification regime, industries in States Parties which produce chemicals and precursors that could be used to make chemical weapons are subject to intrusive inspections. In addition, when joining the Convention, States also undertake to provide assistance to other members should chemical weapons ever be used, or threatened to be used, against them. At the same time, as chemistry is one of the key sectors of global economic development, the Convention seeks to promote cooperation at the international level by encouraging exchange of knowledge and expertise in this field.

9. To ensure the implementation of its provisions, and to promote and verify States' compliance with their treaty obligations, the Convention established the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, headquartered in The Hague. This is a key difference compared to the Biological Weapons Convention, which, despite the comprehensive nature of its own prohibitions, has no verification component or intergovernmental body for critical oversight.

Main achievements to date

10. Allow me now to briefly summarise what has been achieved in the 12-year existence of this unique treaty and this Organisation. To date, the OPCW has attracted the membership of 186 countries with 98% of the world's population and chemical industry, representing the fastest rate of accession in history for any disarmament treaty. Of special note in recent months has been the accession to the Convention of both Iraq and Lebanon, a significant step that will contribute to building greater trust and security in the volatile Middle East region.

11. Total and complete chemical disarmament, in other words the destruction of the world's existing chemical weapons, is a core and—one could say—urgent objective of the OPCW. Within 30 days of joining the Convention, every State Party that possesses them must provide a detailed declaration of its chemical weapons stockpiles to the OPCW. The Technical Secretariat immediately verifies the declared stockpiles and then monitors their destruction until the process is completed. About 85% of our inspection effort is dedicated to this segment of the Convention.

12. To date, six States Parties have declared possession of chemical weapons, namely: Albania, India, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Russian Federation, the United States of America, and A State Party that has requested anonymity. Collectively these six States have declared over 71,000 tonnes of chemical-warfare agents, and as of today, 43% of these agents have been verifiably destroyed. The stockpiles include large quantities of highly lethal nerve agents like VX, a mere drop of which, if properly disbursed, could kill everyone in a room like this in a matter of minutes. So destroying them is a very dangerous, time-consuming and expensive challenge. Albania and another State Party have already completed the destruction of their chemical weapons and a third, India, is expected to reach this landmark in the coming months. The two largest possessor States, namely Russia and the United States, have both met their intermediate destruction deadlines. We now await Iraq's initial declaration; there are indications that it will join as a possessor State.

13. Under the Convention, States Parties also have an obligation to declare and destroy facilities that have produced chemical weapons. To date, OPCW inspectors have verified that all of the 65 declared Chemical Weapons Destruction Facilities have been inactivated, and 61 of them have been either destroyed or converted for peaceful purposes as allowed under the Convention.

14. As mentioned, non-proliferation is a second, fundamental and long-term core objective of the Convention. For that purpose, in tandem with its disarmament activities, the OPCW conducts year-round inspections of industrial facilities that produce toxic chemicals and precursors, which are grouped by the Convention into three Schedules of priority according to the risk they pose. The OPCW is also giving greater attention to what we call Other Chemical Production Facilities. These are facilities that produce chemicals of lesser concern under the Convention but have certain technical characteristics and are engaged in production processes that could quickly and easily be re-converted to make chemical weapons.

15. The Convention also establishes a challenge-inspection mechanism which is of great significance as a deterrent and verification measure, and the Secretariat has steadily enhanced its readiness to conduct such an inspection should a State Party request it.

16. The successful establishment in a relatively short period of time of an effective verification regime for disarmament and non-proliferation purposes is a crucial and remarkable accomplishment of the OPCW. Since 1997, our inspection teams have carried out more than 1,500 industry inspections in 80 countries. On any given day, somewhere in the world the chemical industry is being inspected by the OPCW.

