



OPCW

Executive Council

Eighty-Fifth Session

11 – 14 July 2017

EC-85/NAT.32

11 July 2017

ENGLISH only

PAKISTAN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR IFFAT IMRAN GARDEZI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PAKISTAN TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

As this is the first regular session of the Executive Council under your Chairmanship, I will begin by congratulating you and assuring you of the full cooperation of my delegation. I would also like to thank Ambassador Odette Melono for her remarkable handling of the previous sessions.

We thank the Director-General for his detailed statement reporting on the activities of the Organisation and drawing the attention of the Council to salient issues requiring its consideration.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the States Parties belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

Our Organisation is experiencing the most critical period in its history. Only last week, the Council considered two reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission confirming that sulphur mustard was involved in the incident in Om-Housh and Sarin was used in the attack in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April this year. We strongly condemn this gravest violation of the norms of the Convention. Innocent civilians continue to be blatantly targeted in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The continued use of chemical weapons is further aggravating the humanitarian crisis in Syria. It is imperative now for the investigation to be carried further to its logical conclusion by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and the perpetrators of these heinous crimes to be identified and held fully accountable.

It is tragic that in the year marking the twentieth anniversary of the coming into force of a worldwide ban on chemical weapons, the most dominant issue for the Organisation is how to bring an end to the most serious breaches of the Convention's norms.

The very purpose of this Organisation is to ensure the effective implementation of the prohibition on chemical weapons. Preventing the use of chemical weapons is the first and



foremost of the Convention's objectives. We appreciate the Director-General's resolve to pursue the effort to establish the facts about the use of chemical weapons despite the difficult circumstances and politically tenuous situation. We assure him of our full support.

While the use of chemical weapons needs to be resolutely condemned, it is also important for us to consider ways and means of strengthening our Organisation to deal with on-going and future challenges together with the priority of the complete destruction of declared as well as abandoned chemical weapons.

We have noted the reports regarding destruction progress and we encourage possessor States to complete the process as soon as possible including destruction of abandoned chemical weapons.

In order to advance the goals of the Convention, Pakistan continually supports activities that make a practical contribution to the work of the Organisation. This includes hosting cooperative programmes, including, basic and advanced national, regional and international assistance and protection courses. This year, to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Convention and the OPCW, Pakistan organised a series of events including an advanced chemical safety management symposium held on 7-8 March 2017 and an event on comprehensive chemical safety and security best practices for Pakistani chemical industry on 9-10 May 2017, in Islamabad. Another event in this series will be the Pakistan chemical supply chain safety and security workshop scheduled to be held on 19-21 September 2017, in Islamabad.

Such events underline the convergence of Article XI objectives with those of Article VII. The latter has assumed great importance in the context of strengthening national capacities to deal with terrorism. Cooperative activities offer the best avenue for promoting the implementation of Article VII through substantive programmes that also raise awareness about a range of measures that States can undertake to strengthen domestic regulations and safety and security practices.

While the Convention is not an anti-terrorism instrument, there is much that the Organisation can do to play its part. The full enforcement of the Convention's legal framework offers the best defence against this threat. Effective implementation helps to deter and prevent acts of chemical terrorism.

Pakistan believes that greater substance can also be injected in the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism by focussing on programmes that raise awareness in States Parties about the need for effective controls over chemicals and chemical security issues in general. We also support the work of the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors.

We have taken note of the 'Progress of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Future Priorities'. We hope that the Working Group would come up with a vision of future priorities, keeping in view the essentials like public awareness, transparency, universality, capacity building, role of non-State actors in the procurement and use of chemical weapons, the use of chemical weapons by States not Party, bringing the non-State-actors and States not Party under the purview of the Convention and working of the OPCW in the post destruction phase.

At the same time and like every year, there is a need to establish a structured preparatory process for the next Review Conference.

The Technical Secretariat has undertaken an important task of broadening the scope and deepening the intensity of interaction with external stakeholders. As we embark on the important exercise of determining the future priorities of our Organisation, we believe that this endeavour will occupy a salient position. In this regard, we have noted the deployment of First Batch of JPOs in early 2018.

For an arms control multilateral regime like the Convention to continue to be strong and effective, the OPCW must continue to strive for maximum public awareness, education and participation. To achieve this, we need to accord a higher priority to the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach. On our part, we organise regular programmes for domestic outreach and information sharing as well as conduct practice exercises in the context of inspections.

We will continue to support and to organise all such programmes including those that promote information sharing, coordination and capacity-building in States Parties.

Rapid advances in science and technology have changed the landscape of the industrial complex in various regions and has complicated the monitoring of the chemicals flow from one entity to another. Pakistan strongly supports all efforts aimed at achieving a more effective oversight of transfers.

It terms of strengthening indigenous and regional response capacity, a strategic orientation of OPCW assistance and protection programs towards capacity building, rather than mobilisation of international assistance after an incident, should remain under primary consideration. However, a balance in this regard is important.

In this session of the Executive Council, we have started the process of selection of the new Director-General for the OPCW. It is critical to focus on merit and competence while not ignoring the question of geographical representation. The candidate should thus be able to garner broad support while demonstrating the qualities of leadership and to lead the OPCW in an exemplary manner as the present Director-General Ahmed Üzümcü has done.

It is incumbent upon us to do our very best to protect this regime and to strengthen it further so as to equip the Organisation to deal with the multiplicity of challenges that we face. For this, we must continue to work in the manner that has always been the hallmark of the OPCW which is consensus decision making. Unfortunately, this spirit of consensus seems to have eroded and must be restored.

I would like to conclude my statement by once again underlining the importance we attach to the work of this Council. The OPCW has, in recent years, faced difficult challenges and succeeded because States Parties remained committed to the Convention. It is my hope that this dedication to the goals of the Convention will continue to guide our work.

We request that this statement is circulated as an official document of the Eighty-Fifth Session of the Executive Council. Thank you.