



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Fifth Session
30 November – 1 December 2020 (Part I)

C-25/NAT.7
27 November 2020
CHINESE and ENGLISH only

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

**UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS TOWARDS THE COMPLETION OF
DESTRUCTION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS ABANDONED
BY JAPAN ON THE TERRITORY OF CHINA**

1. Response to COVID-19

Impacted by COVID-19, the Japanese operational personnel have not been able to travel to China. All on-site operations and related consultations have been forced to be suspended, including the abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) excavation, recovery, and destruction operations in Haerbaling; the destruction operation with the mobile facility in Harbin; and the excavation, recovery, identification, and investigation operations across China. Being faced with the new circumstances and problems posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, China has—on the basis of ensuring adequate coordination at home—maintained close communication with the competent Japanese authorities, worked hard to overcome the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the disposal of the Japanese ACWs, and actively explored an action plan for continuing the work in this regard under the new circumstances. These efforts have yielded positive results:

- (a) The two sides have set up a mechanism of video consultation, with constant improvements in its application. At present, two consultations on the operations in Haerbaling, and three consultations on the mobile destruction operations are held weekly. In the meantime, a consultation on other topics should be held at any time. In the first half of November, video consultations on excavation and recovery operations were also resumed. The work intensity and effectiveness have now approached, and even surpassed, their levels before the outbreak of COVID-19. Through intensive consultations, the two sides have reached agreement on the anti-pandemic measures to be put in place for the operations in Haerbaling. This has created the conditions for these operations to proceed timely next year. Progress has been made on the formulation of the destruction plans covering secure treatment, environment monitoring, medical support, and so on, for the high-mobility destructions. Meanwhile, the preliminary designs for the construction, the contractual constructors, and the budgets for the Guangzhou and Taiyuan mobile destruction facilities have been decided. These decisions have laid an important foundation for the high-mobility destruction operations to be conducted in 2021. The tasks and difficulties of conducting a detailed investigation into the burial ground of the Japanese ACW toxic agents in Weijin, Liaoyuan have now been sorted out. A solution thereby has been actively sought, so as to create favourable conditions to start the investigation as early as possible. An agreement, in principle, has now been



reached on the completion of the ACW identification and packaging operations in Qiqihar by the end of March 2021. As at the end of October 2020, more than a hundred consultations of all types had been held with the Japanese side on operational plans, COVID-19-related measures of prevention and control, project construction, and so forth.

- (b) An effort has been made to coordinate actively the resumption of the projects in Haerbaling. Starting from May 2020, as a result of bilateral consultations, and with full account taken of the COVID-19 situation in China, the project construction at the Haerbaling facility was resumed. For this purpose, China had conducted in advance a huge amount of research, and internal coordination and assistance. At the same time, a comprehensive and sound work plan for prevention and control was devised. At present, construction is overall progressing well. The projects related to the main body of the additional destruction facility, the consolidated renovation, the second phase of contaminant treatment, and the expansion of power capacity have been completed. However, due to the impact of COVID-19, the projects of the interior decoration and the construction of the auxiliary facilities will be finished by the end of September 2021. On the condition that the anti-pandemic measures will be well in place, China will continue to coordinate and monitor the completion of the destruction facility construction by the contractors, ensuring it is on time and meets the quality requirements.
- (c) The operations of transporting the Japanese ACWs during the year have been facilitated. For 2020, China and Japan had originally planned to carry out the operations of the integrated transportation of the Japanese ACWs from the six locations of Hangzhou, Nanjing, Anqing, Changsha, Yueyang, and Dangyang to Wuhan from 10 March to 11 April, and to transport the contaminants from Shijiazhuang to the Harbin and Haerbaling destruction facilities in May, but they were forced to be postponed due to COVID-19. With the pandemic situation being stabilised domestically, China has actively engaged with Japan in intensive consultations on the resumption of the two above-mentioned transportation operations. With joint efforts, and as requested by Japan, China worked single-handedly to transport the contaminants from Shijiazhuang to the Harbin and Haerbaling destruction facilities. The operations removed all 2,474 items of hazardous waste and contaminants stored in the Harbin destruction facility. The transportation route covered five provinces, including Hebei, Tianjin, Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang. The transportation operation took almost 40 days, with as many as 46 vehicles involved in the fleet. China actively coordinated the work of the competent authorities of all the provinces and municipalities involved along the transportation route, and mobilised all the participating entities into the careful planning, meticulous execution, and concerted efforts. China overcame all the negative impacts of the pandemic and successfully completed the transportation operation. The contaminants in question have been successfully transported to storehouses in the Harbin and Haerbaling destruction sites for bulk storage. China and Japan have now reached agreement on carrying out the operation of the integrated transportation of the Japanese ACWs from six locations in the vicinity of Wuhan from November to December this year. The transportation operation will be well organised and properly carried out to ensure its safe and smooth completion.

- (d) The newly discovered, suspected Japanese ACWs have been properly dealt with. Given the new situation arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Japanese personnel encountered difficulties travelling to China, and therefore China has worked out appropriate and feasible countermeasures for emergency and deferred treatments. Firstly, as a precautionary measure, China has stayed in close communication with the relevant authorities, for the purpose of discussing how to cope with the situation in case sudden incidents of Japanese ACWs would occur, while the Japanese side would be unable to come over to China in time for their handling. The discussions have also covered drafting contingency plans for various circumstances on the basis of their levels of urgency and hazard. Secondly, China has sent timely notifications to Japan with respect to new discovery of suspected Japanese ACWs, while coordinating internally to ensure their secure storage. Since the beginning of this year, suspected Japanese ACWs have been found successively in Mishan, Heilongjiang Province; Dali, Yunnan Province; Daqiao village of Dunhua, Jilin Province; and Sunwu county of Heihe city, Heilongjiang Province. By taking these two measures, China has put the safety of local residents above all, while minimising the impact with a proper response. China has requested Japan to send its personnel over to China for confirmation and investigation once the pandemic situation is stabilised.

2. Considerations for the next steps of work

- 2.1 Currently, China and Japan are staying in close contact through video consultations on next year's work plan. Once the pandemic situation permits, the tentative plan would be as follows:
- (a) resuming the excavation, recovery, and destruction operations in Haerbaling, the mobile destruction operation in Harbin, and the excavation and recovery operations at various locations;
 - (b) accelerating the high-mobility destructions of the Japanese ACWs in Guangzhou and Taiyuan, and seeking to start the destruction operations in 2021; and
 - (c) moving duly ahead with the detailed investigation operation regarding the toxic agent containers in Liaoyuan, the operation of the transportation of the Japanese ACWs, and the infrastructure construction at various destruction facilities.
- 2.2 In compliance with the relevant provisions of the Convention and of the relevant bilateral MOU between China and Japan, China will, as always, abide by and actively fulfil its responsibilities and obligations. China will duly review the pandemic prevention and control measures as a whole, while advancing the disposal of the Japanese ACWs. China will also provide appropriate assistance and actively contribute to the completion of the destruction of the Japanese ACWs.