

Statement by Mr Alexander Ghionis of The Harvard Sussex Program
to the
24th Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention
The Hague, The Netherlands 25-29 November 2019

Mr Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,

One year has passed since the Fourth Review Conference failed to reach a consensus outcome for a final report. Yet, the Organisation has continued in its work “to achieve the object and purpose of this Convention, to ensure the implementation of its provisions, and to provide for a forum for consultation and cooperation among States Parties.”

As we look at the opportunities and challenges facing the Organisation, it is pertinent to recall the words of the Preamble of the Convention: “determined for the sake of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons.” These words remind us that the implementation of this Convention must have one eye on the present, and one eye on the future.

Mr Chairperson,

The Harvard Sussex Program has long supported the regime against the use of chemical weapons. It has been an active civil society member in this Convention’s negotiation, during its foundational phase, and remains an active and strong civil society supporter in the ongoing work of this Organisation. Accordingly, we see three areas particularly deserving of continued attention.

Reaffirm core understandings and boundaries

The first concerns reaffirming core understandings and boundaries.

States Parties need to once again declare, with one voice, their absolute condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances. Such a declaration should reaffirm understandings about the boundaries between what is permitted under this Convention, and what is prohibited.

I speak about what some refer to as the “General Purpose Criterion” which is the understanding contained in **both** Article 2 and in Article 6 that all toxic chemicals **are**

chemical weapons if they are intended for purposes that are not permitted by this Convention, or are held in types and quantities that are not compatible with permitted purposes. Declaring absolute condemnation and reaffirming understandings of boundaries is a unifying action and will send a compelling message to anyone contemplating use, that their actions will not be accepted or tolerated. However, the time for declarations alone has passed.

Creating an inhospitable environment for those contemplating use also requires unwavering commitment towards investigating all credible allegations of use and towards identifying the sponsors, organisers, and perpetrators of use. We recognise that this issue has created a divergence of views amongst States Parties. We urge you to come together around the words of the preamble quoted previously: “determined for the sake of all mankind, to exclude **completely** the possibility of the use of chemical weapons.”

A quantitative and qualitative focus on implementation

The second area requiring continued attention is the comprehensive implementation of all obligations of the Convention.

The Convention requires all States Parties to have a fully functioning National Authority and for comprehensive measures, including penal legislation, to be in place. Unfortunately, this is currently not the case. Efforts supporting comprehensive national implementation should be a continued focus of work.

We support the efforts of the Technical Secretariat and States Parties to broaden and deepen national implementation, including by

- developing mutual legal assistance;
- enhancing chemical safety and security;
- and forging relationships with a wide variety of stakeholders who use and work with toxic chemicals.

Since the last Conference of States Parties there have also been two proposals for a technical change to Schedule 1.

One member of the families of chemicals included in both proposals was used in the United Kingdom. This resulted in the death of one individual, hospitalisation for others; as well as community trauma.

Recalling the view expressed during the negotiations that the Schedules of chemicals should be dynamic, we celebrate the adoption by consensus the proposed technical change.

Enhancing institutional flexibility

The third and final area where we see the need for continued effort is governance of the Organisation, in particular its Technical Secretariat.

Events of the last seven years, including the downsizing of destruction-related activities, have demonstrated how concepts such as knowledge management, resilience, and adaptability have become important focus areas for this Organisation. Efforts to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons have also demonstrated that the traditional Article-by Article approach to implementation can be complimented by taking a cross-divisional approach to the Secretariat's work.

Adapting organisational governance structures is a complex task. The package of issues that States Parties have had facilitated discussions on this year demonstrates the importance of these concepts. The issues of tenure and of diversity, for example, are too important to defer to a later date. We fully support, and stand ready to support further, the efforts that States Parties are making to engage in issues of governance and administration.

Mr Chairperson, distinguished delegates,

The Harvard Sussex Program has been, and remains, a long-standing supporter of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We recognise that many challenges are ahead: we stand ready to assist you in your efforts to successfully implement the Convention.

We wish you a productive Conference and thank you for your attention.

I request that this statement be made part of the official on-line OPCW CSP-24 proceedings of the OPCW.