

Implementing the Global Chemical Weapons Ban

Keynote Address by Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter, OPCW Director-General to the Ninth Global Green USA Legacy Forum, Washington D.C., 23 September 2005

On behalf of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons,, which I have the honour to represent here at the Global Green USA's Ninth Legacy Forum today, I wish to express my appreciation to Dr Paul Walker for his kind invitation to brief this eminent group of experts in the field of arms control and disarmament. The programme has consistently supported the aims and objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Personally, I appreciate the insights and perspectives on chemical disarmament that Dr Walker and his colleagues have generously shared with me and the staff of the Technical Secretariat.

And in particular I would wish to gratefully acknowledge their fruitful and diligent efforts to raise awareness among legislators and the general public on the urgent need to prioritize the timely destruction of these weapons.

I welcome this opportunity to provide some insight into a successfully functioning disarmament regime that, with 174 Member States, is steadily nearing universal application, enjoys broad-based support in industry, and in the international community and, most importantly, is daily engaged in the verifying the destruction of weapons of mass destruction.

This remarkable instrument is the Chemical Weapons Convention, or CWC.

For those not familiar with the treaty, it is very important to recall that this is a very ambitious legal instrument, one that foresees that by ratifying the agreement every country will accept the obligation to eliminate any chemical weapons in their possession under international verification and within the Convention's timelines.

Moreover, all States that join the OPCW are under permanent obligation to accept on-site military and industrial inspections, to identify and systematically declare any relevant industrial activity, as well as provide assistance and protection should any other Member State be threatened by attack or actually suffer such an attack, while fostering the peaceful uses of chemistry.

The Chemical Weapons Convention represents the international community's single multilateral means of preventing the use and spread of these horrific weapons.

The treaty provides a continuously expanding bulwark, protecting the global population against the latent threat of chemicals used as weapons, and in that sense, the Convention is an indispensable element in the international effort to ensure peace and security.

We must not forget that within the memory of everyone in this room, chemical weapons were integral part of many nations' defence policy.

Now, this treaty grants 174¹ countries the best possible degree of assurance that they can renounce these weapons and choose to exit that escalatory spiral, and in turn freeing resources for peaceful use, as well as enhancing trust and reducing the threat of conflict between nations.

The treaty can and does fulfil other important roles, which I will also briefly detail.

In my day-to-day experience of leading the Technical Secretariat, of interacting with senior officials of the nations that have made enormous financial and political commitments to the Convention's successful implementation and with other officials of international organisations and within civil society, I find that the OPCW experience has not only become a positive highlight in the disarmament world, but also a crucial instrument for non proliferation as well as a contributing factor in the family of efforts carried out by peace loving nations around the world in the fight against international terrorism.

Today, the Organisation has successfully

Completed its consolidation in the aftermath of simultaneous financial and administrative crises in 2001 and 2002;

Grown considerably in membership - from 145 to 174² Member States and remains the fastest growing, multilateral disarmament organisation in the world;

The number of inspections conducted to ensure the total destruction of stockpiled weapons and to ensure the non-proliferation of chemical weapons or their precursors is rising consistently — from 1500 to 2,200;

The number of sites inspected is also steadily increasing from 500 to over 800 sites, and adding more industrial sites of relevance from the point of view of non proliferation;

The number of countries inspected also increases as the Convention's jurisdiction widens, namely from 51 to 72 countries;

Notably, the pace of chemical weapons destruction has quickened and the number of on-line destruction facilities has doubled;

In spite of the increased burden, the Technical Secretariat has been able to cope with additional tasks at the same level of resources. Our budget, for the first time this year represents 0 % nominal growth, which corresponds to a real decrease of approximately 2 % in the assessed contributions from Members States. We are effectively asking for less, for the next fiscal year, while we will be doing considerably more.

¹ As at 11 November 2005, there are 175 States Parties to the CWC.

² *ibid*

The reasons for this considerable achievements are very obvious to all those participating in this unique process and can be summarised by saying that all the countries that make up the OPCW have agreed that the Convention must be preserved and strengthened;

The positive determination displayed by key Member States, such as the United States, to support the OPCW and the process of multilateral chemical disarmament has marshalled the political will and brought the needed expertise to efficiently address the areas where the Convention's implementation required concerted attention.

