

UNIVERSALITY

OPCW Director-General's Address to the Cyprus CWC Workshop Nicosia, Cyprus, 13 June 2005

Excerpts

This regional workshop is related to a European Union joint action on supporting the OPCW's activities in the framework of implementing the European Union Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, and has been made possible through a financial contribution made by the EU. The EU Joint Action represents essential support for the activities of the OPCW in the areas of promoting the universality of the CWC, supporting the full implementation of the Convention by Member States, and international cooperation in the field of chemical activities.

The funds from the Joint Action constitute a valuable and important contribution from the European Union and I would like to take this opportunity to thank once again the European Union for its support.

I would also like to thank the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, and in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for its support in organising this event.

The OPCW marked its eighth anniversary less than two months ago. In these eight years, the membership of the Organisation has grown from 87 States Parties to a total of 169 States Parties today. The Chemical Weapons Convention is already, therefore, the fastest growing multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaty in history. The need for this rapid rate of growth to continue – until all countries in this region and throughout the world have joined the OPCW family – is one of the themes of this workshop.

I warmly welcome the participation of regional States not Party in this workshop – the Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Israel, and Syria. I am confident that their participation will contribute to increasing awareness of the Convention among the authorities of the respective countries, and to making progress in considering appropriate ways of joining the Convention.

Why is this diverse region so important to us? There are many reasons – strategic, political and economic, but above all by virtue of the special contribution that countries in this region are in a position to make in advancing the cause of global peace and security, by renouncing chemical weapons and their means of production once and for all.

Only universal adherence to the Convention, and the implementation of all of its provisions, can ensure that there are no safe havens on the face of the earth for those who would seek to acquire or use chemical weapons.

It is of major concern that more than half of the ten remaining States which have not signed the Convention are in the Middle East region and Africa. The only other non-

signatory States in the whole world are North Korea and three small island countries in the Caribbean and South Pacific.

This also makes the accession by Libya, which had not previously signed the Convention, all the more significant. More non-signatory States have been joining the Convention in the last eighteen months than in the previous six years combined. These are indicators of a trend which we hope will continue.

This workshop will address issues related to building up capacities for the implementation of the Convention, and for strengthening non-proliferation efforts. I am confident that it will also provide opportunities to discuss with representatives of States not Party the steps that those countries may be ready to take, and the OPCW assistance which is available.

The programme for the workshop has been tailored to address issues of direct relevance to the region, including the export and import provisions of the CWC, the Convention's verification regime, national implementing legislation, and implementation support mechanisms.

There are global concerns about the risk of the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the need for more attention to be paid to national counter-proliferation measures, and to addressing the threat of terrorism. The risk of terrorists gaining access to weapons of mass destruction requires concrete actions by all States and international organisations.

International efforts to prevent acts of terrorism, including curbing such activities by non-state actors, must be done in coordination with other agencies. The joint challenge is to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. As of the end of May 2005, 2105 inspections had been completed at 844 sites in 72 States Parties. Of course, what matters most is not the impressive number of facilities inspected, but the fact that a large number of States without any past experience in international inspections in the area of arms control have received such inspections as a matter of routine, and without significant problems in terms of acceptance or procedure.

Today, the international norm outlawing chemical weapons is firmly established – there is no “residual legitimacy” for the possession of chemical weapons – by any country, by any terrorist group, or by anyone.

Moreover, certain chemicals listed in the Convention may not be transferred to any country that has not yet joined the Convention. This is why the full and effective implementation of the Convention by all States Parties, including the adoption of comprehensive national implementing legislation, is also of the highest importance to achieving the goals of the CWC.

There is no officially confirmed data on where undeclared and un-safeguarded stockpiles of chemical weapons may be, and how large they may be. But such stocks do exist, together with the military programmes and doctrines associated with their potential use.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is a major instrument in the international system for dealing with this problem. And it is an international instrument that operates as part of a broader system that includes national, bilateral, regional and other creative solutions.

The Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW carry a message of hope. It is a serious message that requires diligent, systematic effort on the part of all States parties in order for that hope to become a reality.