

Please check against delivery



**Statement by
Ambassador Venu Rajamony,
Permanent Representative of India to the OPCW
at the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the
States Parties to Review the Operation of the
Chemical Weapons Convention
(Fourth Review Conference)**

23 November 2018

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Director General,
Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to begin by offering warm felicitations, on behalf of my delegation, on your assuming the Chairmanship of the Fourth Review Conference. We are confident that you will steer the sessions of this important Conference to a successful conclusion, and assure you of our full cooperation.

My delegation would like to commend Ambassador Mr. I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja of Indonesia for his hard work and dedication in leading the deliberations of the Open-Ended Working Group set up for Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference. We thank Director General Ambassador Fernando Arias for his informative statement as well as his support throughout the preparatory period.

My delegation endorses and associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of NAM States Parties to the CWC and China.

Mr. Chairman,

We have gathered here to look back and take stock of implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention during past five years, as well as map the future direction which OPCW, its implementing body, should take in coming years. The Chemical Weapons Convention is a unique, multilateral, non-discriminatory disarmament instrument, which embodies the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. Its remarkable success was internationally recognized when Nobel Prize was conferred upon OPCW in 2013.

Universality is essential to fully achieving the object and purpose of the Convention which now embodies the will of 98% of the world's population living under its protection. It has secured the commitment of 193 States, making it the world's most widely adhered international disarmament treaty, eliminating an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. India welcomes the five new States Parties, which have joined the Convention since the Third Review Conference, namely, the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of Angola and the State of Palestine. We urge the States not Party to the Convention to consider acceding to the Convention at the earliest.

Disarmament is the primary objective of the Convention, which is a shared responsibility of OPCW and the member states. It is commendable that over 96% of the chemical weapons stockpiles, declared by possessor States, have been destroyed under OPCW verification. India welcomes the completion of destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles by the Republic of Iraq, Libya, Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic. We hope that the process of destruction of the remaining stockpiles of chemical weapons will also be completed soon.

The aim of the Chemical Weapons Convention is "to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons". As the destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles nears completion, OPCW must continue to implement its disarmament mandate by focussing on preventing the re-

emergence of chemical weapons as well as the risk of their proliferation. This is vital in fulfilling the OPCW's crucial role in enhancing international peace and security.

Mr. Chairman,

OPCW has effectively addressed a lot of complex challenges during 21 years of its existence. This is the result of the continued commitment and collective endeavor of States Parties to working in tandem with the professional and competent Technical Secretariat. It is a matter of grave concern that despite our best efforts, there has been an increase in allegations and incidents of use of chemical weapons in different parts of the world such as Malaysia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. India fully shares the concern over the possibility of use of chemical weapons and expresses its deepest sympathies to the victims of chemical weapon attacks and their families.

It has been India's consistent position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstances, cannot be justified and the perpetrators of such abhorrent acts must be held accountable. The use of chemical weapons is in complete disregard of humanity and is reprehensible and contrary to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as accepted international legal norms. India believes that it is important to maintain the credibility and integrity of the Convention. Hence, it is essential that all investigations of alleged use of chemical weapons are impartial, objective and conducted strictly in accordance with the Convention, utilizing all its provisions.

My delegation is also deeply worried about the reports of the so-called 'Islamic State' or ISIS/ISIL acquiring chemical weapons and their delivery systems. A significant step in combating this challenge was taken when the Executive Council adopted in 2017, by consensus, its decision on addressing the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors. We request the Technical Secretariat to continue to monitor this threat and report to the Executive Council on this issue.

Mr. Chairman,

The OPCW has been actively involved in Syria since its accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 2013. My delegation welcomes the completion of destruction of all chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities, declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. We urge continued cooperation between the OPCW and Syrian Arab Republic. We also take note of the work done so far by the OPCW- Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syrian Arab Republic and look forward to receiving reports on its ongoing activities.

Let me reiterate, that our efforts in the OPCW should be aimed at eliminating all possibilities of any future use of chemical weapons. There are daunting challenges ahead such as discovery of new toxic chemicals, advancements in deployment and dissemination techniques and increasing threat of use of chemical weapons by non-state actors. The growing complexity of global security environment calls for greater vigilance and continued efforts by both OPCW and the member states towards achieving general and complete chemical disarmament.

Mr. Chairman,

Permit me to highlight a few issues which India considers to be of particular relevance:

National Implementation

Effective national implementation under Article VII of the Convention is an essential part of upholding the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. We note the progress made in this regard and welcome the fact that since the Third Review Conference, an additional fifteen States Parties have adopted national legislation to implement the Convention. We urge all States Parties, which have not yet done so, to undertake necessary measures to implement Article VII, including through drafting and adoption of national legislation as well as capacity building. As a founding member state of the Organization with an effective national implementation system, India is happy to share its knowledge and experience and remains willing to collaborate with other States Parties and Technical Secretariat towards this end.

Verification

India has a large and rapidly growing chemical industry, with the one of the largest numbers of declared facilities and receives the second highest number of inspections from OPCW. We have an excellent track record with regard to submission of industry declarations as well as verification inspections. India will continue to cooperate with OPCW in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the verification system.

Impact of advances in science and technology

India is fully cognizant of the impact that scientific and technological advancements have on disarmament and international security. Recognizing this, India had tabled a resolution on "Role of science and technology in context of international security and disarmament" at the 73rd session of the UNGA First Committee, which was adopted by consensus. We also recognize the significance of the role played by the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) in advising the Director General and take note of the recommendations made in its latest report.

Article XI

India stands for the full and effective implementation of Article XI as well as promoting the peaceful use of chemical technology and enhancing international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited in the Convention. It is important to reinforce the ability of states parties to fully implement the provisions of the Convention in this regard. We recognize the crucial role played by OPCW in promoting a culture of safety and security throughout the entire life-cycle of toxic chemicals, including through sharing best practices in the area of chemical safety and international trade in chemicals.

Mr. Chairman,

The Fourth Review Conference was preceded by contentious and divisive 23rd Conference of States Parties, which saw divisions deepening over the Programme and Budget for the OPCW for 2019, primarily arising from proposed allocation of funds for setting up an attribution mechanism. It is notable that the decision on attribution mechanism was adopted through a divisive vote, circumventing the established procedure of an Amendment Conference as provided under Article XV of the Convention. The Attribution Mechanism has adversely impacted the finely crafted and indispensable balance between

legitimacy and effective action under a member-state driven Convention, assisted by a technically proficient Secretariat. It is regrettable that, since then, there has been increase in division amongst State parties, which needs to be bridged through dialogue and consultations, to allow for effective functioning of the Organisation.

As a founding member of OPCW, India has always emphasized the importance of the principle of consensus enshrined in the Convention and the need for decisions to be taken by the States Parties in consultation with each other. Any long-lasting and effective solution to the challenges faced by the OPCW can only be found through wide-ranging consultations involving all States Parties. The need of the hour is constructive engagement, dialogue and unity of purpose. India remains willing and open for discussions with States Parties to find ways and means to strengthen the Convention and its effective implementation, within the framework of the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

I request that this Statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the OPCW's public website.

Thank you.
