



'Mujib Year's Diplomacy, Friendship & Prosperity'

**Statement by
H. E. Ambassador M Riaz Hamidullah
Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the OPCW
at the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to CWC**

The Hague, 30 November – 1 December 2020

*Chairperson of the Conference, Ambassador José Antonio Trejo
Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias
Deputy Director-General, Ambassador Odette Melono
Members of international organizations, specialized agencies, and scientific community
Members of civil society and NGOs,
Excellencies,*

Let me welcome Your Excellency Ambassador Trejo on your assumption as the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. My delegation is fully confident of your acumen and capabilities in steering the business of this session towards a successful conclusion.

We would also like to congratulate the newly elected members of the Bureau and other officials. We affirm our support and cooperation to you, Mr Chairperson, as also the members of the Bureau in discharging your mandated responsibilities.

Allow me to register our appreciation to the Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, Ambassador Kostov of Bulgaria, for his dedicated efforts during the last session of the Conference.

We would wish to thank the Director-General for his informative and substantive report presented at this session. The Director-General and the Technical Secretariat has been steadfastly engaged in ensuring full and effective implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr Chairperson,

Bangladesh delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ambassador Fikrat Akhundov, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Convention and China.

This session is taking place at a time when we are faced with an unprecedented global challenge in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic's effect on international community, particularly on our economies and societies, is universal and colossal. Bangladesh, therefore, calls for deepened multilateral cooperation to contain the pandemic and recover from its fallouts, especially by sharing scientific knowledge, technology, innovation, information and best practices.

Mr Chairperson,

As my delegation iterated earlier, it is our collective endeavour to make sure that no one shall ever be a victim of chemical weapons. Humanity cannot afford to see heart-piercing images

of suffering and death from chemical weapons. This Conference offers us an opportunity to renew our commitment and redouble our efforts to secure a future without chemical weapons and our combined resolve to hold accountable any who dares to challenge our aspiration. The global resolve against chemical weapons is not only a legal instrument, but also a categorical moral and ethical pronouncement to uphold the human dignity.

As an original signatory to the Convention, Bangladesh always identifies itself with the aims of the OPCW to achieve a world permanently free of chemical weapons and to contribute to international security and stability, general and complete disarmament and global economic development. Bangladesh finds the Convention a model disarmament treaty. In 2020, as we celebrate the birth centennial of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, true to his mantra “*friendship to all, malice to none*”, Bangladesh wishes to see an unflinching response mechanism to address the use of chemical weapons as well as to the threat of chemical terrorism indulging in zero-tolerance to the perpetrators.

We believe, a culture of consensus and spirit of cooperation among the States Parties is crucial in our quest for non-proliferation and prevention of the use or, re-emergence of chemical weapons, anywhere. We, therefore, urge all actors to uphold all provisions of the Convention, under all circumstances.

Bangladesh believes that full universality of the Convention as well as full and effective implementation of all provisions of the Convention will significantly enhance international peace and security and technological and economic development of all States Parties. We hope that the remaining States that are yet to be Party to the Convention will join the OPCW at an early date.

Mr. Chairperson,

The ever-changing security environment and advancement in science – technology – innovation, especially the convergence of chemistry and biology, certainly add new challenges to the States Parties, particularly the low-income developing countries like Bangladesh. The Convention must guard the interests and circumstances of such countries *vis-à-vis* chemical weapons.

Bangladesh continues to fulfil its obligations under Article VII of the Convention relating to national implementation measures. We deeply appreciate the active encouragement and support of the Technical Secretariat in this regard. The Technical Secretariat, with its institutional experience and expertise and with the support of developed States Parties, needs to assist the States Parties from the developing world to fully implement their national obligations and to deal with any threat of chemical terrorism through tailor-made capacity-building programmes. The Secretariat should also promote chemical safety and security against the hostile use of toxic chemicals or preventing chemical accidents through appropriate training programmes, support for enhancing laboratory capabilities, chemical-knowledge promotion and exchange programmes, etc. Promoting peaceful use of chemicals has to be a corner stone of OPCW.

Bangladesh fully supports and values the Centre for Chemistry and Technology project. This Centre promises to significantly enhance the capacity of OPCW in response to the current threats and scientific and technological developments as also support capacity building in the States Parties. We warmly welcome the generous contribution of the host country, The Netherlands, and of a good many other States Parties. We would like to appeal to others for their generous contribution in preparing OPCW for a better tomorrow.

