



**OPCW**

**Review Conference**

Fourth Session  
21 – 30 November 2018

RC-4/NAT.79  
22 November 2018  
ENGLISH and SPANISH only

**ARGENTINA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HÉCTOR HORACIO SALVADOR  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARGENTINA  
TO THE OPCW AT THE FOURTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE  
OF THE STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION  
OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Mr Chairperson,

We welcome you, Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez, representative of our sister Republic of El Salvador, at the head of this Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention; we are fully at your disposal.

We welcome the participation of the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, and we reiterate our confidence in his management of the Technical Secretariat, work that we hope will be enriched by the discussion held at this Review Conference. We also welcome the Vice-Presidents and the other authorities of the Conference.

As established, this body is meeting with the objective of examining the operation of the Convention, bearing in mind in particular the most significant scientific and technological advances. It is hoped that our work will serve as a guide and inspiration in years to come.

We are fully aware that there will be complex moments in which not all of the positions of the States coincide on important issues. We trust that this will not create an obstacle to adequately reflecting on the operation of this Organisation and, in particular, the prospects for its future and focussing on avoiding the re-emergence of the scourge that is chemical weapons, in addition to focussing on prevention and fostering broader cooperation.

Since the Third Review Conference in 2013, a great many positive steps have been taken by our Organisation. The twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention in 2017 provided us with an opportunity to reflect on and extract lessons learned from experience. At the same time, we once again clearly and strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances: we are determined to hold those responsible accountable under the law.



The progress made by the OPCW has been widely praised by the international community. The example of the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the Organisation is significant as recognition of the OPCW for its “extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons”.

In five years, progress has been made toward the universality of membership with five States (the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of Angola, and the State of Palestine) that have completed the process of acceding to the Convention. Without a doubt, the complete universality of the membership in the Organisation continues to be an uncompleted task. We continue to urge the four States that are not yet members to accede to the Convention and join this Organisation.

In fact, more than 96% of declared global chemical weapons stockpiles have been destroyed. We call for continuing with the efforts aimed at completing the destruction of declared chemical arsenals as soon as possible within the framework of the relevant decisions.

From our perspective, the OPCW plays a very significant and promising role in the international system, primarily as a capable Organisation that has achieved a high degree of success in the objectives that the Convention has set for it. On various occasions, it has been able to deal successfully with new situations, adjusting its mechanisms in order to confront the challenges of the times, with the support of the majority of the States Parties. Furthermore, the potential success of complete chemical disarmament, as set out in the Convention is promising and could set a highly valuable precedent for other disarmament initiatives.

We therefore highlight the initiatives taken by the OPCW and the work of the men and women who, often at their own personal risk in the field, have put their energy and skills at the service of the Organisation.

Things are like that; old challenges remain, and new ones appear. While we observe a decrease in the danger posed by declared stockpiles, we are seeing at the same time an increased threat of chemical terrorism. The OPCW also has a role to play within its mandate, which we will be one of the topics of our discussions.

We continue to be shocked by the recent events, to which we respond with our strongest possible condemnation; it has been determined that these events involved the use of chemical weapons or chemicals as weapons.

Per the initiative of a group of Member States, in late June 2018 we held a special session of the Conference of the States Parties with the aim of expressing our support for the general prohibition of the use of chemical weapons.

The special session of the Conference decided to assign the Organisation new authorities, specifically with regard to attributing responsibility for the use of chemical weapons or chemicals as weapons. Argentina believes that the entire mechanism for the attribution of responsibility for the use of chemical weapons should play an appropriate and decisive role both for the Conference and the Executive Council, bearing in mind the authorities that the Convention assigns to both of these bodies. This decision and its implementation have caused divisions among the membership. We believe that a clear understanding should prevail when ensuring the normal operation of the Organisation and the implementation of its decisions.

Argentina has in place a State policy on non-proliferation, which applies to chemical weapons, among others, and is based on two aspects: first, the right to the peaceful use of advanced technologies as part of the sovereign right to development; and second, non-proliferation, particularly concerning weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, chemical, or biological. We are actively collaborating with efforts in the international community to achieve a world free of this type of weapon, maintaining the principle of an absolute ban on the possession, acquisition, transfer, or use thereof, both by States and non-State actors.

My country values being one of the first signatories to the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997, and having been part of its predecessor, the Mendoza Agreement, with other South American countries.

As an expression of high political tenor as part of the twentieth anniversary of the Organisation, our President, D. Mauricio Macri visited the Headquarters of the OPCW on 28 March 2017, becoming the first from Argentina to do so.

