

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Shujjat Ali Rathore,
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OPCW
at the 95th Session of the OPCW Executive Council
(6-9 October 2020)**

Mr. Chairman

We welcome you once again at the helm of the 95th session of the Executive Council and give you the assurance that Pakistan's delegation would extend its full cooperation and support in your work during this session which we are confident will conclude successfully under your able guidance

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

Mr. Chairman

This is the second session of the Executive Council that is taking place under unusual circumstances. We hope that we come out of the throes of the resurgent pandemic and return to normal soon. The Secretariat deserves praise for making another session of the Executive Council possible despite the challenging conditions.

Although we continue our progress towards achieving one of the fundamental goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention, reports of instances of their use in recent times give cause for serious reflection. The threat of re-emergence of these weapons appears not-so-unimaginable despite decades of hard work to reach a milestone of 98% destruction of the declared global stockpiles of chemical weapons.

Needless to mention that continuation of reports alleging the use of chemical weapons remains a matter of particular gravity when our efforts should remain focused on strengthening the Convention through restoring consensus, improving national implementation, promoting international cooperation, avoiding unnecessary divisions and achieving universality.

Mr. Chairman

We take note of the Director General's recent reports on Syria. In its last session the Executive Council adopted a decision titled "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic." Although it is unfortunate that the mechanics of the procedures in the policy making organs continue to be misused to favour numerical strength, we believe ultimately there would be no winners or losers in these political games. Every decision taken by setting aside time-tested norms of engagement and disregarding consensus affect the credibility of the OPCW and the longevity, durability and sustainability of the Convention. If this practice continues, it would tear at the heart of this organization and weaken the sinews that bind us together. We encourage the structured dialogue between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic and hope that all outstanding matters would be resolved soon through the standard mechanisms that are non-controversial in nature.

Our position is based on the commitment to keep the Convention strong. We have been critical of the controversial attribution mechanism because it is an innovation inconsistent with the CWC. On the other hand, we fully recognize that the Convention is a living document and that the norms that it creates cannot be artificially confined to arbitrary categories.

One of the important items in our Agenda relates to the Central Nervous

System Acting chemicals. Pakistan believes that when necessity demands, in the interest of our collective security, as well as of our future generations, certain initiatives must be taken. We have an obligation to take them into serious consideration so long as they fall within the legal parameters of the Convention. To us the proposal on CNSAC is a refinement of norms which is consistent with the overall spirit of the Convention. It may be recalled that in 2008, during the Review Conference, in the context of the Swiss initiative on Riot Control and Incapacitating Agents, Pakistan stated that it was particularly concerned about the question of what have on different occasions been called either non-lethal agents or incapacitating agents. Irrespective of the terminology used, it was important to bear in mind that the influence of advanced military technologies had often led to a search for exploiting real or perceived loopholes in legal instruments in order to circumvent their prohibitions. It would be unfortunate if the CWC were to be subjected to similar treatment.

It is a happy coincidence that after long-standing opposition, many have come around to the need to take actions on this important subject. We continue to empathize with its justifications. However, it is equally important to proceed with consensus.

Last year we all came together in a great show of unity to add certain chemicals in Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals in the Convention. We certainly made further improvement in our collective security through this act. We believe that the issue of the CNS acting chemicals may be dealt with in the same manner - i.e. through consensus. If it entails more debate among us, we must do it; if it entails giving up our apparently doctrinaire positions, we must abandon them in the interest of a genuine compromise which is beneficial to all. Our support therefore, is contingent upon forging a consensus.

Another important issue on the Agenda relates to ABAF. It has existed since OPCW's establishment and performed admirably over the years. The sponsors of the draft decision on ABAF Rules and Procedures have yet to clarify the pressing necessity of making radical changes that might preclude many especially from developing countries from participation in it, as well as create a needless layer of decision making for the EC whose jurisdiction is well defined. We believe that further discussions may be held to forge consensus on the matter and all States parties must be on the same page before its adoption.

The equal importance of all the provisions of the CWC cannot be overstated. Therefore, it is essential to hold the provisions that deal with international cooperation and assistance activities as dear as any other. These provisions have formed the basis of our unity. We will continue to stress that the Convention is implemented in the manner that promotes the economic and technological interests of all States Parties and we believe that investment in this field will strengthen the interests of a large number of States Parties in the Convention in future. In the same spirit, Pakistan was one of the countries which supported the initiative for upgrading the OPCW Lab to Centre for Chemistry and Technology, as well as contributed to its establishment.

Mr. Chairman

This organization faces a dichotomy today. On the one end, exemplary history of the successes of this organization shines bright, while on the other the forces of polarization and politicization cast deep shadows. On many critical occasions in the past, the strength of wisdom and the spirit to forge a common destiny have guided us in the right direction. Do we really need to create divisions which might set us on the course of undoing the project that has stood tall as a great example to follow in the domain of disarmament? Pakistan hopes that we would be

wise; that we would not let certain narrow political aims hinder our progress; that we would revert to the traditions of consensus and continue to hold the Convention as a guide to achieving noble aims through true multilateralism, for our future generations.

I thank you.