



Fourth Five-Year Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, The Hague, The Netherlands, 21 - 30 November 2018

The Statement of Tehran Peace Museum and the Society for Chemical Weapons Victims Support (SCWVS) from Iran By: Ms. Elaheh Pooyandeh

Mr Chairperson, Director General, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to speak at this plenary session of the Fourth Five-Year Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, on behalf of the Tehran Peace Museum and the Society for Chemical Weapons Victims Support (SCWVS), from Iran.

Please allow me to begin by extending our appreciation to the new Director General Ambassador Arias for his efforts as the new director general of the OPCW since July. Furthermore, we are grateful for eight years of sincere effort in achieving the goals of the CWC by H.E. Ahmet Uzumzu – a leadership that led the OPCW to winning the Noble Peace Prize in 2013 and to the destruction of more than 96% of the world's declared chemical weapons. We hope that during the new leadership, OPCW can finally make the dream of a world free of chemical weapons come true.

We would also like to thank the ongoing efforts of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, as well as all States Parties in advancing the goals of the CWC during the last year.

Excellencies,

Established by survivors of chemical weapons, the Tehran Peace Museum (TPM) has worked with – and for – these victims since 2005. This has resulted in a thorough identification of the needs and capabilities of the victims. Providing appropriate support for the victims requires accurate data on the number of victims, chemical agents, their health effects and medical guides. Therefore, we highly recommend that the Review Conference discuss the role of the victims in the CWC and, as the first step towards supporting them, plan a registration process in an international framework executed by the OPCW and assisted by National Authorities.

Survivors of chemical warfare should not be regarded as disabled people since they can play an important role in raising public awareness about the necessity of a world free of CW. The first-hand experience of these survivors is the testimony needed to emphasize the importance of chemical weapons disarmament and the strong will and actions required to achieve it. As a result, we strongly encourage the OPCW to benefit from this opportunity and we offer our full cooperation in this regard.

Mr. Chairperson,

Our world has suffered enough from chemical weapons. Today the international community has a consensus that use of this hideous warfare would not be accepted in any form and any condition. It has been more than 340 years since the first international agreement in Strasburg to ban the use of poisonous bullets and it is time to finish the chemical disarmament process.

Security and safety of “we, peoples of the United Nations” cannot and must not be compromised by political agendas/interests of member states and non-member states anymore. The way forward is clear: full universality of the CWC and full destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles, including the non-declared ones.

Destruction of more than 96% of declared chemical weapons stockpiles is a huge achievement, but it should not leave us with a false sense of security. The threat is still present and close. Therefore, we insist on drawing the international community’s attention to universality of the Convention and to the full implementation of member states’ commitments.

Members of the Coalition for the CWC, including the TPM, demand for more engagement in the OPCW’s activities as neutral actors to ensure the good faith and full commitment of member states.

In conclusion, I would like to invite Mr. Asadollah Mohammadi, a survivor of chemical weapons to address you.

“In the name of God, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was 22 years old when I was exposed to CW on January 11, 1987. I was trained for a chemical attack and had protective gear with me. After exposure, I was transferred to a medical center immediately and had to take a cold shower in freezing January. But none of that stopped the gas from turning my life upside down.

Mustard gas has changed my whole life. I was in hospital for a long time then. A few years later, I chose to study chemistry with one goal only: to understand how chemical warfare works. When I decided to marry, I had to make sure that my partner was aware of the difficulties of living with a victim of chemical weapons. If I get a simple cold, I might end up in

hospital. I cough all the time and I have a silicon compartment in my throat, to keep my airway open and help me breathe.

Mustard gas has changed my life, but I won't allow it to stop me. No one else should suffer like me or my comrades. Chemical weapons should be abolished completely, and we won't stop until then. That has been my message since I started my work as a volunteer in the Tehran Peace Museum. I have shared my story in Iran, in Japan, in Spain and today in The Hague, with a hope that it would make a change. I am doing my share of responsibility and I expect you, Excellencies, to do yours.

Thank you for your attention.”

I request that this statement be made part of the Review Conference official proceedings on the OPCW website.