

MALAYSIA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DATO' NADZIRAH OSMAN PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA TO THE OPCW AT THE FIFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

1. Allow me to congratulate, and welcome His Excellency Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast of the Netherlands as the Chairperson of the Fifth Review Conference. I trust that, under your able leadership, the Conference will be guided towards constructive deliberations and successful outcomes.
2. My delegation wishes to thank His Excellency Ambassador Fernando Arias, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and his team at the Technical Secretariat for their valuable work since the last Review Conference. We further extend our appreciation to His Excellency Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia for his extensive and efficient leadership of the open-ended working group, which saw the submission of a draft provisional text to the Conference that serves as a solid basis for discussion.
3. Malaysia aligns itself with the statement from member states of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and by the statement delivered by His Excellency Ambassador Rahman Mustafayev of Azerbaijan on behalf of members of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China (NAM States Parties and China).
4. The States Parties to the Convention are gathered here today to review the operation of the Convention for the fifth time since its inception three decades ago. Since the last Review Conference in 2018, this august Organisation has its fair share of achievements and challenges in the implementation of the Convention. We now have a distinct opportunity to take stock of those achievements and challenges, and most importantly, chart a consensus-based strategic direction of the Organisation for the next five years.
5. We should take pride that the Convention remains as the most successful disarmament treaty and a major contributor to international peace and security to date. With 193 States Parties committed to the Convention, around 98 per cent of the global population live under the protection of the Convention, and over 99 per cent of the chemical weapons stockpiles declared by possessor States have been verifiably destroyed through the Convention's strict verification regime.

Mr Chairperson,

6. 2023 will mark another milestone in the implementation of the Convention. The complete destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles is expected this coming September. We also view the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) which was inaugurated recently as instrumental in further building the expertise and capabilities of the Technical Secretariat and States Parties towards achieving the objectives of the Convention.
7. While we laud these achievements, Malaysia is fully cognisant that a world free of chemical weapons is not feasible when there remain States that are outside of the Convention. We attach great importance to the universality of the Convention as the strongest guarantee for chemical security, in light of the resurgence in the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as a weapon, and the threat posed by chemical terrorism by non-State actors.
8. Malaysia condemns the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as a weapon anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances as a reprehensible act, that is contrary to the Convention and the principles of international law. We reaffirm our support for a comprehensive, objective, and impartial manner for the Organisation to handle such use, in complementarity with the work of the United Nations.
9. As we forge ahead, we must ensure that the OPCW, as the implementing organ of the Convention, remains fit for purpose. There is a need to strengthen the verification regime and capabilities of the Technical Secretariat and States Parties, particularly under Article VI and VII of the Convention. We also have to ensure response preparedness, particularly under Article X of the Convention, in light of the re-emergence of chemical weapons either by existing or emerging threat of use. We further need to support peaceful use of chemistry as provided by Article XI of the Convention.
10. While we urge all States Parties to comply with the respective obligations under the Convention, we speak not just on the willingness of States Parties to fulfill these obligations but also whether the States have the necessary capabilities to fully implement the Convention. Against this backdrop, the international cooperation and assistance (ICA) elements of our work definitely play an integral role in ensuring the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention.
11. Malaysia is a firm believer in the effectiveness of tailor-made ICA programmes. We have recently concluded a partnership programme with Australia which includes the convening of sub-regional forum for Pacific Island States. Moving forward, we are eager to work with Australia in the OPCW Laboratory Twinning initiative, in an effort to expand the Organisation's network of designated laboratories, and enhance the preparedness of the Organisation. We strongly encourage States Parties to engage in cooperation in this manner and we look forward to cooperate bilaterally with other States Parties to the Convention on any assistance programme.

Distinguished delegates,

12. Since 2013, Malaysia has been a training provider under Article X, conducting regional courses on chemical emergency response for first responders annually. Encouraging a more meaningful implementation of Article XI of the Convention, Malaysia will host a Forum on the Peaceful Uses of Chemistry in Kuala Lumpur from 23 to 25 May 2023 which aims to enhance participants' knowledge and understanding of chemical safety and security management, in addition to learning about the policies adopted by States Parties to foster international cooperation. Moving forward, Malaysia will continue to be in close cooperation with the Technical Secretariat to support wide-ranging ICA programmes of the Organisation.
13. Similar to the majority of States Parties, we regard the chemical industry sector as our main stakeholder. We believe that the chemical industry which mostly from the private sector needs incentives in order to be better engaged with the Organisation, particularly on verification-related matters. We need to collectively look into that and see how we can create a safe and secure chemical industry environment without burdening the industry players. We need to also look at ways to adopt technology to make our engagement with industry players more efficient. We may also wish to consider to enhance the participation of chemical industry players in the OPCW advisory bodies such as the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and the Advisory Board for Education and Outreach (ABEO).
14. Malaysian delegation would also like to thank the SAB for its report on developments in science and technology to this Conference. It is noted that the astonishing pace of technological advances have created an ever-changing set of opportunities and challenges for the implementation of the Convention. Significant advances to artificial intelligence, additive manufacturing and biotechnology have the potential to strengthen the verification regime, increase operator safety and assist in the discovery of medical counter-measures for exposure to chemical warfare agents, among others. Nonetheless, Malaysia calls on the OPCW and all States Parties to be vigilant of the massive risks that new technologies pose to the Convention, especially their effects on the future of verification.
15. Last but not least, Malaysia believes that inclusive representation at the OPCW and across its work will serve well for the full, non-discriminatory, and effective implementation of the Convention. In this regard, we are supportive of the papers submitted by the delegation of Canada on "Gender Equality, Diversity, and the Chemical Weapons Convention" and from the delegation of China on "Promoting International Cooperation on Peaceful Uses under the Framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention".
16. I would like to request to have this statement issued as an official document of the Fifth Review Conference and posted on both the external server and the public website.

I thank you, Mr Chairperson.