For its part, the implementation of the Convention continues to progress successfully in Argentina thanks to the intense work of its National Authority, and the efforts and cooperation of the industrial sector and civil society associations involved in this field—especially educational institutions and universities.

As an example of the continuity of these efforts, regional courses were held annually, such as the advanced protection and assistance course for Latin America and the Caribbean on responding to chemical emergencies, a course that was held for the seventh consecutive year in 2018. Other courses included laboratory security, chemical nanotechnology, a training-for-trainers workshop designed for university teachers as part of the national education project on the responsible and safe use of chemical sciences and technologies, and a regional workshop on chemistry for environmental security and protection.

The above is a true testament to our complete and continued support for this Organisation and its objectives.

A lot of work has been done to prepare for this Review Conference. We welcome, in particular, the work done by the Ambassadors of South Africa and Canada as Vice-Chairpersons of the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities, and specifically the tireless work of the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Group for Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference, Ambassador I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja. I would like to make a few comments on the broad subjects that were addressed.

First and foremost, and in light of recent events concerning the regulatory bodies of this Organisation, we believe now is an excellent time to reiterate our conviction that as a State Party, we must continue to search tirelessly for a consensus in order to try to keep moving forward within our mandate.

We must also mention the Organisation's response to the use of chemical weapons that has been verified in recent years. The OPCW has developed an important range of mechanisms to investigate and verify the use of chemical weapons, and to respond to emergencies; these

include the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria, and the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM).

Furthermore, we have made progress with important agreements with the United Nations and other international bodies that have been decisive in this regard. We call for the continued strengthening of these tools, which are vital on the path to deter chemical weapons.

With regard to tools, the States Parties should ensure that the OPCW is able to appropriately develop verification activities—one of its central activities—as set out in the Convention. For this reason, it is imperative that its analytical capabilities are maintained and up-to-date in order to keep abreast of scientific advances. We believe the initiative to invest in the OPCW Laboratory and modernise it to convert it into a science and technology centre was correct. Continued support from the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) will also be crucial.

Likewise, the Organisation should continue to have at its disposal adequate tools for developing industrial verification in the most efficient way possible, while continuing with its monitoring functions, as it is currently being done, in a balanced manner.

The credibility of the OPCW in terms of technical capabilities is one of the most important assets that it has been able to build. Fostering this acquis should be an element that brings everyone together.

We are convinced that the method used to impede the re-emergence of chemical weapons requires a holistic approach. From this perspective, cooperation in a broad sense plays an essential role.

It is important to strengthen the capabilities of the States Parties in order to prevent the re-emergence of this scourge, safeguard their chemical facilities, and impede the transfer of chemical weapons within their territories, among other things. In this regard, we do not see any substitute for the work of the Technical Secretariat to develop courses, training officials, and encouraging best practices.

As a complement to the efforts made by the States Parties, we believe it is necessary to prioritise the training programmes that the OPCW is developing in distinct areas.

We must recognise the reality that a larger number of Member States still do not have the resources necessary in terms of legislation and administrative provisions for the full implementation of the Convention within their national jurisdictions. We believe that the training provided by the Secretariat, as well as any other mechanisms that collaborate with these States in order to help them implement the Convention, should remain a priority.

Another important aspect in the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons is the work being carried out by the Advisory Board for Education and Outreach. Its recommendations, proposals, and the joint work of the States Parties continue to grow more relevant as we face the future. We call for a greater exchange among all parties and the ABEO toward enriching proposals. The Hague Ethical Guidelines should continue to inspire scientific communities in the responsible use of chemistry.

The staff of the OPCW are the most valuable element of the Organisation. Various analyses have led to reforming personnel matters, such as the term of service policy. We take on this issue with an open spirit and with full confidence in the proposals of the Director-General.

We see that there remains much to do in terms of geographical distribution within the composition of the Technical Secretariat. For this reason, we urge the Technical Secretariat to continue implementing active policies to hire personnel in such a way so as to obtain results conducive to correcting this situation.

We also believe it is of the utmost importance to take decisive steps toward gender parity within the composition of the Secretariat. This question stands on its own merit. We do not see any solid reasons—save for our own failure as an Organisation—that would justify the fact that there is still no gender parity in the composition of the Technical Secretariat across all of its levels.

The OPCW is the whole of all of its parts. For this reason, it is necessary that all States Parties strictly comply with all of the obligations of the Chemical Weapons Convention and respect the implementation of the decisions of the Organisation, while we rebuild a path of constructive dialogue and basic consensus. In this spirit, we expect that this Fourth Conference Review will come to a successful close.

Thank you.

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