Chemical demilitarisation lies at the heart of our work.

Under the Convention six countries have declared chemical weapons (Albania, India, Libya, Russian Federation, United States and an unidentified State Party).

In total, over 71,000 metric tonnes of chemical agent have been declared and secured. Secure storage means that the chemical agent is far from battle-ready and, through the OPCW's short-notice inspections, any diversion would be swiftly identified.

This step into storage has already substantially reduced the possibility of use or spread of chemical weapons. Security is a paramount concern as all possessor States are under obligation to prevent illicit transfer.

All six possessor States have submitted plans for the verified destruction of the declared stockpiles, which are subject to the Member States' review. Transparency is an essential element in the demilitarisation process.

The destruction of almost 17% of the total stockpile has been verified, in other words, over 26.5 million pounds of the deadliest chemical compounds on earth can no longer threaten our security - an impressive figure.

Twelve countries have declared 64 former CW production facilities.

100% of these former CW production facilities have been inactivated.

Their inert status is systematically checked to ensure that the facility cannot be reconstituted to produce chemical weapons.

Almost 80% of these former chemical weapons factories are certified as destroyed or converted to legitimate purposes.

India and, in the meantime, another State Party are now ahead of schedule.

Four of the present six possessor States, Albania, India, Libya and another State Party, will likely complete their destruction campaigns in 2007, the final deadline.

The biggest stockpiles are those of the Russian Federation and the United States. There is where most of the effort is deployed, in terms of destruction campaigns and, as far as the OPCW is concerned, of inspector men days. There, is where our major challenges lie.

The Chemical Weapons Convention foresees a final deadline for the entire destruction effort in April 2012. Some consider that this is an extremely tall order to be fulfilled by the US and Russia.

In simple terms, they believe that Russia will never make it and even the United States will be in an extremely difficult position to comply with the dates enshrined in the treaty.

As Director-General of the OPCW I continue to believe that the solemn commitments undertaken by all Parties to the treaty must, and will be honoured. I believe, and support, Governments in their efforts to do it, no matter how complex this may seem at the present moment.

In the United States as of beginning of September 2005, more than 32 percent of its category 1 CW stockpile as well as all of its Category 3 were destroyed.

Due to certain difficulties or delays in relation to some of the operational or upcoming facilities, the US submitted a request for an extension of its obligation to meet the 45% destruction of its stockpiled CW. This extension request was granted by the Conference of States Parties of the OPCW in October 2003, which set up a revised deadline for 31 December 2007 and also granted in principle an extension of the 100% final deadline.

Currently, six full scale destruction facilities are operational in the United States, Tooele, Anniston, Pine Bluff, Umatilla, Newport and Aberdeen. In addition, planned small scale destruction operations took place this year in other facilities.

Only last year, I was privileged to be able to review on-site the construction of new destruction sites (in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, and Anniston, Alabama) and gained a very favourable impression of the professional manner in which this enormous task is being handled.

I can confirm from my own personal experience, that the United States' unwavering commitment to this crucial disarmament effort is clearly evident.

This clear demonstration of political will to comply, is of vital importance for the treaty's credibility internationally.

Coming to Russia, last June I travelled there, visited some of the facilities and held important meetings in Moscow, including with Foreign Minister Lavrov, the President of the National Commission for Chemical Disarmament Kirienko, Vice Minister Kysliak and General Kholstov, who is in charge of the destruction programme.

During my visit, I received repeated assurances about the Russian Governments' firm determination to move decisively ahead, with a view to fulfilling their obligations in time.

A comprehensive programme was presented to me, containing a blueprint for the destruction campaign over the next few years.

Let me share with you some of the most salient features of it;

Not less than six facilities are to become operational in the course of the next four years Kambarka and Maradykovsky in 2006; Shchuchye in 2008; Pochep , Kizner and Leonidovka in 2009. The intent of the plan is to complete destruction of 15,9% of the stockpile in Kambarka by the end of 2009; with 17,4% of the CW stockpile located in Maradykovsky to be destroyed in two phases, the first concluding in 2007 and the second in 2012. Schuchye, Pochep and Leonidovska would follow suit, all completing their respective destruction operation by 2012.

