

“Cooperative Threat Reduction: Partnering for a More Secure World”

3 December 2012, Washington, D.C.

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Weapons (OPCW)**

Speaking Notes

I thank Under Secretary Rose Gottemoeller for that introduction and for her continuing strong support for our organisation. I also wish to express my appreciation for being invited to this important event. I look forward to meeting Senators Nunn and Lugar- the architects of the Cooperative Threat Reduction Programme. This programme has been a success story and of great support in the implementation of the Convention. It complemented significantly the chemical demilitarization efforts of the OPCW.

In one of his speeches President Obama emphasized the need for global responses to global challenges. The Chemical Weapons Convention is indeed a prime

example of an effective global response to a global challenge.

The origins of the Convention belong to a period of time that experienced widespread shock and retained painful but vivid memories of the carnage during the First World War. The threat of large scale use of chemical weapons persisted for almost the rest of the 20th century. Adding urgency to the long drawn efforts to comprehensively ban chemical weapons was their use by the former regime in Iraq.

Happily, today the threat of chemical weapons seems to have receded. But lessons learnt bear repetition. Chemical weapons are a category of weapons of mass destruction that have been used the most often. They have been used in a global conflict, in regional wars and indeed as weapons of terror; as illustrated by the actions of a terrorist outfit in Japan.

The existence of a near universal norm; established and supported collectively by the international community which is embodied in the CWC, has been the single most

important factor in making our present world safer from the threat of chemical weapons.

The question facing us today is the future of this regime. It has now been in operation for 15 years in which 78% of the global stockpiles of declared chemical weapons have been eliminated and most of the remaining will be destroyed rather soon. Three countries that declared possession of stockpiles have already destroyed all their stockpiles.

This is but one visible and quantifiable measure of the success of the Convention. I will revert to other benefits momentarily. What I wish to emphasise here are two points:

First. The possibilities that can be realized within a multilateral cooperative framework that is viewed as beneficial by all, and;

Second. The constant awareness that a well-deserved sense of accomplishment must, nonetheless, not lead to any complacency.

On a declaratory basis, our States Parties are unanimous in the permanence of the regime. We, however, need a clear view of the conditions, the resources and the programmes that will help keep this hard earned regime relevant and effective.

The key to sustaining the future of the CWC lies in supporting the consensus that has enabled its success thus far. And consensus in a body of 188 countries comes with mutual accommodation and by making the necessary compromises.

Any global regime in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation will broadly exhibit two parallel and sometimes conflicting approaches. One views these regimes essentially through the prism of non-proliferation. The other considers these as beneficial in reducing the perceived strategic gap between militarily advanced states and the rest. Added to the latter are expectations of affirmation of the right to peaceful uses of science and technology. Perceptions can off course be strong drivers of policy.

The CWC has been successful because it has maintained a balance between competing approaches – a via media.

And this is reflected in what are described as, the so-called “four pillars” of the Convention. These are; the verified destruction of existing chemical weapons; non-proliferation or the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons; promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry, in particular through fostering international cooperation; and strengthening assistance and protection against chemical weapons for emergency situations.

The great benefit of such an underlying consensus is that it injects a constructive spirit in the work of the OPCW. This same spirit has helped reach decisions on several difficult issues. A most notable one is the decision adopted last year by the States Parties on the final extended deadline for destruction. States Parties have acknowledged that the delays were due to technical, financial and other difficulties. They welcomed the strong commitment reaffirmed by Possessor States and approved the decision. This decision has enabled the U.S., Russia and Libya to continue their destruction

activities under the verification of the OPCW with some additional transparency measures.

It is thus that the Organisation is described as an example of effective multilateralism, serving in a tangible manner the goals of international peace and security.

Our membership has grown to 188 States Parties. No other international treaty dealing with disarmament has attracted such wide adherence in such a short period of time.

The utility of any enterprise is judged by its performance and achievements. In the case of an international organisation a vital additional quality is the general legitimacy that its members attach to it.

It is this strength of the CWC that allows the Organisation to conduct inspections, collect import and export data and enables it to work with States on a cooperative basis to strengthen domestic implementation of the Convention that is so necessary for its effectiveness. These are unique advantages that the OPCW enjoys. They all add up to providing security to all.

