



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Chemical Materials Agency (CMA) Closing Ceremony

REMARKS BY

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CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be here today when the US Army Chemical Materials Agency celebrates an important milestone in its work – the completion of its stockpile destruction operations at seven facilities under its purview, which have successfully destroyed all their chemical weapons and are now closed.

We are all aware of the major accomplishments of the CMA and its systems contractors – the Chemical Materials Agency oversaw the destruction of 27,924 tons of blister and nerve agents and associated munitions in a safe and environmental friendly manner. This represents nearly 90% of the chemical weapons declared by the United States.

Reaching this destruction mark shows the progress that the United States has made, through the work of CMA, in fulfilling its international obligations to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile and reducing the overall public risk from its continued storage.

The destruction of chemical weapons is an enormous task. It involves many technical challenges and huge financial expenditure. Safety standards and the protection of the environment, as set forth in the Convention, are paramount. My previous visits to some of the destruction facilities, including Anniston and Tooele, have given me a better understanding of the human effort, technical challenges, regulatory constraints, and financial expenditures surrounding the destruction of chemical weapons in the United States.

The involvement of local communities and the recommendations put forward by local citizens have been important inputs in decisions on chemical demilitarisation and the CMA has managed the process in a transparent and effective manner. I am confident that the United States authorities will do their utmost to accelerate the current schedule.

CMA remains responsible for the safe storage of remaining chemical weapons. I had the pleasure to meet this afternoon some of those who managed the programme and warmly congratulate all involved. Its experience with over two decades of destruction operations and “lessons learnt” will be invaluable for the Assembled Chemical Weapons Assessment program, which will manage the safe destruction of both the Colorado and Kentucky chemical weapons stockpiles. Recognising the commitment of the United States to the complete destruction of the remaining stockpiles, I encourage it to continue to do its utmost to accelerate the current schedule and complete the destruction of the remaining 10% in the shortest time possible. You should all be proud of these achievements

It is my firm belief that the destruction of chemical weapons is an extraordinary team effort and can not be carried out without the professionalism and utmost dedication of the people, at all levels, involved in the chemical destruction programme. I therefore warmly congratulate all those involved in the successful completion of destruction operations at all seven CMA’s sites and wish them every success in their future endeavours.

The United States of America has shown unwavering commitment to uphold its obligations under the Convention. It has shown firm resolve to overcome the many difficulties of the destruction process.

Both the Secretariat and States Parties to the CWC have been appreciative of the openness and transparency demonstrated by the United States, since the entry into force of the Convention. There is recognition also of its determination in overcoming the many challenges in this difficult undertaking to destroy one of the most toxic substances ever created.

Such recognition is reflected in the decision adopted by the Conference of States Parties last year on the recommendation of the Executive Council. This will enable the United States and others to complete the task of destroying their remaining CW stockpiles. This decision preserves the integrity of the Convention and ensures that our work continues without undue impediments.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the United States for the unwavering support for the noble goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is a world free of chemical weapons. Your commitment reinforces the validity and the value of the Convention and contributes directly to the objective of establishing an international system in which nations can cooperate and progress in conditions of peace and security.

I extend to all those involved in the demilitarisation programme, my sincere congratulations over your success.

Thank you ***