This is of course carried out against the background of the previous decisions taken by the OPCW Policy Making Organs.

In 2003, the Russian Federation was granted by the Conference of the States Parties at its Eighth Session, an extension of the 20% intermediate deadline for the destruction of its Category 1 chemical weapons (CW) stockpiles until 29 April 2007; an extension, in principle, of the 45% intermediate deadline so that it would occur after the 20% deadline; and an extension of the final deadline so that it would occur after the 45% deadline (C-8/DEC.13, dated 24 October 2003).

Of the 40,086.720 metric tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons declared by the Russian Federation, by 1 September 2005 the latter had destroyed 999.02 metric tonnes – 2.49% of the declared Category 1 CW stockpiles –. Of this quantity, 778.567 metric tonnes – 1.94% of the declared Category 1 CW stockpiles – had been destroyed by 31 December 2004.

All Category 1 CW stockpiles destroyed by the Russian Federation thus far have been destroyed at the chemical weapons destruction facility (CWDF) located at Gorny, in the Saratovskaya Oblast. The Russian Federation started to destroy the chemical weapons stored at the co-located storage facility (CWSF) in December 2002.

According to the annual destruction report submitted by the Russian Federation to the Technical Secretariat for the destruction period from 29 April 2005 to 28 April 2006, the former expect to complete destruction of all stockpiles currently stored at the Gorny CWSF by December 2005.

In accordance with the extension granted by the Conference of the States Parties in 2003, by 29 April 2007 the Russian Federation should complete the destruction of 8,017.344 metric tonnes of their Category 1 CW stockpiles.

In accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Technical Secretariat is developing with the Russian Federation the verification regime for the Kambarka and

Maradykovsky – first stage of destruction operations (destruction of VX-filled large-calibre munitions) – CWDFs.

This regime – which is developed for all States Parties that have declared possession of chemical weapons, prior to the commencement of their destruction – provides the framework that allows the Technical Secretariat to verify the destruction of CW stockpiles through on-site inspection and monitoring with on-site instruments.

In this context, in late 2004 the Russian Federation submitted the detailed destruction facility information for both CWDFs, which triggered bilateral discussions on the respective detailed plans for verification and the facility agreements, with a view to their submission to the Executive Council of the OPCW for review and approval.

And in 2005, the Technical Secretariat conducted the initial visits to each CWDF (28 May to 4 June to the Kambarka CWDF, and 11 to 18 September to the Maradykovsky CWDF). We expect to carry out the final engineering reviews in the upcoming months, within the timelines set in the Convention (60 days before the commencement of the destruction, pursuant to paragraph 60 of Part IV (A) of the Verification Annex).

As I indicated, Russia's national destruction programme has been updated and modified in a concerted effort to accelerate the pace of the destruction campaign.

In line with what the Russian authorities informed me on the occasion of my visit, a national paper presented by the Russian delegation to the Executive Council of the OPCW (EC-41/NAT.2, dated 27 June 2005), informed the EC of its intention to use the CWDFs in Gorny, Kambarka (Udmurt Republic), and Maradykovsky (Kirovskaya oblast), to achieve the 20% intermediate deadline of destruction.

The Kambarka CWDF is currently under construction, and it is expected that, in principle, construction of this facility will be complete by 31 December 2005.

The Kambarka CWSF holds 3,168 metric tonnes of lewisite, which Russia intends to destroy at the co-located CWDF by 29 April 2007. The amount of lewisite that will be destroyed in this facility is equivalent to 50.4% of the aggregate lewisite stockpile declared by the Russian Federation (6,349.03 metric tonnes).

The Russian Federation intends to destroy the remaining quantity of lewisite stored in this facility by the end of 2009.

Maradikovsky holds a total stockpile of 6,929.73 metric tonnes of CW agent, which corresponds to 17.29% of the total stockpile declared by the Russian Federation. This stockpile comprises mustard, lewisite, sarin, soman and VX.

The first phase of the Maradykovsky CWDF is also under construction. Destruction of VX in this CWDF will take place in two so-called trains: the first train will consist of treatment by hydrolysis of the VX contained in large-calibre munitions (9-A-475 air

bombs and 9-A-483 spray tanks); the second train will consist of the draining of the resulting reaction masses and incineration thereof.

