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BANGLADESH

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SHEIKH MOHAMMED BELAL
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC
OF BANGLADESH TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Chairperson,
Director-General, Deputy Director-General,
Members of international organisations, specialised agencies, and scientific community,
Members of civil society and NGOs,
Distinguished delegates,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by greeting Ambassador Krassimir Kostov as the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. We express our confidence in you and hope that under your able leadership the conduct of business of this session of the conference will come to a successful conclusion.

We would also like to congratulate the newly elected members of the bureau and other officials. We pledge our full support and cooperation to you and the members of your bureau in the discharge of your mandate.

My delegation would also like to register our deepest appreciation to the Chairperson of the Twenty-Third Session of the Conference of the States Parties, Ambassador Yun-young Lee of the Republic of Korea for all his dedicated efforts during the last session of the conference. As Ambassador Yun-young Lee will be leaving us soon, I take the privilege to wish him all the best in his new endeavour. You have been a blessing to this forum - wishing you the best, Excellency.

We wish to thank the Director-General for his informative and substantive report presented at this session. We would like to commend the Director-General and his team in the Technical Secretariat for their hard work and dedicated efforts in the implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Your innovative leadership is already making a difference and we hope it will eventually take us to the wonderland of “never again”.

The norm of “never again” is becoming ever more relevant as the opportunity cost of wasteful practices like chemical weapons is almost at an all-time high. The supply and demand curve for the developing countries, whilst drifting ever apart are jumping from one exigency to the other without fixing the former or preparing for the next.



Humanity's goal of achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seems more challenging today than what it was yesterday. With millions suffering in the painful pit of poverty, and more are joining than coming out, it is time for us to think more of them as we work together for a better world.

Talking about a better world, allow me to pause to congratulate Mr Cheng Tang of the People's Republic of China, Dr Robert Mikulak of the United States of America, and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) as joint recipients of the prestigious 2019 OPCW–The Hague Award in recognition of their contribution towards the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Bangladesh delegation aligns itself with the statement made at this session by the Acting Director of the Department for Political-Military Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan Mr Jafar Huseynzada, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China. My delegation would also like to express sincere appreciation to the immediate past chair Venezuela for their role from 2016 to 2019.

We would also like to register our gratitude, once again, to the Executive Council Chairperson Ambassador Andrea Perugini - I have something special for you. "O mangiar questa minestra o saltar questa finestra."

This is the Italian way of saying "Either eat this soup or jump out of this window". I know, as a former chair, there were multiple occasions when I really felt like jumping out of the window, but I resisted in the disguise of rushing to the airport as my wife had to live in the airport for the entire duration of my chairmanship. You may take note of it, God forbid.

Allow me also to thank, wholeheartedly, on behalf of my delegation, co-facilitators Ambassador I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja of Indonesia and Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador for their effort to have us revitalise the facilitation framework.

Bangladesh wholeheartedly welcomes the proposals to add new families of the chemicals to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention. We believe the proposed changes to the Schedule 1 will strengthen the Convention towards a more secure future for all of us.

On a fundamental issue like the Programme and Budget, Bangladesh is of the view that we ought to have consensus. Therefore, we would like to wholeheartedly support the functioning of this Organisation to meet the object and purpose of the Convention.

We, once again, would like to extend our full support to the ChemTech project. My delegation would like to warmly acknowledge the generous contribution of the host country the Netherlands and of a good many other States Parties for their generous contributions. We would also like to appeal to others for their generosity to a just cause.

Bangladesh is eagerly looking at 2023 for the Convention's entry into post-destruction phase. We wholeheartedly appreciate the Russian Federation's destruction of its all chemical weapons ahead of the schedule. In this regard, we also wish to acknowledge the helping hands of so many States Parties, who made it possible.

We also wish to acknowledge the progress in the destruction of the chemical weapons stockpile in the USA and development in the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) of Japan in China and hope for the sustained attention to meet the goal of the destruction of the stockpiles and the ACW well before the Convention enters into the post-destruction phase. Leading to the post-destruction phase, we would like to see more resources for the promotion of peaceful use of chemistry for the well-being of humanity.

Bangladesh considers the assistance and protection is of utmost importance. Therefore, we would like to appreciate the National Authorities of Bangladesh, Malaysia and Kenya for organising very successful national training programmes on chemical incident preparedness for hospitals (HosPrep) on 22-24 July 2019 in Dhaka, on 19-22 October 2019 in Putrajaya and on 19-22 November 2019 in Mombasa. We would like to express our gratitude to the Technical Secretariat for its extending support to Bangladesh, Malaysia and Kenya in this regard. For work like this, the OPCW is a cause for inspiration and celebration. Not a source of polarisation - as some critics would like us to believe.

We would like to commend the Director-General for his forceful leadership in bringing gender parity in the Organisation's top structure. As a practicing gender champion as well as being from a country known for her accomplishments in the field of women empowerment, we thank you, wholeheartedly, for doing it so fast.

However, my parting plea to the Director-General and to you all, is to institute a trust fund for interns and JPOs who will otherwise not afford to make it to this city of peace and justice. For a model organisation like the OPCW, living on morally untenable culture of "affordability", instead of "merit and excellence", is not what we wish to see. When gender and geography are not bound in the same speed and treatment, we shall remain handicapped and thereby limiting our ability to sprint to the goal of a chemical weapons free world.

Allow me to share some of my personal reflections as this Conference is the last one before I move away. Over the last five and a half years, I have had the privilege of serving to this cause of "never again". Mr Chairperson, allow me to quote from a statement you made on 19 July 2019 at the Ninety-First Session of Executive Council.

"120 years ago, upon initiative of Tsar Nicolas II of Russia, the First Hague Conference took place and adopted what became known as The Hague Convention of 1899. Largely based on the Lieber Code, which was signed and issued by President Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War, The Hague Convention of 1899 and the subsequent one of 1907 are symbols of the need for restrictions on war and the desirability of avoiding it altogether. Bulgaria was among the participants in the Conference and the countries that ratified the documents that it adopted.

100 years later Bulgaria was the fifth country to join the Chemical Weapons Convention. This is the reason why we are so passionate in defending the common achievements in the fight to eradicate chemical weapons and to uphold the regime of the Convention. This is the reason why today the one and only issue that is of utmost importance for us is the question of compliance with the provisions of the Convention."

Talking of "compliance", allow me to draw your attention to our neighbour Myanmar. On 7 August 2015, when Myanmar joined the Convention as the 191st State Party, we, in Bangladesh, were happier to see Myanmar in the umbrella of Convention and thereby

bringing the Convention closer to universal adherence. However, today—after listening to United States statement made in this august forum yesterday—we are saddened to our core. The United States certified yesterday that Myanmar is in non-compliance of the Convention due to its failure to declare its past chemical weapons programme and destroy its production facility. We are deeply concerned about the Myanmar's non-compliance of the Convention. We urge Myanmar to comply its Convention obligations in the entirety.

After living in this city of peace and justice for so long, I have a feeling that humanity's realisation that “No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings” is more relevant here than anywhere else.

Let us work, the best we can, using our spirit of inner disarmament and consensus, to keep this city of peace and justice to live up to the expectation of the humanity. We must continue along the chosen path of the Convention and maintain this spirit of consensus to move together towards a safer world.

I ask that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Twenty-Fourth session of the Conference of the States Parties. Thank you.

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