17. In addition to fulfilling its mandate for disarmament and non-proliferation, the OPCW has made major contributions to strengthening the capacity of States Parties for assistance and protection against chemical weapons. The Technical Secretariat organises training programmes for first responders, government experts and emergency response units to develop national and regional capabilities and emergency response systems against the use, or threat of use, of chemical weapons. To date, approximately 2,300 participants have benefited from these programmes and support for them has been strong. Forty-three States Parties have made unilateral offers of assistance, 41 have contributed to our Voluntary Fund for Assistance, and 127 have provided information on national programmes related to protective purposes.

18. While the OPCW is not a development agency, it helps to build national and regional capacities that are consistent with the aim of eliminating chemical weapons and which have a beneficial economic impact for recipient countries. For instance, the OPCW trains chemists and engineers in industrial best practice to safely manage chemicals in a

complex industrial environment. We have programmes designed to enhance analytical skills in chemistry. Other programmes provide funding for research projects and organise internships for qualified people at world-class research institutions. These activities have been critical to engendering a sense of ownership and solidarity among our States Parties, especially among developing countries and those with economies in transition.

19. The list of achievements must necessarily also include the OPCW itself, as an Organisation composed of two policy-making bodies that have shown an extraordinary commitment to implementing the Convention through consensus—and I will refer more extensively to this later in my statement—and an equally effective Technical Secretariat.

20. I am proud to be the head of a Secretariat that acts with absolute loyalty to the Chemical Weapons Convention and conducts itself with unbending commitment to excellence, fairness, transparency, and full accountability. Our human and financial resources are lean, but our commitment is high and unqualified. In fact, whilst doing more on every front every year, we have managed, through internal efficiencies and firm financial discipline, to keep the same number of staff for over a decade, to retain excellence in the Secretariat, simultaneously implementing with success a difficult tenure policy and offering Member States zero nominal growth budgets for the last four years. Yet, we have at all times ensured full programme delivery and even increased the budget for International Cooperation and Assistance by around 70% over six years.

Ongoing challenges

21. I have given you an overview of the OPCW's history and achievements—allow me now to turn to our principal challenges. As mentioned, a core objective of the Chemical Weapons Convention is the complete elimination of chemical weapons, and achieving this goal within the deadlines stipulated by the Convention indeed poses major challenges. The weapons to be eliminated are some of the most toxic substances ever created, and the actual work of destroying them has proven to be more daunting than the drafters of the Convention might have anticipated. High levels of financial and technological resources need to be invested to ensure that these highly dangerous agents can be safely destroyed while also protecting the environment.

22. The fact that 43% of the declared stockpiles have been destroyed to date is a laudable achievement, but this still leaves nearly 60% to be

eliminated before the final deadline of April 2012 established by the Convention. The challenge is particularly acute in the case of the two major possessor States – the Russian Federation and the United States of America, which between them account for more than 90% of declared global stockpiles. The difficult task ahead and the short time available to complete it will demand an unremitting political and financial commitment on their part. Based on their track record, I am confident that both countries will do their utmost to comply with their obligation to completely eliminate their chemical weapons by the 2012 deadline. Indeed, they deserve positive recognition for their firm commitment to the Convention and for the concrete steps they are taking.

23. As a natural evolutionary process, once the destruction of existing chemical weapons has been completed, the majority of the verification activities of the Organisation will be focused on the long-term core objective of non-proliferation. This will pose significant future challenges, and the OPCW must be ready for them. Thus, it is necessary that, at all times, the verification knowledge and technical equipment of the organisation remain relevant to the continuous advancement in the fields of science and technology. For example, we must be able to detect new chemicals and the impact they can have on the Convention. And we must be able to respond to the growing interaction between chemistry and biology, and be able to cope with the way micro-reactors and nanotechnology can affect our work in the future.

24. This challenge becomes much more urgent as non-State actors, particularly terrorists, seek to produce or acquire chemical weapons. They must not be allowed access to these toxic compounds or the means to produce them—and chemical engineers and scientists have an important role to play in this regard.