In accordance with the information received by the Technical Secretariat during the initial visit to this CWDF, the Russian Federation expects to complete construction of the first train of the first phase of this facility during the second quarter of 2006. The Russian Federation will continue construction of the second train of the first phase of this CWDF at the time of treatment of VX by hydrolysis (first train). It is expected that the withdrawal of the reaction masses from the pre-treated munitions (second train) will commence in late 2006.

The Russian Federation intends to destroy about 4,400 metric tonnes of VX at the Maradykovsky CWDF by 29 April 2007.

The Russian Federation thus plans to attain the 20% intermediate destruction deadline by destruction of about 8,700 metric tonnes of Category 1 (as stated above, comprised of 1,143 metric tonnes destroyed at Gorny, about 3,200 metric tonnes destroyed at Kambarka, and 4,400 metric tonnes destroyed at Maradykovsky).

The Russian Federation expects to complete construction of the second stage of the Maradykovsky CWDF (destruction of the remaining munitions – VX-filled munitions of smaller calibre, sarin, soman, and a mixture of mustard and lewisite) by April 2007. All CW stockpiles currently stored at the Maradykovsky CWSF are expected to be destroyed by April 2012.

The Russian Federation has informed the Technical Secretariat that construction is currently under way at the CWDFs in Leonidovka (Penzenskaya oblast) and Pochep (Bryanskaya oblast). The Russian Federation expects to destroy 8,100 metric tonnes at these facilities (4,800 and 3,300 metric tonnes, respectively) by the end of 2009, and to destroy all CW stockpiles in these facilities by April 2012.

Construction works are also under way at the CWDF in Shchuchye (Kurganskaya oblast), where destruction is scheduled to begin in the second half of 2008. Destruction of all CW stockpiles in this facility is expected to be completed by April 2012.

Construction of the CWDF in Kizner (Udmurt Republic) is scheduled to be completed in the first quarter of 2009. Destruction of CW stockpiles at this facility will be conducted in the period comprised between the second quarter of 2009 and April 2012.

Destruction delays are not surprising given the considerable difficulties this hazardous process presents, chemical demilitarisation requires purpose-built facilities, whose complex engineering and construction must meet stringent safety and environmental standards.

On top of this, the legitimate interests of all stakeholders must be addressed – these matters require time to reach agreement within the legislature and administration.

The costs of demilitarisation are estimated in the tens of billions of dollars. And few Member States, with the exception of the United States perhaps, can shoulder this burden alone.

For instance, we are well aware that funding for the Russian Federation has not always kept pace with the demands placed upon Russia in meeting the Convention's timelines.

This funding, be it from national budgetary resources or from international partners, must be assured to be certain that funding gaps do not translate into operational delays that would endanger timely compliance.

I think it is important to bear in mind that factor when it comes to the domestic legislative processes, which may take time, and inadvertently run contrary to the intentions of all concerned.

International support, in particular through the G8 Global Partnership, is crucial in maintaining the treaty's credibility and its ability to sustain adherence to the obligation to destroy swiftly.

Thus, the OPCW commends the generosity of the G8 and the thirteen additional donor countries that have joined the Global Partnership for their commitment to chemical demilitarisation and for their contribution to the total elimination of these weapons.

Allow me to take this opportunity acknowledge gratefully those countries whose representatives have honoured us with their presence today, specifically, the individual contributions made by Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The commitment of these countries is exemplary and long-standing. I would hope to see this cooperative spirit continued, and, if possible, encompassing a wider circle of nations.

Support for Russian chemical weapons destruction is a cost-effective insurance policy – the elimination of the stockpiles will nullify the threat these weapons pose either environmentally, or in terms of potential terrorist acquisition.

On its part, Russia should make every possible effort to ensure the maximum levels of transparency and flow of information towards donor countries, so as to facilitate the smooth and continued provision of international funding which is so vital for the effort to be successful.

It is clear for everyone that both the Russian Federation and the United States are lagging behind the timelines.

Both nations have faced this issue squarely and have transparently and proactively provided revised destruction plans intended to accelerate the elimination process.

Given the substantial political and financial investment in this process, and in light of the risks of any weakening of the chemical weapons ban, we must all be prepared to allocate more resources, expend more effort and quicken our resolve to destroy these weapons.

