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Presentation to the Conference of State Parties (CSP) 24

Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

The Hague, The Netherlands

November 25-29, 2019

Mr Chairman, Director-General, Distinguished Delegates, CWC Coalition Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I feel privileged to make a statement at the session of CSP-24.

On the 11th of this month, the “Remembrance Day” was commemorated. 101 years have passed after the end of the First World War which incidentally, is also known as the Chemists' War. We have come a long way in these 101 years.

As we celebrate the 23rd year of the 1997 entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), there is a need to note many accomplishments and we should be grateful for a universal treaty regime, for almost complete abolition of declared chemical weapon stockpiles in eight possessor states, and perhaps most important, the establishment of a world free of deadly chemical agents, which were the major cause for the violence in the last century.

Since the early days of this Convention a lot has been done and much praise needs to be noted for the determined and dedicated work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its inspectorate. It has been acknowledged that 98% of the global population are covered by the Convention and that over 97% of the chemical weapons stockpiles declared by possessor states have been verifiably destroyed. We applaud the OPCW on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and will advocate that the Convention framework be used as a model for other major threats to nations.

Mr. Chairman,

Unfortunately, the threat from chemical weapons is yet to be over, the use of chemical weapons in the recent past in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia, and in the United Kingdom has caused concern. There is a continuous challenge posed by non-state actors misusing chemicals. There is an ever-present risk that the harmful chemical agents are still being used. In light of recent events, it is encouraging to note the push made by Canada, United States of America (USA) and the Netherlands, to add new toxic chemicals to Schedule 1 listed chemicals in the CWC, to ensure, the treaty remains robust and adaptive to current threats.

Achieving universalization and full compliance with the obligations of the CWC is in the interest of all States Parties. It is important to reach out to the four remaining countries – Egypt, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan – to join the Convention. Pressure needs to be maintained on the USA, as the US still has two stockpiles of CW left to be destroyed and the

deadline should not go beyond 2023. The CWC regime is the product of international cooperation and can only survive with greater partnership amongst States Parties.

Mr. Chairman,

It is commendable to note that the OPCW made efforts in engaging various non-governmental stakeholders and improved relations with private, public and civil actors giving importance to public outreach and civil society's involvement to play a constructive role towards fulfilling the CWC's mandate. The NGO community is pleased to work with all components of the OPCW to assure that the Convention is fully implemented in a transparent, science-based, and community-inclusive manner.

The United Services Institution of India, is one of the oldest, non-partisan, autonomous think-tanks dedicated to objective research and policy-relevant studies on aspects of national and international security through the generation and dissemination of knowledge on defence and disarmament-related issues. USI continues to stand tall on its mission to conduct policy research on chemical & biological weapons. USI's research is driven by a comprehensive agenda including issues related to Weapons of Mass Destruction. USI remains a long-standing supporter of the contribution made by our colleagues at the CWC Coalition.

Mr. Chairman,

It is expected, that the proposed new Centre for Chemistry and Technology, will solidify the joint commitment, in the name of the victims of chemical weapons around the globe and in the name of future generations for making the world truly free of chemical weapons. However, the role of the OPCW in countering CW terrorism, needs to be enhanced and well defined.

The CWC regime has accomplished much in the past two decades to eliminate chemical weapons and reinforce the decades-long norm against their use. It is anticipated that the OPCW is able to redefine its purpose owing to changing geopolitical realities and promote peaceful uses of chemistry.

I thank you, Mr Chairman – and thank you all for your kind attention and request for this statement to be made part of the final CSP record and posted on the OPCW website.