

Ms. Irene Kornelly, Chairperson, Colorado Citizens' Advisory Commission, Pueblo, Colorado, U.S.A.

Statement to the Twenty-Third Conference of the States Parties(CSP), Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), The Hague, The Netherlands, November 2018

Mr Chairman, Mr Director General, Distinguished Delegates and Guests,

Thank you for providing me and many of the non-governmental organizations present at this Conference of States Parties with this opportunity to speak briefly about work in their home countries. I am the chairperson of the Citizens' Advisory Commission at the eighth of nine declared chemical weapons stockpiles in the USA – Pueblo, Colorado – where we are currently operating our stockpile destruction program.

The chemical weapons demilitarization program in Pueblo is finally moving forward and has currently destroyed almost one tenth of the stockpile. The program is designed to destroy some 780,000 mustard-filled chemical weapons through the use of water neutralization and bio-treatment. In addition, alternative technologies, such as the Explosive Destruction System and the Static Detonation Chamber have been and will be used to destroy leakers and rejects to the main facility and to destroy the 4.2-inch mortars stored at the site. Under the auspices of the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives Program and the United States Department of Defense, the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Project, commonly known as PCAPP, and all other facilities at the site, are carrying out to the greatest extent possible the principles of citizen involvement, worker, stakeholder, and environmental safety and transparency.

Mr. Chairman,

The four hallmarks of the chemical demilitarization program of transparency, citizen involvement, education and safety have transformed the Pueblo community and in many ways the Department of Defense. These principles have brought about a community that is now comfortable with the neutralization-biotreatment facility constructed in the Pueblo community and has helped the alternative technologies gain acceptance. Fear, anger, and distrust of the process have been replaced with understanding and knowledge.

Transparency is one of the most important aspects of the program. The citizens of Pueblo continue to have input into almost every aspect of the program. In the past year we have met to discuss the re-start of the Explosive Destruction System, the transportation of hydrolysate and the use of the Static Detonation System. There are no easy answers to these issues and the many others that will arise in the future. The answers lie within the community discussions that are on-going.

Public meetings and tours of the construction site were also a hallmark of community involvement and education. Now, with operations on-going, tours are limited to the training facility or virtual tours made possible by YouTube and discussions with subject matter experts.

An outreach office is located in the Pueblo community, where anyone can walk in and view displays and take away program information. An educational specialist regularly goes into the schools to teach about chemical weapons and the destruction programs. The ACWA program has a website where anyone can look up information, view pictures and watch YouTube videos about the processes and facilities.

The final cornerstone of the program is the most important to the community - safety. Facility workers, our husbands and wives, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers and neighbors must work at a facility that is safe. The surrounding environment must remain unimpaired while destruction of the weapons continues. Vigilance will be kept throughout operations as these factors must not be compromised in the interest of rapid destruction of the chemical weapons in the stockpile.

Mr. Chairman,

Early in the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternative Programs, and I suspect in some areas even today, the concept of providing communities with the tools to assist the Department of Defense and Department of the Army in making decisions was very controversial. The issue was power and the idea that power and ideas had to be closely held and not shared. Few could conceive of the idea of providing transparency and education to citizens without losing power. Today, transparency, education and mutual understanding of decisions has led to shared power and increased power for our leaders, because they know that the decision is made by all people involved.

Mr Chairman,

Meeting the criteria of transparency, community involvement, education, and safety has

allowed the ACWA program, the community and the Department of Defense to work together with the Pueblo community to build a program that meets the needs of everyone by employing face-to-face discussion and consensus and will result in the safe destruction in Pueblo of the stockpile and all secondary components of the stockpile by December 2023.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to provide you with a glimpse into the chemical weapons destruction program in Pueblo, Colorado. I wish for this statement to be made part of the final CSP record and posted on the OPCW server and website.