



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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**SEVENTH SINGAPORE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON
PROTECTION
AGAINST TOXIC SUBSTANCES (SISPA)
SINGAPORE
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**Video Message
The Hague
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Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the Seventh Singapore International Symposium on Protection against Toxic Substances.

Being held for the third time in conjunction with the International Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Explosives Operations Conference, this event has become a beneficial complement to SISPAT's deliberations.

I take this opportunity to commend Singapore for its strong support for the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

This symposium serves as an integrated forum for prominent scientists, engineers, medical practitioners, military planners and other professionals from the government, academic and industrial sectors. It is an opportunity to share and promote the latest knowledge and experiences concerning operations and incidents, emerging protective technologies and measures against CBRN threats.

The community of experts and specialists who are attending the symposium are people who can also make an invaluable contribution in strengthening the application of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Convention is the most authoritative, internationally agreed framework prohibiting the use of toxic chemicals for any purpose other than peaceful. As an international treaty that bans an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, the Convention derives its legitimacy from its near-universal membership which currently stands at 188 States Parties.

The total elimination of chemical weapons from the world is a core objective of the Convention. To ensure that these weapons will not re-emerge is the other.

Your work is driven by the desire to make people and society safe from the negative or unintended effects of toxic substances. This is as much an ethical motivation as it is safety or security related.

In the CWC, the international community has given the ultimate expression to its collective resolve of preventing toxic chemicals from bringing harm to people and nations.

Admittedly, the principal focus of the Convention and the work of the OPCW has so far been on eliminating the most dangerous toxic threats, namely, the military arsenals comprising chemical weapons. But the spirit of the Convention remains firmly rooted in preventing the use of any toxic chemicals from causing harm.

I envisage this fundamental ethical norm as gaining greater prominence in our work in the future.

This year, the Chemical Weapons Convention has completed fifteen years of its operation. The agreed goal of a total ban on chemical weapons and the complete elimination of CW stockpiles is being served by the various facets of the Convention and its implementation.

The OPCW is steadily advancing towards the complete elimination of the declared chemical weapons. To date, the Organisation has verified the destruction of nearly 80% of such stockpiles.

As the actual stocks of chemical weapons continue to diminish, OPCW verification will focus more on the objective of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons or non-proliferation.

The practical tools that the Convention employs for this purpose are the industry verification regime and data monitoring covering imports and exports of relevant chemicals. On the side of the industry verification, the Organization will continue its work to ensure that production and consumption of scheduled chemicals and the operations of other chemical production facilities, as defined by the Convention, remain dedicated for peaceful purposes. Today, the global chemical industry is producing an ever broader variety of new compounds. States Parties have declared over 5,300 chemical production facilities.

About 98% of the relevant chemical industry is located within the jurisdiction of the States Parties to the Convention. However, with such a large number of inspectable facilities, we will need to enhance the focus and intensity of our industry verification regime.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Verification of both destruction of chemical weapons and the industry provides the basis of confidence in the effectiveness of the treaty. At the same time, assistance and protection against chemical weapons and international cooperation for peaceful uses of chemistry address the expectations and the needs of our Member States. In this regard, an important pillar of our activities is our programmes that help them build their national capacities to protect their populations against chemical attacks.

States Parties, joining the Convention agree to provide each other with assistance and protection against chemical weapons; and are committed to the promotion of the peaceful uses of chemistry under the umbrella of international cooperation activities.

The possibility of use of chemical weapons or toxic chemicals by terrorist groups or even in warfare cannot be completely excluded. Our States Parties will continue to rely on the OPCW to play a more active role in matters of both assistance and protection as well as safety and security against chemical weapons and toxic chemicals.

Developing national protection capacity through international cooperation is the core objective that underpins the OPCW's response to a risk of chemical attack. In order to maintain preparedness to respond to such threats, we will continue to develop the ability for rapid and coordinated responses at the national, regional, and international levels as outlined by Article X of the Convention.

The assistance and protection measures also provide for OPCW's preparedness to deal effectively with threats that arise from the possibility of non-state actor's gaining access to prohibited materials. Through international cooperation activities, the OPCW contributes to

strengthening national protective capacity and provides basic and specialized training to first responders.

An effective international response capability is absolutely essential if we are to be prepared for large-scale incidents. The OPCW Member States regularly undertake multi-national field training exercises to test and raise the readiness in executing a major assistance operation.

The Technical Secretariat also continues to organize workshops for the coordination of assistance under Article X of the CWC on an annual basis. Additional focus has been devoted to various aspects related to international coordination and enhancement of delivery response capacities, capacity building, international, regional and sub-regional networking

The OPCW has also benefitted from the regular meetings of the Protection Network - a group of experts established to support the implementation of Article X of the Convention. Recommendations emanating from discussions at this important forum have been taken into account in the design and implementation of Assistance and Protection activities by the Technical Secretariat and in its interaction with Member States and other stakeholders.

The Technical Secretariat maintains cooperative links with international organizations such as the Euro Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre of NATO, the Implementation Support Unit of the BTWC, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research institute, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the WHO, and other agencies that may potentially be involved in an emergency response operation, allowing to cope with mandated assistance tasks in a cost effective and coordinated manner.

