

# **Japan's Efforts and Progress on the Destruction of Abandoned Chemical Weapons in China**

## **I Introduction**

1. Japan, as the Abandoning State Party (ASP), and China, as the Territorial State Party (TSP), have jointly committed their best efforts be used towards the completion of the destruction of declared abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) in China as early as possible, in accordance with the joint destruction plan. It is legally based on the relevant provision of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (hereinafter referred to “the Convention”), which stipulates that the ASP shall provide all necessary financial, technical, expert, facility as well as other resources and the TSP shall provide appropriate cooperation for the purpose of destroying ACWs. Under this framework provided by the Convention, Japan, as a staunch guardian of the Convention, reaffirms its commitment to continue its fullest possible efforts to move the projects forward with the appropriate cooperation of China.

2. Japan has been carrying out the destruction of ACWs to fulfill its obligation under the Convention and has invested significant financial and personnel resources to make all possible efforts. Japan, with the cooperation of China, proceeded with the project in accordance with the “Destruction Plan for the Chemical Weapons Abandoned by Japan in the People’s Republic of China Beyond the Year 2016” (EC-84/NAT.6, dated 2 March 2017), which covered the period until the end of the year 2022 and was adopted at the Eighty-Fourth Session of the Executive Council.

3. Bearing in mind the duration of the Plan, Japan and China, after a series of consultations, reached a consensus on a new destruction plan, which was jointly submitted to the 101st Session of the Executive Council in 2022. In accordance with the “Destruction Plan Beyond the Year 2022 for the Chemical Weapons Abandoned by Japan in the People’s Republic of China” (EC-101/DEC.2, dated 4 October 2022), Japan continues to make its utmost effort to tackle various challenges and uncertainties in order to achieve tangible progress.

4. Through the joint efforts by Japan and China, progress of the ACW project has been made since the last Review Conference. This paper summarizes the outline and progress of the project to help other States Parties have a better understanding.

## **II Challenges of the ACW Project**

5. The ACW project entails various challenges and uncertainties, and one of such challenges was the COVID-19 pandemic since 2019. Although the destruction, investigation, excavation, and recovery operations had been suspended, after a series of consultations and coordination between Japan and China to overcome this severe situation, those operations were resumed in 2021 and 2022 in order to move the projects forward.

6. Excavation and recovery operations have been conducted in various locations, including mountainous areas, riverbeds and urban districts. Generally, most ACW items are highly corroded or deformed as a result of remaining underground or underwater for a long period of time. Therefore, maximum caution and technical expertise are required from excavation through destruction. In addition, due to harsh weather conditions, many ground operations in northern China cannot be carried out in wintertime, meaning that the available timeframe for ACW projects in each year is not a whole year.

7. Since this project also involves dangerous tasks and in order to move this unprecedented project forward, Japan places the highest priority on the safety of the local community and personnel, as well as on the protection of the environment, in order to minimize negative effects by the operations. Based on this stance, for example, Japan installs Hazardous Waste Treatment Facilities in Haerbaling to dispose of the hazardous wastes generated from the projects, as well as conducts environmental monitoring of ambient air. Japan's measures meet the requirements of the Article 4 paragraph 10 of the Convention and the Chinese domestic laws and regulations.

8. Understanding China's concerns regarding the location of ACWs, Japan has provided China with all available information regarding the location of ACWs, regardless of the Convention. Such information includes materials on the situation of CW production and deployment of former Japanese Army troops as of the end of WW II (provided in 1993), materials on the locations of arsenals and depots as well as related statements of former military personnel (provided in 2005), and 6 interviews by former military personnel (provided in 2006-2007). Although it is no longer easy to find out and provide further information on traces of ACWs after more than 70 years since the end of the war, Japan committed itself in the destruction plan to continue to

use its best efforts to collect and provide information on ACWs to China when new information is found.

### **III Progress of the ACW Projects**

9. In the past five years, the project achieved tangible progress by the joint efforts of Japan and China, as reported to the Executive Council. The unprecedented and extremely challenging projects cannot be carried out without the bilateral close coordination and cooperation.

