

Statement by the Head of the Chinese Delegation
During the General Debate of the Twenty-Fifth Session of
the Conference of States Parties of the OPCW
(The Hague, November 30, 2020)

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director-General, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Please allow me, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, to begin by congratulating the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the OPCW, Ambassador Zabalgoitia, for his election as the Chairman of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties of the OPCW. The Chinese delegation is ready to fully cooperate with you, and with other delegations, in a joint effort to make this session a success. I would like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor Ambassador Kostov, as well as the EC Chairman Ambassador Gomez, for the work which they have done.

China associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Azerbaijan on behalf of the NAM CWC States Parties and China. Now, please allow me to elaborate on China's positions on some issues further.

Mr. Chairman,

This year has been special. Covid-19 is still raging across the world. The global economy is in recession. Globalism has met with countercurrents. Unilateralism and hegemony have been on the rise. And some international regimes have been faced with increasing risks. As a result, the OPCW has been inevitably affected. The Chinese delegation would like to commend the DG, the TS and the States Parties for their endeavours to overcome the difficulties and carry on with the implementation of the Convention. At the same time, this delegation is highly concerned over the worsening politicization of certain aspects of the work of the OPCW and the current situation of the States Parties being deeply divided.

The CWC constitutes an essential cornerstone for the preservation of the global peace and security. The maintenance of the Convention's authority and effectiveness, the realization of its objects and purposes and the effort to bring the work of the OPCW back onto the right track are the shared responsibilities of all the States Parties, which serves the common interests of all sides. In this connection, China has the following propositions:

Firstly, the cause of meeting the goal of a “chemical weapon-free world” should be accelerated. The comprehensive prohibition and destruction of CWs of all the categories and the thorough elimination of the possibility of using CWs are some of the fundamental objects of the Convention, and should thus be consistently adhered to. China urges the US, the only remaining possessor state with a CW stockpile, to honour its obligation under the Convention by completing its destruction as early as possible, according to the relevant CSP decision on the CW destruction beyond the final deadline, and to the specified extended deadline.

The CWs abandoned by Japan in China still pose a real threat to the lives and properties of the Chinese people and to the environmental safety in the country. China calls on Japan to continue to increase its inputs and advance the destruction process further. As impacted by Covid-19, this year’s destruction operations have been deferred. China will maintain its communication with Japan and the TS, and seek to have the operations restored to normal as soon as possible.

Secondly, the technical nature of the OPCW should be truly preserved. The CWC contains the stipulations on a full, strict and specific regime of verification and its procedure, as well as the measures for ensuring the implementation of the Convention. While the TS is responsible for implementing the verification measures under the Convention, the Convention does not entrust the TS with any authority to attribute the responsibility for the use of CWs. The States Parties and the TS should both act stringently in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and its relevant annex, and work in earnest to safeguard its authority and effectiveness.

The Chinese delegation is concerned about the multiple incidents of the alleged use of CWs in recent years. China believes that the investigation of the incidents in question should return to the framework of the Convention as soon as possible, so as to ensure a truthful compliance with the procedure, reliable evidence and credible findings. On the issue of the Syrian CWs, China is strongly opposed to the circumvention of the mechanisms under the Convention and the establishment of the so-called “Investigation and Identification Team (IIT)” as a brand-new alternative. In fact, the credibility of the evidences accepted by the IIT is questionable, and the IIT’s working approach and methodology does not conform to the provisions on the investigation of the alleged use of CWs under the Convention. Instead of getting to the bottom of the truth, it has served to make the States Parties even more divided.

Regarding the recent incidents of the alleged use of CWs, China has noted with concern that some countries have jumped to the presumption of guilt, whereas the technical assistance requested by the State Party concerned according to the Convention has not been responded to timely. China appeals to all the parties concerned to cooperate with one another and demonstrate their sincerity for having dialogues and cooperation. China also hopes that the TS will play a constructive role in this regard.

Thirdly, efforts should be made to maintain the tradition of reaching consensus among the States Parties. The Policy-making Organs of the OPCW plays a key role in ensuring the implementation of the Convention, and is thus duty-bound with critical responsibilities. The making of decisions by the PMOs is the right way to preserve the unity of the States Parties and achieve the objects and purposes of the Convention in a comprehensive and effective manner. With respect to some major issues, the States Parties should hold in-depth and thorough discussions, seek to bridge disagreements through constructive dialogue and consultation, and work to forge consensus. On this basis, decisions should be made with caution.

In recent years, the OPCW has shown a growing tendency towards using voting to replace dialogue, and resorting to confrontation to supersede cooperation. That is a cause for China's profound concern. In an international organization, if crucial issues and personnel, financial and legal matters are all addressed through voting, the organization's authority is bound to be widely questioned, and the implementation of the relevant decisions will be very much compromised. China calls upon the States Parties concerned to revert to the right track of having dialogues and consultations with one another, so as to prevent any further damage caused to the authority of the OPCW.

Fourthly, international cooperation should be effectively reinforced, in order to enhance the economic and technological development of all the States Parties. The provisions on assistance and protection against CWs and international cooperation are critical pillars for the full and effective implementation of the Convention. China is in favour of increasing the budgetary inputs in assistance and protection against CWs and international cooperation, and enhancing the developing nations' capacity to implement the Convention, so as to ensure that the States Parties, especially the developing countries among them, will have a full access to enjoying the bonus of the peaceful use of chemistry. In this regard, discussions should be continued on establishing a "follow-up mechanism for Article XI of the Convention", and on such measures as the formulation of an "action plan", so as to ensure that Article XI is effectively implemented, and that the States not Parties would be more willing to accede to the Convention.

Mr. Chairman,

China has always fulfilled its obligation under the Convention in earnest, and steadfastly upheld the objects and purposes of the Convention. China has declared the most industrial facilities in the world. China's domestic implementation mechanism has kept improving. And China has been receiving all kinds of inspections in an efficient and stringent fashion. China stands firmly against the use of CWs by any country, any organization and any individual under any circumstance. As always, China has staunchly upheld fairness and justice, and promoted the investigation of the alleged use of CWs to be conducted on the basis of facts, and using the Convention as the yardstick, with a view to maintaining global peace and security. As the second largest contributor of the assessed contributions, China has made its important contribution to the comprehensive, balanced and effective implementation of the Convention the world all over. On the condition that the anti-COVID-19 measures permit, China will, through multiple vehicles such as hosting workshops and training courses and conducting bilateral exchanges, continue actively to assist other states in enhancing their implementation capacity, in an effort to contribute to the universality and effectiveness of the Convention. China will consistently support the DG and the TS in their continual performance of their responsibilities mandated by the Convention.

The Chinese delegation requests that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session and uploaded to the public website and external server of the OPCW.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.