25. One of the most obvious lessons we have learned in the past 12 years is that inspections are a crucial mechanism for building confidence that all States Parties are complying with their obligations. On-site inspections are a crucial element in verifying compliance, deterring illegal activities and blocking access to prohibited materials by terrorists.

26. But verification alone is not enough. National implementation is an equally essential complementary element in achieving the non-proliferation goals of the Convention. All States Parties must therefore establish and reinforce administrative and legislative measures so that key provisions of the Convention are in place, including systematic declarations, industry monitoring, controls on transfers of chemicals, and

regulatory measures to identify and track toxic chemicals. It is also vital for States Parties to be able to detect, pursue, and prosecute any breach of the Convention by their nationals, and in any area under their jurisdiction or control. For these reasons, the OPCW Technical Secretariat invests significant resources in assisting States Parties with establishing a National Authority for coordinating implementation of the Convention, and with adopting legislation criminalising activities that violate its object and purpose.

27. In the field of international cooperation and assistance, we must ensure our continued ability to deliver in accordance with the increasing expectations of States Parties to their assistance-and-protection needs, particularly in the light of their ongoing concern about the possible use of toxic chemicals by terrorists. This was reflected by the Second Review Conference, which additionally recognised that such assistance can be a motivating factor for States to join the Convention.

28. Indeed, the possibility that terrorists may use chemical weapons has created renewed interest in the OPCW's ability to coordinate delivery of emergency assistance in the event of an attack, or the threat of such an attack. The ease with which some commonly available toxic chemical compounds can be used for nefarious purposes, using rudimentary but widely available knowledge to weaponise them, makes it incumbent on States Parties to be aware of and address the existing dangers. Full implementation of the Convention by all States Parties, working together in all regions and with all stakeholders, is an essential means to address the threat.

29. This endeavour also accords entirely with the objectives of the United Nations Security Council's non-proliferation efforts under Resolution 1540 (2004). The OPCW is not an anti-terrorism agency, but the comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons that falls within its remit has an important contribution to make in this area. The Organisation's role in this context is specifically recognised in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the General Assembly in 2006, and which the Assembly reaffirmed in September of last year.

30. I should add that the Second Review Conference also reaffirmed the importance which the Chemical Weapons Convention attaches to fostering international cooperation in the peaceful uses of chemistry, and to implementing the Convention in a manner that avoids hampering the

economic and technological development of States Parties. This is an issue that some Member States frequently raise in their statements.

31. Another important task ahead of us is to continue to develop a multi-stakeholder approach to promoting universality and awareness of the Convention. The final report of the Second Review Conference reaffirmed that raising awareness among all stakeholders about the prohibitions and requirements of the Convention would benefit national implementation.

32. Whilst the latter are important challenges, few are as crucial to the ultimate success of the Chemical Weapons Convention as the one posed by the need to achieve universality. Universal adherence to the Convention is crucial to the realisation of its object and purpose. The absence of any State from the Convention—whether large or small, rich or poor, but particularly one that might have an active chemical programme and/or stockpiles—undermines the goal of achieving a total ban on these weapons.

33. Only nine United Nations Member States remain outside the Convention today. Among these countries, some fully support its objectives but have not yet joined because of logistic or resource constraints. Others, however, have yet to indicate any intention of joining. In this regard the Middle East is a region of particular concern, where Egypt, Israel—which has signed but not ratified the Convention—and Syria have taken no concrete steps to join. Further east in Asia, Myanmar has signed but not ratified the Convention, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has so far declined even to have contact with the OPCW.

34. On my part, I strongly believe there is no justification, moral or strategic, in retaining the chemical weapons option. Chemical weapons are of decreasing strategic significance and are basically instruments of terror against civilians. Quite appropriately, therefore, the Second Review Conference strongly urged the remaining States not Party to ratify or accede to the Convention as a matter of urgency and without preconditions. We must relentlessly continue to raise this issue with those countries. I have been keenly committed to this goal from day one of my tenure, and will remain so until the end of it.

