



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Opening Remarks of the Director-General

At the Sixty-Third Meeting of the Executive Council (EC-M-63)

25 February 2019

The Hague

REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

I would like to take this opportunity to update the Executive Council about the steps taken by the Secretariat in relation with the issue to be discussed today.

On 30 November 2018, the Secretariat received a series of five proposals submitted by the Russian Federation in accordance with Article XV of the Chemical Weapons Convention for a change to the Annex on Chemicals of the Convention.

Article XV of the Convention sets clear timelines for such proposals, notably, the Director General shall evaluate the proposal to determine all its possible consequences for the provisions of the Convention and its implementation not later than 60 days after its receipt. Secondly, the Executive Council shall examine the proposal in the light of all information available to it not later than 90 days after its receipt. Within the 60-days deadline, I issued a Note on 29 January containing the evaluation by the Technical Secretariat of the proposals submitted by the Russian Federation, as document EC-M-63/DG.1, quickly followed by two corrigendum. On 12 February, the Secretariat held a briefing on its evaluation of the proposals submitted by the Russian Federation.

Pursuant to Rule 34 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council, I issued a note contained in a document, dated 18 February 2019 and labelled EC-M-63/DG.2) on the financial, administrative, programme and budget implications of the follow-up activities related to the adoption of the proposal. According to the note, the Secretariat does not expect a significant increase of inspections, should the proposals by the Russian Federation be adopted. However, appropriate capacity building and training would be required. Moreover, relevant scientific and

technical information would be incorporated into OPCW support programmes. It is the Secretariat's assessment that any additional requirement could be met within existing resources.

Pursuant to para 5(c) and (d) of Article XV, the Council is expected to recommend today, to all States Parties that the proposals, as contained in the draft decision before us put forward by the Russian Federation, be either adopted or rejected.

Before we proceed further, I would like to recall that on 16 October 2018, I received a joint proposal from Canada, the Netherlands and the United States of America to introduce two additional families to the schedules of chemicals. The Council met on 14 January and adopted a recommendation to add these families to the schedules.

Madam Chair,

At this juncture, it is perhaps useful for us to pause and reflect on these developments. As you are all aware, the Convention was signed in 1993 and entered into force in 1997. With the proposals put forward by the joint proponents – namely Canada, the Netherlands and the United States – and the Russian Federation, this is the first time since the Convention's entry into force that a request is made to open the Schedules.

This is not an insignificant development and needs to be weighed against the realisation that the world we now live in is very different from the one we lived in some 25 years ago. Concerns around security related issues are on the rise, and the need to address them is to remain central if we want to guarantee our collective security.

The spirit of consensus that once prevailed and characterised the deliberations of this august audience has steadily eroded over the past years. In these challenging times, multilateralism remains the only way to deal with such issues, and international organisations provide a unique forum for States to discuss these issues.

It is in this very spirit of cooperation and dialogue that the OPCW was created 22 years ago, to implement our Convention and help rid the world of all chemical weapons. And this is exactly the question that was asked on 14 January, to which States Parties to the Convention brought, through consensus, a clear unequivocal answer.

The proposals put forward today have thoroughly, professionally and independently been analysed by the Secretariat. The Secretariat's assessment has clearly been presented, it is now up to the States Parties to decide upon these proposals.

The questions that are put forward to States Parties can be summarised as follows:

- Why open the Schedules now?
- Are States Parties correctly assessing the new threats?
- Do States Parties want to provide this organisation with all the means required to fight these new threats?

Answers to these questions may not come as straightforward and easy as one would hope, but it is necessary to formulate them if States Parties want to fulfil the mandate they have given to this organisation.

Finally, let me inform you that, should the members of the Council decide to recommend for adoption any of the proposals by the Russian Federation of relevance to the Joint Proposal, the Secretariat would be ready to assist the States Parties in consolidating the proposals. The aim of this exercise would be to render the proposals technically consistent with each other which would, in turn, facilitate their interpretation and implementation.

I have full confidence that States Parties, together, will show the same commitment to the Convention they have shown in the past. You can all count on the Secretariat for assisting you.

I thank you, Madam Chair.