Another important undertaking has been the identification of advanced national centers in States Parties that can offer specialized training courses at the regional and international levels. The States offering such facilities include: South Africa, China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Czech Republic, Finland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Brazil, Peru and Argentina.

We have also proposed certain regional initiatives such as the centres of excellence that among others, will allow designating regional networks to optimize the sharing and use of chemical protection capabilities, facilitate sharing of chemical protection expertise and to identify needs and design solutions for States Parties in a specific region.

This has resulted in a continuous increase in the number of trained individuals in regional workshops, and exercise modules, including table top and practical field exercises, to develop knowledge and skills related to protection against chemical weapons.

Regional capacity-building workshops and training courses on emergency response in case of use of chemical weapons have been organised in several regions and sub-regions with a view to facilitating regional cooperation and coordination. These include the basic course on emergency response to chemical incidents held in Singapore in March 2009 and the advanced course on emergency response held also in Singapore in November 2011.

The OPCW has organised jointly with the Governments of the host nations, international assistance and protection courses for training of first responders in many State Parties, and I

wish to extend our sincere thanks to these States Parties for their invaluable cooperation. The increasing demands from Member States for technical assistance to develop their individual and regional capacities against chemical weapons are clear indicators of the renewed sense of priority that they are giving to Article X.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assistance and protection against chemical weapons or the misuse of toxic chemicals is one aspect of our work. Our collective security and confidence in adherence to the treaty provisions depend on effective national implementation of the CWC by all Member States.

Article VII obliges States Parties to ensure that the provisions of the Convention are fully implemented on their territory or anywhere under their jurisdiction or control. It is the cornerstone of the CWC verification system for the chemical industry, which depends on having the necessary national legislation and regulations in place, as well as an effective National Authority.

Effective implementation builds confidence in the international community and realises more fully the security benefits of the Convention. It is not an imposition but an advantage. A legal framework through legislation and the means to enforce it create the domestic capacity to monitor, to report, and to guide activities involving chemicals along peaceful and productive lines. Such measures represent the most practical means of addressing the contemporary threats relating to chemical terrorism.

Our efforts to achieve effective implementation also complement the work of the United Nations's to stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction. We have shared our expertise and experiences at forums organised by the United Nations to support the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540 whose objectives are consistent with the goals of the CWC. We also contribute to other UN anti-terrorism efforts in the context of weapons of mass destruction.

In the face of developments ranging from the transforming nature of our mission to the rapid developments in science and technology, the need to keep the Chemical Weapons Convention strong remains as crucial as ever. As the Organization transitions from its traditional disarmament emphasis to one focusing on preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, we are embarking on a cross-organizational strategic and structural adjustment without compromising on the integrity of our core objectives and at the same time fully safeguarding the operational needs of implementing the Convention.

Change creates challenges but also opportunities. We will need to focus with renewed determination on a number of priorities, such as effective domestic implementation, monitoring the advances in science and technology, reviewing the industry verification regime to ensure that it will continue to promote confidence in compliance, and improving surveillance of transfers and trade in chemicals. In addition, we need to redouble our efforts in promoting the universality of the Convention. Our motto is, 'working together for a world free of chemical weapons'. It sets out the vision of the OPCW. But this vision will remain elusive until each and every nation in the world accepts the ban on chemical weapons as established by the Convention.

Our States Parties have always acted in a spirit of cooperation, constructive engagement and consensus. Such positive attitudes reflect a strong commitment to the success of our mission especially in relation to our unfinished business as well as future challenges. An area where our States Parties are showing an increasing interest relates to issues of chemical safety and security. The OPCW is widely regarded as a guarantor of security against the threat of chemical weapons and by extension, the threat of toxic chemicals that could be used as weapons. The unique mandate of the Organisation supported by its culture of cooperation makes it a most suitable forum for exploring further avenues for exchanges on issues related to chemical safety and security.

It is this broader appreciation of the value of the OPCW, that has created the expectation for the Organisation to offer services and programmes to its Member States who are increasingly concerned today about non-conventional security threats.

Capabilities and capacities differ around the world. Even as the global chemical industry grows and expands including to new regions and countries, not all of them are endowed with the same degree of preparedness to deal with contingencies involving the release, intentional or otherwise, of toxic chemicals. So at the heart of our endeavours in this area is not the urge to set any new standards, but to make them more accessible to as wide an audience as possible; to focus our attention on imparting capabilities where they might not exist or are insufficient and to offer training and capacity building to those who need them.

It took over a hundred years to achieve an effective and comprehensive prohibition of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Eliminating those weapons is no doubt an outstanding achievement. But preserving and strengthening the Convention against threats that an uncertain future can generate is equally important.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has proved its value and shown that disarmament is possible. The results reinforce our faith in multilateralism. The CWC and the OPCW offer a model that can indeed spur progress more generally towards a peaceful and secure future.

It is my hope that we can all continue to work collectively to strengthen the Convention and to make the OPCW even more responsive to the needs of our times and the future.

In conclusion, I wish to express my hope that with your inputs and support, we will continue to forge ahead in strengthening our mission to provide ever greater security against threats that are obvious but also those that require careful assessment and response.

I wish you every success and thank you for your attention.