10. Japan has responsibly covered all costs for the ACW project, including the construction, operation and management of the infrastructure and facilities that will be described in the following paragraphs. The total expenditure amounts to approximately 3.1 billion euros from Japan's own account as of the end of the fiscal year 2021. In addition, Japan has allocated a record budget of approximately 488 million euros in the fiscal year 2022, which is approximately 1.8 times larger than the fiscal year 2018 when the Fourth Review Conference was convened. Japan has also doubled the number of dispatched personnel.

11. With regard to the ACW project, the Mobile Destruction Facility (MDF) installed in Harbin started its destruction operation in May 2019, and successfully destroyed 3,582 ACWs by 2022 despite a 2-year hiatus due to COVID-19. Meanwhile, preparations for destruction operations using the High Mobility Destruction Facility (HMDF) in Wuhan, Xinzhou and Harbin have progressed based on the destruction plan.

12. In Haerbaling, as a result of the excavation and recovery operation that resumed in November 2012, 38,268 ACWs have been recovered as of the end of March 2023. Meanwhile, the destruction operation in Haerbaling, which started in December 2014, has successfully destroyed 23,800 ACWs as of the end of March 2023. To accelerate the ACW destruction operation further, new Haerbaling Large Chambers (HLCs) were installed in 2021 in addition to existing facilities and started the destruction operation in October 2022. The destruction capacity of the HLCs is 12 times the previous chamber of the same type.

13. On-site investigations as well as excavation and recovery operations in various areas have been carried out with the cooperation of China. As of the end of March

2023, more than of 140 of such operations resulted in the recovery and the declaration of 60,025 ACWs (not including the number of ACWs recovered in Haerbaling and declared to the OPCW by the same date). Such investigations, excavations and recovery operations are still ongoing. The destruction plan stipulates that Japan, in consultation with China, will make a medium to long-term plan of the excavation and recovery at Jiamusi, Shanzhi and Hunchun by the end of the year 2023. In spite of the various challenges in those areas, Japan is of the view that we should focus on the implementation of the destruction plan reached through consensus between Japan and China.

14. Japan submitted the latest declaration to the Secretariat on 3 April 2023. Accordingly, the total number of declared ACWs reached 98,293, while the total number of destroyed ACWs reached 65,894.

#### **IV Measures for Smooth Implementation of the ACW Projects and Efforts for Ensuring Transparency**

15. As mentioned above, close coordination and cooperation between Japan and China are requested by the Convention and indispensable to move the projects forward. Bilateral consultations between Japan and China, which were conducted many times at various levels, have been contributing to maintaining and enhancing the partnership for the project.

16. Japan, China and the Technical Secretariat hold trilateral meetings periodically. These meetings provide the opportunity to share information on the status and outlook of the project so that transparency of the project and appropriate verifications are ensured.

17. The Director-General and the Executive Council delegations including the Chairperson of the Council have visited the facilities in Haerbaling physically in 2019 and virtually in 2022. The delegations have recognized the professionalism and dedication of personnel at work from both sides and obtained first-hand information on the destruction-related progress and close bilateral cooperation of Japan and China at all levels.

18. On-site inspection had been suspended until 2022 due to COVID-19. Despite that situation, Japan, China and the Technical Secretariat coordinated, decided, and

implemented the virtual inspection of the Haerbaling site successfully in 2022 to ensure the transparency of the ACW projects. In addition, the three parties decided to resume the on-site inspections and the inspections of the Temporary Trust Warehouses in Jiujiang and in Wuhan were carried out in April 2023.

## **V Conclusion**

19. Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan has continued to make solid progress regarding ACW operations.

20. Due to the inherent uniqueness of the ACW project, there are many difficulties in its implementation. However, Japan is committed to make its fullest possible efforts toward the destruction of ACWs as early as possible, with the further cooperation of China as well as the Secretariat. Japan hopes that the bilateral cooperation, as well as the trilateral coordination exemplified in this project, enhances further cooperation among States Parties for the strengthening of the CWC regime.