The question facing us today, as I mentioned earlier is the future of the Convention and what role it will play against both traditional threats and new ones.

Clearly, we have work in a number of areas. And more importantly, we need to continue to receive strong support both political and in terms of resources from our States Parties if we are to keep the OPCW as a barrier against the chemical threat in its varied forms.

I will mention some of these areas:

We need to improve upon our industry verification regime which is the bed-rock of the Convention's non-proliferation goals. States Parties have declared over 5,300 chemical production facilities that under the terms of the Convention are inspectable. To systematically inspect such a large number of facilities is beyond our means and resources.

What we can do is to develop a more effective and meaningful industry-verification regime that is more focused and better able to capture those facilities that are more relevant to the purposes of the Convention.

Science and technology have advanced significantly in recent years. It is therefore crucial to take stock of the current state of the science and the production technologies that the Convention covers. That is why I place a special emphasis on the work of the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board which must play an increasingly important role in the future. While urging the Board to consider the range of issues that might impact the Convention, I have also sought to provide it the resources that it needs to conduct its work.

Another important element that requires to be strengthened relates to the full and effective national implementation of the CWC's provisions by all our Members.

It is vital for States Parties to be able to detect, pursue, and prosecute any breach of the Convention by their nationals, in any area under their jurisdiction or control.

The Secretariat will continue to refine its programmes for assisting States Parties to fulfil their national implementation obligations. We have over the years gained valuable experience. We have created the

institutional capacity and expertise to help our Members to register further progress in improving their domestic implementation of the Convention's obligations.

This institutional asset has been found to be of great relevance in the context of improving the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004). We continue to contribute to the UN's efforts in this regard.

The work of the OPCW in improving the domestic implementation of the Convention is rooted in the obligations established by the Convention. At the same time, it serves to strengthen the counter-terrorism efforts of our Members.

As we aim to achieve a more secure and safe environment, the threat from non-State actors seeking to produce or acquire chemical weapons remains real.

Although the OPCW is not an anti-terrorism organisation, countering the contemporary threat of terrorism is accepted by our Membership as within our area of responsibility because it is a matter relating to the promotion of security.

Another key challenge before us is to ensure universal adherence to the Convention. Eight countries in the world still remain outside of the Convention.

We are strongly committed to encouraging the remaining countries to join the CWC.

On our part, we continue to work through our regional partners, including bilateral contacts and international organisations to convince the remaining countries to join the Convention at the earliest opportunity. The UN Secretary General and I have recently sent joint letters to the leaders of the eight countries urging them to join the Convention.

The international community should unequivocally insist that there is no justification whatsoever to retain the chemical weapons option. Accession to the Convention by certain non parties will lead to declarations and eventual elimination of those stockpiles of chemical weapons that have so far remained out of the reach of international verification.

As we advised earlier this year in a press release, Syria reportedly possesses significant stocks of chemical

weapons. This is in fact a matter of great concern to the OPCW and the whole international community. We continue to follow the situation closely.

The overwhelming majority of members of the international community subscribe to the obligations established by the Convention. It is not in the interest of the international community to allow exceptions.

15 years is not a long time in the life of any international organisation. Yet, hard work and the commitment of our States Parties to the goals of the Convention have led to the creation of a robust and successful multilateral organisation. With the verified elimination of the declared chemical weapons stockpiles in sight, the Organisation now needs to ensure that the Convention will remain a permanent barrier against chemical weapons.

I have briefly mentioned some of the challenges that we face.

Additionally, the process of change and transition for the OPCW will require a review of internal processes that can be streamlined and made more efficient.

While I am determined to exercising due financial rigour, I am also aware of the need to ensure the integrity of our core objectives and of our operational imperatives in implementing the Convention.

It is my hope that in assessing the future of the OPCW, States Parties will carefully consider the record of its accomplishments and what it has taken them collectively to build an asset that provides substantive security benefits. I believe that the OPCW has the potential to serve both present and future needs in an ever changing global security environment.

Thank you