We believe, it is paramount for OPCW to further strengthen partnerships with the relevant regional and international organisations as well as the chemical industry associations, scientific community, academia and CSOs to raise our collective voice against chemical weapons and endeavour for our shared goal of a world free of chemical weapons. We would like to see

OPCW's umpteen attempts for innovation, particularly in education – outreach - research - scientific collaborations for a broader partnership for peace.

I am happy to inform this Conference that the Bangladesh National Authority, in association with the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, has taken an initiative to introduce a one-credit course on 'Chemical Weapons Convention and Basics of Chemical Hazard and Safety' for undergraduate and post-graduate students of Chemistry, Chemical Engineering and allied fields in our universities. This module, once introduced, will surely make our graduates industry-ready within our overall chemical management architecture.

Mr. Chairperson,

Bangladesh applauds the Scientific Advisory Board for its significant work and contributions in advancing science and technology for peaceful use of chemistry. This is indeed a continuing process.

We appreciate their recommendations on the CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes. While we concur that the CNS-acting chemicals must not be used for law enforcement purposes, we believe that the prohibition of aerosolized use of CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes in no way should hinder the beneficial or developmental use of CNS-acting chemicals, for instance, in medical, pharmaceutical or agricultural sectors. Our collective focus should rather be science and technology oriented peaceful use of chemicals. In that direction, all of us should strive to forge consensus on issues like responsible use of CNS-acting chemicals.

Mr Chairperson,

Bangladesh looks at 2023 for the Convention's entry into the post-destruction phase. We acknowledge the progress made in the destruction of the chemical weapons stockpile in the United States and the developments in the destruction of the abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) of Japan in China. We hope for the sustained attention to meet the goal of destructing the stockpiles and the ACWs well before the Convention enters into the post-destruction phase.

Time is also opportune for us to redeem our universal pledge to attain SDGs within the ambit of OPCW. Today, chemicals touch every aspect of development and our living. Their sound management supports attainment of several SDGs, particularly SDG 12 (*on sustainable consumption and production*). Indeed, chemicals cannot be ignored as we talk about SDG 3 (*good health and well-being*); SDG 6 (*clean water and sanitation*); SDG 7 (*affordable and clean energy*); SDG 9 (*industry, innovation and infrastructure*); SDG 11 (*sustainable cities and communities*); SDG 14 (*life below water*); and SDG 15 (*life on land*). Proactive, planned and balanced development and use of chemicals is crucial to realise SDG 1 (*end poverty in all its forms everywhere*) and SDG 2 (*zero hunger*) as well.

If we are to conclusively achieve the SDGs by 2030, effective and robust national coordination has to be matched by meaningful international cooperation. Bangladesh would thus urge for robust international cooperation in ensuring peaceful use of chemistry for well-being of our peoples, indeed in the context of attaining SDGs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has hardly spared any entity, let alone OPCW, particularly in respect of implementation of its Programme and Budget for 2020 and also its design for 2021. We believe, a technical organisation like OPCW needs to be resourced robustly. It requires due flexibility and functional autonomy to continue its good work towards a safer, responsible use of chemicals, and check any possible use of chemical weapons.

On the Programme and Budget, particularly at the time of COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh would call for understanding and flexibility from all States Parties to adopt it on consensual basis.

Mr. Chairperson,

Bangladesh would underpin the importance of gender balance and geographical diversity in staffing in the Technical Secretariat. It is crucial to reflect true international character of OPCW. We commend the Director-General for his leadership in making progress in this regard, particularly ensuring gender parity at the Organisation's top structure.

In that regard, Bangladesh appreciates the sincere efforts made by Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus of Australia and Ambassador Laura Dupuy Laserre of Uruguay as the facilitators on organisational governance issues. We join all others to see tangible outcome out of their efforts, particularly on tenure policy and knowledge management, geographical diversity, internship and Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programmes. We believe, undertaking pragmatic programmes like scholarships for interns and junior professional officers from developing countries will surely foster geographical diversity in the Organisation. Eventually, this would contribute to the promotion of peaceful use of chemistry in those countries.

Mr. Chairperson,

As I conclude, let us remind ourselves of the fact that the Convention is faced with challenges. Until and unless we the States Parties could address these challenges by working together, our shared goal of "never again" would be far from reality. Bangladesh is committed to deliver on her bit in accomplishing it as we are firm in our conviction to secure a chemical weapons free world for our posterity, everywhere.

I would request that this statement be circulated as an official series document of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

I thank you.
