

The 4th Review Conference

General Debate

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Yun-young LEE

Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea

November 21, 2018, The Hague

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere congratulations to you, Ambassador Agustin Vasquez Gomez, on your assumption of the Chairmanship of the Fourth Review Conference. I am confident this Review Conference will be crowned with great success under your excellent leadership. My delegation assures you of its full support and cooperation for the successful outcome of this Conference.

My appreciation also goes to the Chairperson of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassador Puja of Indonesia, and the Technical Secretariat for their devotion to the Fourth Review Conference. Ambassador Puja's outstanding leadership and hard work done by the Secretariat laid a solid basis for our work at this Conference.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Fourth Review Conference provides us with an invaluable opportunity to reflect on the lessons learned from the past 21 years of experience and to place the OPCW in a better position to address the challenges ahead.

Since its entry into force more than two decades ago, the Chemical Weapons Convention has indeed served as one of the main instruments in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Convention has legally binding force in as many as 193 States Parties around the world, protecting approximately 98 percent of the world population. The destruction of more than 96 percent of all declared chemical weapons should also be highlighted as one of the major achievements. The 2013 Nobel Peace Prize for the OPCW demonstrates that its noble efforts to eliminate chemical weapons prove to be a great success for the common good of the international community.

However, our shared vision of a world free of chemical weapons is still out of reach. Since the Third Review Conference, we have been repeatedly confronted with the re-emergence of the horrendous incidents of chemical weapons use by State or non-State actors across the world, including in Syria and Salisbury in the United Kingdom.

Confronted with the unprecedented re-emergence of chemical weapons in various continents, my delegation reiterates its condemnation of all chemical weapons uses in the strongest possible terms. Those responsible for such heinous acts must be brought to justice. Impunity will only embolden perpetrators, leading to more provocations.

In this regard, my delegation would like to renew its support for the Decision Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use adopted at the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties last June. The attribution mechanism at the OPCW will serve to deter potential use of chemical weapons and contribute to the effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We welcome the adoption of the Programme and Budget for 2019 yesterday, which will include a reasonable increase of budget for the implementation of the June Decision. My delegation urges the Technical Secretariat to make its utmost efforts to

implement the Decision in a professional, efficient, and effective way and encourages all States Parties to provide valuable support to the OPCW.

Mr. Chairperson,

The chemical weapons issues in Syria remain an issue of concerns. My delegation notes with concern the recent report by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) that the Organization is still unable to resolve all of the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in Syria's initial declaration. We support the work of the FFM and the DAT and urge the Syrian Government to render its full cooperation to the relevant mechanisms to address the outstanding issues.

Mr. Chairperson,

Since 1997, universal adherence to the Convention has been, and continues to be, a top priority for all of us. Firmly believing that universality of the Convention will be a key element in international peace and security, my delegation urges the four remaining States not Party to the CWC to ratify or accede to it as soon as possible without any preconditions. Also, we encourage the Director-General of the OPCW and States Parties to the Convention to double their ongoing efforts for our common vision of universality.

Furthermore, my delegation wishes to underline the importance of the full implementation of Article VII of the Convention. We note with appreciation the annual report of the Director-General that there has been steady progress since the Third Review Conference with a growing number of States Parties adopting national implementing legislation. We should not be complacent, however. We are remote from the full implementation of Article VII with only 63 percent of the States Parties having legislation covering all the initial measures. My delegation encourages the Secretariat to continuously render its support for the States Parties endeavoring to

fulfill their obligations under Article VII. Such efforts will contribute to addressing the threat from chemical weapons use by non-state actors.

Mr. Chairperson,

The organizational governance of the OPCW, especially the issue of the tenure policy, is another topic of our mutual interest during this Fourth Review Conference. As two external experts have rightly pointed out in their assessment report in June 2018 on the impact of the tenure policy of the OPCW, the current tenure policy is no longer as appropriate to the needs of the organization as it may once have been. My delegation is of the view that the Organization should give serious consideration to the recommendations of the report and that the Director-General should be equipped with more flexibility for increased operational effectiveness. My delegation also hopes that the OPCW will be able to remain a global repository of the Chemical weapons-related knowledge and expertise, without compromising the geographical balance of the Organization.

Mr. Chairperson,

Since the entry into force of the Convention, the Republic of Korea has been faithfully committed to its implementation. In particular, Korea has supported the work of the OPCW in the fields of chemical safety and security by hosting an annual Workshop on the Peaceful Development and Use of Chemistry in the Asia region. The Seventh Seoul Workshop, which was held three weeks ago, provided 27 attendees from 15 OPCW States Parties with a rare opportunity to discuss a wide range of chemical safety and security management issues.

This year, the Republic of Korea also made financial contributions to the project to upgrade the current OPCW laboratory to a Center for Chemistry and Technology. The current OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store, which opened even before the entry into force of the Convention,

has successfully accomplished its missions. But, the OPCW must adapt itself to the advancement of science and technology as well as to newly emerging threats. My delegation is proud of being a first donor country in supporting this project, which is the shared priority for all of us. We hope other States Parties have ownership and join hands to provide political and financial support.

Mr. Chairperson,

We should take this rare opportunity, which comes only once every five years, to reaffirm our shared commitment to the global norm banning chemical weapons. Unfortunately, it is true that there remain many differences of opinion among States Parties as we have witnessed for the past two days. It is indeed an achievement for us to adopt a number of important decisions and recommendations yesterday, but it is unfortunate that we had to resort to 7 votes instead of consensus. We are here to achieve the same goal of a world free from chemical weapons. We sincerely hope that all States Parties will cooperate closer in a constructive manner during this Review Conference in addressing our common challenges ahead. My delegation remains deeply committed to successful outcomes from the Fourth Review Conference and looks forward to continuing to work closely with States Parties and the OPCW to this noble end.

In closing, I would like to request that this statement be included in the official document of the Fourth Review Conference and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. /END/