

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Shujjat Ali Rathore,
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OPCW
at the 92nd Session of the OPCW Executive Council
(8-11 October 2019)**

Mr. Chairman

We welcome you back at the helm of the 92nd Session of of the Executive Council and assure you of Pakistan's full cooperation and support in your work.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the States Parties belonging to the Non-Aligned Movement and China.

I thank the Director General for his opening statement. His report on various activities of the Secretariat is, as usual, comprehensive and provides much food for thought.

Mr. Chairman

The agenda for our meeting reflects both our achievements and our dilemmas. The Chemical Weapons Convention stands out as a unique international treaty. Comprehensive, non-discriminatory and supported by verification, the Convention has contributed to enhancing our collective security. It is indeed a great achievement that today, 97 percent of all the declared stockpiles of chemical weapons have been verifiably destroyed.

In its latest Report of September 2019, the United States has mentioned that it "continues to act on opportunities to accelerate the completion of chemical weapons destruction" and "it is working to complete destruction before the scheduled timeline". We welcome this statement and encourage the US to stay on course.

But as we approach the fulfillment of a key goal of the Convention, namely, the total verified elimination of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons, we do so in less than ideal circumstances.

Chemical weapons have been used. This is a matter of grave concern. The response, instead of reflecting the desired unity, has been divisive. We need to restore the vitality of the policy functions of the OPCW. We need to reinvigorate the agenda.

One of the several ways of ensuring effective implementation and forestalling the possibility of the use of chemical weapons is to have complete universality of the Convention. We would like to thank the Director General for his recent Report on implementation of the Action Plan for Universality of the Convention and appreciate efforts of the Secretariat to bring the remaining states into the fold of the Convention. We hope that these efforts will continue with zeal so that we achieve another of the Convention's goal of complete universality as soon as possible.

The recent report of the Director General on Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme underscores the Secretariat's on-going engagement with the Syrian authorities. We appreciate continuing efforts of the Secretariat as well as cooperation of the Syrian side. We also support the framework of the Structured Dialogue and hope that it would help in the resolution of all matters considered outstanding. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have been destroyed. The remaining issues that continue to bedevil the deliberations in the organization now need to be brought to early and satisfactory closure. This requires the cooperation of all concerned and it can only happen if extraneous political goals are set aside.

Mr. Chairman

We have examined the Draft Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2020 as well as the proposal for transition from an annual programme and budget cycle to a biennial one. Pakistan, in principle supports this fundamental transition as it will allow the Technical Secretariat to exercise flexibility with regards to running its various programmes and verification exercises around the world. It will also help them to have a better long-term view with regard to its organizational effectiveness. My delegation also commends the Technical Secretariat that the 2020 draft Accounts and Budget Programme remained at zero nominal growth as of previous year at Euro 67.12 million.

However, given recent history, we can be reasonably certain about the inadvisability of the omnibus budget approach. We feel that in order to have a clear consensus, it will be advantageous to separate the decisions covering the cyber security special fund and the special fund for IT infrastructure to support the controversial IIT. Similarly, for the establishment of a Major Capital Investment Fund, it should be established with the approval of the State Parties for clearly defined activities. Coupling it with the omnibus budget risks losing clarity over all the three decisions.

On the question of rehiring of inspectors, my delegation does not have an in-principle objection to its rationale. However, it is critical that such a decision is adopted under adequate assurances against possible lopsided and monopolistic tendencies. The principle of equitable geographical distribution needs demonstration in practice. This is vital to preserve the quality of the OPCW as an inclusive and truly multilateral body.

Mr. Chairman

Another important matter which is of interest to all States Parties is the Tenure Policy or the matter of Workforce Management. We understand that expertise, skills and knowledge are difficult to acquire and preserve. It is presumed that this preservation is a wider concept encompassing all that this organization has achieved and seeks to endure. Naturally, this is more than just about Tenure Policy. This is where we are all engaged in a search for keeping the OPCW relevant in the long term. Surely this cannot be achieved by focusing on a narrow spectrum of activities. For example, the Fourth Review Conference which was meant to set a course for this organization for next five years, came close to agreeing on a number of important aspects. We recognize that it was unable to reach consensus on a final outcome. Yet it is important to preserve the spirit and content of the understandings that had been reached after a long and demanding process.

In this regard, we would also like to appreciate your recent efforts as presented in your Draft proposal which suggests a way forward to work on issues where consensus is achievable. I believe it provides a good starting point for finding common ground. The NAM States Parties and China have suggested some amendments to your Draft. These should be taken in a positive spirit as they are meant to advance constructive work on all relevant matters. I am confident that if we continue our efforts with a positive and conciliatory mindset, we would be able to reach our objectives.

Undoubtedly, all provisions of the Convention are of importance and these include those related to international cooperation and assistance. We emphasize that this Convention must continue to be implemented in a balanced manner with due regard to the economic and technological interests of all States Parties. This is a means to assure securing the long-term interests of the Convention itself. Diversity of the CWC's membership is its strength. The spirit of cooperation and consensus has been the single most important factor in our progress. It is important to preserve these qualities as we look to the future.

Mr. Chairman

As we commence another session of the Council, we do so under a shadow of recent anxieties. While the success of this organization and its immensely valuable work since its establishment has been laudable, we have also faced troubling developments that are creating further complications. I have mentioned the case of the draft Programme and Budget; which is one example. The genesis of these issues can be traced to decisions that defied the longstanding tradition of consensus. Essential elements of pragmatism and fairness become casualties in such instances. Disagreements, discord, politicization and polarization take their place. The common and long term interest and integrity of the Organisation suffers. So does its effectiveness. It is obvious that these complexities would continue to pose problems if instead of consensus, the tyranny of numbers becomes the norm. We know from experience, that disarmament never succeeds on that basis. The objectivity of the outcomes stemming from controversial mechanisms would remain subservient to the flaws which formed its basis. The acceptance or rejection of their findings would continue to depend upon subjective interpretations. We need to avoid the further sharpening of the divide.

What seems like an emerging agreement on addition of some new families of chemicals to Schedule 1 in the Annex on Chemicals in the Convention is therefore a most welcome development. It presents a valuable opportunity to build on the convergences and restore the avenues for constructive work. Mr. Chairman, my delegation will be guided by this spirit now and in the future.

I thank you..