

Ms. Irene Kornelly
Chair, Colorado Citizens' Advisory Commission
Pueblo, Colorado, U.S.A.

Statement to the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
The Hague, The Netherlands

Mr Chairman, Mr Director General, Distinguished Delegates and Guests,

I am honored to provide you with this update on activities in Pueblo, Colorado concerning the destruction of the chemical weapons currently being destroyed at the Pueblo Chemical Depot.

The chemical weapons demilitarization program in Pueblo has achieved several milestones in the past year. First, all 4.2 mortars have been reconfigured and are now ready for destruction in the Static Detonation Chambers (SDCs). Second and the most important, all 155mm projectiles have been destroyed in the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP). 295,677 munitions in Pueblo have been destroyed and 67.7% of all agent has been destroyed. This has all been done without injury to the workers, the community and the environment. Lastly, full permitting for the PCAPP facility has been approved by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE).

Alternative technologies are being deployed at the Depot to ensure that the United States meets the 2023 deadline for destruction of all chemical weapons at the Depot. The PCAPP facility is designed to destroy mustard-filled chemical weapons by means of water neutralization and biotreatment for the hydrolysate. The Explosive Destruction System was used early in the destruction timeline to destroy leaking and rejected munitions already stored at the Depot. The three Static Detonation Chambers (SDC) will be used to destroy leakers and rejects from the main facility and all of the 4.2 mortars stored at the site. Construction of the SDCs is complete and systemization has begun. Full operations of the SDCs is anticipated in late 2021.

Mr. Chairman,

Under the auspices of the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives Program and the United States Department of Defense, the PCAPP facility and the SDCs, are carrying out to the greatest extent possible, the principles of citizen, worker, and stakeholder involvement, and environmental safety and transparency. These principles have brought about a community that is now comfortable with the neutralization-biotreatment facility and has helped the alternative technologies gain acceptance. Fear, anger, and distrust of the processes have been replaced with trust, understanding and knowledge. These principles are often difficult to maintain over the long period of time of the program, so constant vigilance is necessary. There are no easy answers to the many issues that have been discussed and that will arise in the future. The answers lie within the community discussions that are on-going and the trust that has been built over the years.

Safety is another cornerstone of the program and is most important to the community and the Department of Defense. Vigilance must be kept throughout operations to protect workers and communities from workplace accidents and environmental harm. These

factors must not be compromised in the interest of rapid destruction of the stockpile.

Mr. Chairman,

These accomplishments have been done while meeting the challenges of COVID 19. The personnel at PCAPP have followed the requirements mandated by the U.S. Center for Disease Control. Meetings have been conducted via teleconferencing and as many individuals as possible have worked at home. Enhanced cleaning of work areas has been instituted and barriers and partitions have been constructed to make for a safer work site. The results are that only a few workers have tested positive for the virus and no one has required hospitalization.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to provide you with a glimpse into the chemical weapons destruction program in Pueblo. I request that this statement be a part of the record of the 25th Conference of States Parties.