

**The 5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference of  
The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)  
General Debate  
Statement by Mr. Younghyo Park  
Director-General for Nonproliferation and Nuclear Affairs of  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea**

**16 May 2023, The Hague**

Mr. Chairperson,  
Mr. Director-General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,

I would first like to sincerely congratulate Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast of the Netherlands on assuming the chairpersonship of the Fifth Review Conference. I have every confidence that this Conference will prove a great success under your able leadership, achieving fruitful results. I assure you of my delegation's full support in your meaningful work.

I wish to convey my appreciation to the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group, Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia, for his dedication to facilitating substantive and sincere discussions by all States Parties through the preparatory process. My delegation also extends its gratitude to Director-General Fernando Arias and all the staff members of the Technical Secretariat (TS) for their outstanding endeavours to fully implement their mandates.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is one of the main pillars of the international nonproliferation and disarmament architecture and the most universal norm ever against chemical weapons use with 193 Member States.

For the last five years since the Fourth Review Conference in 2018, in particular, the CWC and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have yielded tremendous achievements, thereby safeguarding the global norms against the use of chemical weapons. Over 99% of all declared chemical weapons have been verifiably destroyed, and we expect the completion of the destruction by the end of this year.

The Republic of Korea greatly welcomes the inauguration of the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre). We believe the new Centre will serve as a technological and training hub to assist States Parties and the Technical Secretariat (TS) in fully implementing the Convention. The Centre will also significantly help the OPCW to better address emerging challenges and reinforce the verification regime.

For our part, the Republic of Korea has been working together with the OPCW to strengthen the CWC regime, particularly for the capacity building of the organization and its States Parties. As the first State Party to have made voluntary contributions to the ChemTech Centre Project in 2017, the Republic of Korea renews its full support for the successful operation of the Centre and we stand ready to support its future projects.

We have also been annually hosting the Seoul Workshop on the Peaceful Development and Use of Chemistry for States Parties in the Asian Region with the TS since 2012, with a strong belief that ensuring chemical safety and security in the private sector is another prerequisite for achieving a world free from chemical weapon threats.

Furthermore, in addition to our ongoing efforts, we launched a new tabletop exercise (TTX) programme with the cooperation of the TS last year. We are pleased to contribute to the TS's efforts in continuing TTX against chemical attacks and managing knowledge and experience acquired through past investigations and exercises.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite remarkable achievements, building the world free of chemical weapons still calls for efforts of the States Parties and the TS. The re-emergence of chemical weapons is a spectre that has moved beyond being a hypothetical possibility – it is becoming more of an imminent threat, as repeatedly witnessed around the world in recent years. The verification regime and the Organisation continuously face challenges to demonstrate their relevance in a rapidly evolving landscape encompassing industry, science and technology. Against this backdrop, the Fifth Review Conference provides a timely and valuable opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the CWC and strengthen our preparedness to address potential challenges ahead.

In order to secure the full effectiveness of the Convention after the destruction of all declared chemical weapons, ensuring universality should be discussed and promoted as a top priority. As long as there is the possibility that chemical weapons exist in any country, including States not party, potential threats to the Convention exist as well. My delegation strongly urges the four remaining States not a party to the Convention to join it as early as possible without any preconditions.

Countering and preventing the use of chemical weapons is a foremost priority of the Convention. The Republic of Korea reiterates its firm position that the use of chemical weapons cannot be tolerated anywhere, anytime, by anyone or under any circumstances and those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

In this regard, we express our grave concern that the chemical weapons issues in Syria remain unresolved. Cooperation between Syria and the OPCW has deteriorated, as seen in a few members of the TS being denied access to the country.

We continue to fully support the relevant ongoing work of the TS, including the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), and its utmost efforts to fulfill its mandate in a transparent, independent, impartial and professional way. In particular, we are deeply concerned over the findings in the IIT reports that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical weapons in several cases. We urge Syria to immediately and fully cooperate with the Secretariat to redress the situation and comply with the Convention as requested by the decisions of the OPCW policy-making organs (PMO).

Mr. Chairperson,

Voluntary and responsible national implementation is essential in realizing the objectives of the Convention. All States Parties are encouraged to adopt necessary measures to fulfill their obligations under the CWC, including national legislation and subsequent on-site implementation and follow-up monitoring. In this connection, a more tailor-made approach to developing and implementing International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA) programmes for national implementation is required, taking into consideration different national and regional needs while avoiding duplication between similar programmes.

In the efforts to enhance the organizational governance of the OPCW, we should aim to adapt the Organisation to timely and efficiently respond to new challenges and an ever-changing environment. In this context, we support a more flexible human resources policy as well as enhanced geographical diversity and gender equality in the organization.

In closing, I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this Conference and be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you. /END/