

**Statement of Mr Alexander Ghionis  
The Harvard Sussex Program**

**Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties  
to the Chemical Weapons Convention  
The Hague, The Netherlands**

**Mr Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

The Twenty-Fifth Conference of the States Parties is a milestone in the life of this Organisation, and it reveals the progress made in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Yet, this Conference also faces significant challenges that require attention, energy, and resources, to overcome.

There is no endpoint to this Convention: each State Party must, as its Preamble makes clear, be “determined for the sake of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemicals weapons.”

**Mr Chairperson,**

From this Convention’s negotiation to the present day, The Harvard Sussex Program has been active in the work of the OPCW. Today, we see two areas particularly deserving of attention. The first concerns reaffirming core understandings and boundaries within this Convention. States Parties must declare, with one voice, their absolute condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances. This declaration is a unifying and compelling action.

However, the time for declarations alone has passed.

We stress that implementation of the ‘General Purpose Criterion’ is now, more than ever, vital. This 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. Creating an inhospitable environment for those contemplating the use of chemical weapons requires an unwavering commitment towards investigating all credible allegations, and to identifying sponsors, organisers, and perpetrators.

The establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team has, therefore, been an important step in strengthening the regime, and it demonstrates that the Convention is an active, and not just reactive, tool in strengthening and enforcing the norm.

**Mr Chairperson, this leads to a second area of focus.**

To ensure continuity of the Convention, change must be embraced by the Organisation. The governance of the OPCW, in particular its tenure policy, is an area deserving of attention, as it shapes capacity in efforts to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

Shifting from an Article-by-Article implementation approach to one that is cross-divisional and gap-driven, can amplify the delivery and impact of the Secretariat’s implementation support programmes.

**Mr Chairperson, distinguished delegates,**

Just as the Convention itself does, we believe States Parties must have one eye on the present and one eye on the future.

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