35. Last but not least, the list of challenges cannot omit a reference to the Technical Secretariat, which will always be expected to remain

actively committed to upholding the important principles of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and to act efficiently in so doing.

Unique multilateral virtues of the OPCW

36. As well as presenting our achievements and ongoing challenges, I said I would also offer some reflections on the OPCW as an example of effective multilateralism, which is to say, why it works well and has produced concrete results for the benefit of international peace and security. The reasons, in my view, are the OPCW's unique multilateral virtues as a treaty organisation.

37. Certainly, a key principle is the equal standing of all parties to the Convention. OPCW members share the same rights and obligations and all are equally accountable for complying with the provisions of the Convention.

38. Secondly, there is no confusion about what the OPCW is or what it should do. It is a security organisation with a clear agenda, not subject to qualifications or uncertainties. The OPCW is fundamentally dedicated to ensuring and verifying the universal, irreversible destruction of all existing chemical weapons and their future non-proliferation. In support of those goals, it has a complementary core agenda of assistance to and protection of its Member States, and of international cooperation for the promotion of the peaceful uses of chemistry.

39. A third virtue of the OPCW is its tradition of consensus-based policymaking, meaning that competing interests must be reconciled to reach agreement on all policy issues. We are all actively engaged in this way of operating, which can sometimes be difficult and time-consuming, but consensus lies at the basis of the trust and commitment of our Member States and has returned great dividends to the Organisation.

40. A fourth unique virtue is our ethos of mutual assistance, which encourages the sharing of know-how and resources among Member States and engenders solidarity. I should again note that requests for OPCW to share its expertise in assistance and protection against chemical weapons have increased significantly as a result of concerns about the possible resort by terrorists to toxic chemicals.

41. The fifth virtue I would highlight is the OPCW's relationship with industry. The Chemical Weapons Convention is the first arms control treaty that directly impacts and relies upon industry for its full

implementation. Quite wisely, industry was invited to participate in the final stages of the negotiations of the Convention. Since entry into force, its role has continued to grow and our Article VI verification regime—and the promotion of peace in general—have greatly benefited from consultation with industry; we are keen to continue the engagement with this major stakeholder.

The Hague Process of Promoting Multilateralism

42. The Second Review Conference encouraged the OPCW to continue developing relations and partnerships with relevant regional and international organisations related to chemical safety and with chemical industry associations, to which I have already referred, as well as with the private sector and civil society.

43. As far as international organisations are concerned, our position is clear. The Convention and the OPCW are part of a broader effort by the international community, led by the United Nations, to streamline multilateral disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation mechanisms, and to make them more responsive. Therefore, although an independent organisation, the OPCW feels very much a part of the United Nations system, and indeed the Convention is a major treaty in the service of the United Nations Charter's peace and security goals.

44. Moreover, we actively cooperate with regional organisations, including the European Union, whose political and financial support through a series of Joint Actions has greatly helped us in our outreach for universality, full implementation of the Convention, and international cooperation. We also interact with the African Union and the Organization of American States, which are strongly supportive of our efforts.

45. Beyond intergovernmental organisations, our experience in promoting effective multilateralism through negotiation and consensus has proved inspiring to other endeavours. In that regard, I am happy to recognise and ratify our support for the initiative to be called The Hague Process of Promoting Multilateralism, which is being developed by the Clingendael Institute in The Netherlands with the support of Dutch institutions and international partners. The Process will aim to build synergies between weapons of mass destruction regimes and stakeholders, and to promote the message that common security is best achieved through multilateral approaches, building on the experience of the OPCW as one example. It will also seek to develop standards and

practices for effective multilateralism in the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Process will comprise a series of events, including workshops, lectures and training courses organised in the Netherlands and other international locations.

46. Allow me to conclude by stressing my firm conviction that global, regional and national security are greatly enhanced by multilateral endeavours like the one represented by the OPCW. Such approaches strengthen international disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, and foster conditions to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their related technologies and means of delivery.

Thank you.