



Remarks by the Director-General of the OPCW, Fernando Arias, at the welcome reception hosted by Director-General, Department of Arms Control, Mr. Fu Cong, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

As delivered on 2 September 2019, Beijing, China

Mr. Director-General of the Department for Arms Control,
Mr. Chairperson of the Executive Council,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,

I am visiting China for the first time in my current capacity.
It is a pleasure to be in this country again.

Since our arrival this morning, we have been cordially greeted and are touched by your generous hospitality. The warmth is evident this evening as well, in this wonderful setting. I wish to thank the Director-General of the Department of Arms Control for hosting us so graciously.

While the purpose of this visit is specific, I cannot miss the opportunity to acknowledge China's key role in efforts for achieving the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention. China's remarkable economic progress includes a major investment in its chemical industry, which has become the leading chemical sector in the world. Because of this, China hosts regular OPCW inspections and is therefore a valuable partner for the Organisation.

The OPCW also continues to benefit from China's participation in terms of hosting regional workshops and training, and its equipment support programmes, as well as China's research on different projects. These are valuable contributions to our work and to the goals of the Convention.

This is the fourth occasion upon which members of the Executive Council are visiting China. The previous visits were successful in realising their objectives, thanks to the professional arrangements undertaken by the hosts.

The visits, including this one, underline the serious commitment of China, Japan and the OPCW on the issue of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China (ACW). Witnessing the range of activities connected with this complex undertaking helps the Executive Council in its decision making and oversight functions. I wish to express my appreciation to the Governments of both China and Japan for their will to work together.

Over 53,500 of the approximately 76,300 items of declared ACW on the territory of China have been destroyed. These operations were carried out at the mobile destruction facilities in Nanjing, Shijiazhuang, and Wuhan, as well as at Haerbaling and Harbin, and after transferring huge numbers of items from surrounding locations.

We are aware at the same time of the estimates of the number of weapons buried at Haerbaling, which suggest a number in the range of over 330,000 items. These are yet to be recovered, as is the case with items at other locations.

The selection of sites for the Mobile Destruction Facilities in Taiyuan and Guangzhou is ongoing. Progress has been made in consultations between China and Japan towards preparing for destruction operations at these sites.

Japan, with assistance from China, continues to conduct on-site surveys and recovery and identification operations at various locations. Such exemplary cooperation reinforces our confidence in the validity of the goals of the Convention.

We are aware of the challenges of this long-term project. It will require continued dedication and political support. The conclusion of this campaign will mark yet another milestone in the promise that the Chemical Weapons Convention brought to the world.

One hundred and ninety-three countries have vested their hopes in the Convention by signing and ratifying it as an instrument of peace and security. At the present time, only four countries still need to join.

Ninety-seven percent of declared chemical weapons have already been verifiably destroyed. The total elimination of declared chemical weapons will be an unprecedented development. It is a shining example of the success of multilateralism.

Additionally, we are aware that our mission will never come to an end. Modern times mean not only progress but also new threats, because more harm can be done than before with less effort. We will need to continue to work to ensure that chemical weapons, in any form, will never re-emerge.

The Organisation must be well-equipped to deliver should a State Party so need. We must continue to further build and sustain the wealth of expertise and knowledge that is the most important asset of the OPCW. And we must ensure that the science of chemistry remains dedicated for peaceful purposes alone.

Mutual support is fundamental for our work at the OPCW. There is a steadfast commitment amongst States Parties to eliminate forever the threat of chemical weapons. Flexibility and compromise are necessary in order to forge ahead.

As we begin another mission, symbolised by this visit, we do so with hope and determination. I am confident that this visit will be pleasant and productive.

I thank you for your attention.