Strict adherence to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention is essential, especially when it comes to destruction of the existing stockpiles.

Failure in this field would inevitably weaken not only the CWC but the whole edifice of multilateral disarmament, as it would risk reopening and putting into question the very purpose and intention of a Treaty which is, for better or worse, the only active and effective instrument overseeing the destruction of a whole category of weapons of mass destruction.

Beyond the destruction of existing stockpiles, other challenges await, as those related to Non Proliferation and Terrorism.

But other challenges lie ahead and beyond the destruction of the Chemical Weapons in existence, as chemical weapons proliferation continues to loom large over our collective horizon.

This is especially worrisome, in view of the clear and present danger posed by terrorist potential access to CW agents.

In contrast with the nuclear sphere, these materials can be acquired throughout the world, the know-how to produce simple chemical weapons is widely available, and the technological and financial hurdles to be overcome are much less problematic than those posed by the illicit manufacture and use of primitive biological and nuclear weapons

We can take some, but not complete comfort in the fact that the Convention now extends to over 95% of the relevant global chemical industry and over 90% of the global population.

But we have to face the hard reality that the national infrastructure, and legislation, to apply the non-proliferation stipulations of the treaty in many Member States leave considerable room for improvement.

For example, we know that not every Member State would be able to detect, pursue and prosecute a breach of the Convention by any national within that Member State's jurisdiction.

Given this situation, the Convention's First Review Conference in 2003 adopted an Action Plan to rectify the situation.

The adoption of such an Action Plan to enhance national implementation was a further demonstration of the OPCW's willingness to frankly examine its performance, to identify

areas for improvement and to spend the time, money and effort to address these issues and amend practices as expeditiously as possible.

The OPCW Action Plan foreshadowed by a year UNSCR 1540, which in turn created a binding obligation upon all U.N. Member States, be they OPCW Members or not, to enact the legislation necessary to create an interlocking web of systematic declarations, industrial monitoring, chemical transfer controls and regulatory measures that identify and track the chemicals of concern, in order to provide assurance that these dangerous materials are used and transferred in accordance with the treaty.

The CWC is not a self executing treaty. It demands from Member States action at several levels, namely the establishment of a National Authority, passing of effective legislation, enacting export controls, to name the key ones that make the treaty truly operational.

In the past two years, over 100 Member States have requested and received from the Technical Secretariat the support needed to establish an autonomous capacity to apply the chemical weapons ban nationally.

We are far from getting where we should be, but I am encouraged by the response and the support we have gotten from Member States, and here I wish to pay tribute to the proactive approach taken by this country, which, in conjunction with the Technical Secretariat has been actively assisting countries that so requested, sending “flying teams” of experts to capitals that are making a silent but praiseworthy effort to close the gaps and strengthen the OPCW’s network of solidarity and security.

In a final analysis, in a not too distant future, the CWC and its operational agency, the OPCW will have a reason to exist, it’s *raison d’être*, precisely because of these types of challenges.

I wouldn’t like to conclude without mentioning the importance of Universal Membership in all of this.

At the beginning I mentioned our 174³ nation-strong membership as a proof of our encouraging size and reach.

But we have notable absentees, mainly North Korea and important countries in the Middle East. Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are not yet Members, and this is of course a reason for concern.

But there are elements to be moderately optimistic. The dialogue in the Mediterranean Basin and Africa are priorities for the entire Organisation.

³ *ibid*

As an example, for the first time in May 2005, all of the non-Member States in the Middle East attended a Chemical Weapons Convention event and further meetings have and will occur.

I have said time and again, that we cannot afford to wait until conditions for a discussion of WMD disarmament in the region are perfect. The Chemical weapons ban should not be the hostage of a desirable, but yet improbable agreement on the front of Nuclear weapons, let alone the achievement of a comprehensive settlement of the Middle East issue.

Dialogue and a persistent reiteration of the benefits that accrue to the countries that join, such as Libya, may well lead to universality in the region.

As you may have appreciated, we have a very complex agenda and an impressive array of issues under consideration. It has been a real pleasure to share with you these thoughts, and now I would be glad to respond to any questions you may have

Thank you