

## **CYPRUS**

### **Statement by Ambassador Euripides L. Evriviades, Political Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus at the High-Level Meeting on “Fifteen years of the Chemical Weapons Convention: Celebrating success: Committing to the future” United Nations Headquarters, New York, 1 October 2012**

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Cyprus naturally subscribes fully to the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

My delegation would also like to pay tribute to you Mr. Chairman, Director General Ahmet Üzümcü, for organizing this meeting and for the professional manner with which you are guiding our collective work as we confront common challenges.

We also thank the Netherlands for hosting the OPCW and for the amenities offered, so that the OPCW can operate in a smooth and conducive atmosphere.

As a former Permanent Representative of my country to the OPCW, I was closely involved with the Organisation's work. I hope that it is not too presumptuous on my part if I say that I can attest first hand, of the OPCW's unique importance in achieving the object and purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

As we mark today the fifteenth anniversary of the entry into force of the CWC, it behooves us to go back to the basics and to remind ourselves that the object and purpose of the Convention, is essentially humanitarian in nature. In other words, the destruction of existing stockpiles and the prevention of their re-emergence, is the way to ensure that the human suffering resulting from the past use of chemical weapons will never reoccur; and this is a goal which unites us.

Fifteen years on, we – the States Parties and the Technical Secretariat, as well as other stakeholders – have much to celebrate. Destruction of existing stockpiles has progressed significantly. 188 States are now Parties to the Convention, whilst a lot of effort has been invested in the full implementation of *all* the provisions of the Convention. As a result, the OPCW remains an excellent example of effective and successful multilateral diplomacy.

However, we cannot be complacent and we should not rest on our laurels. We need to recommit ourselves to continuing and building on these achievements.

Destruction of declared stockpiles will have to continue under systematic verification. Whilst we are concerned that the final extended deadline for destruction of remaining stockpiles was not met, we have full faith that the possessor states will complete this process in the shortest time possible.

Moreover, the implementation of the Convention will need to be adjusted so that it is able to meet the challenges brought about by its ever changing environment. We believe that whilst the Third Review Conference will need to assess the operation of the Convention over the previous five years, it should also lay the groundwork for the future priorities of the OPCW.

Cyprus will continue to engage in a constructive spirit with all States Parties as well as with you Mr. Chairman, the Technical Secretariat and with all other stakeholders in the run up to and during the Review Conference also, if I may add, in our capacity as Coordinator of the European Union during the second half of 2012.

Recent events force us to make particular reference to the universality of the Convention. The recent admission by Syria that it possesses chemical weapons is a cause for serious concern. It shows that the threat of chemical weapons is still very real. It goes without saying that these weapons should not be used under any circumstances whatsoever. We call upon all States not Party to ratify or accede to the Convention without any further delay.

I would like to conclude by coming back to my point of departure: the ultimately humanitarian nature of the object and purpose of the Convention. Whilst our thoughts turn to the terrible effects on humanity of past use of chemical weapons, we must reiterate today our strongest possible commitment to continue our efforts so that this is never repeated, in a world free of chemical weapons.

Thank you for your attention.