

MAINTAINING A WORLD FREE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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the Chemical Weapons Convention

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*Chairperson, Director-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,
Expert Colleagues,*

The complete elimination of declared chemical weapons is our shared goal, to which we are coming close to celebrating. However, to what are we celebrating if we live in fear that chemical weapons may yet again be developed and used? We sit here today with one eye on the past, and one on the future: it is only through our work to preserve the elimination of chemical weapons in years to come, that the completion of their destruction this year can be a celebration.

This Review Conference is, therefore, a pivotal one that embodies many discussions and perspectives that seek to shape how the OPCW can prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

Unlike destruction, preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons is a continuous set of efforts. It is a range of processes that require and combine different tasks, activities, and actors – both inside the OPCW and outside.

Chairperson,

The OPCW must remain ready to undertake more destruction-related activities. There is still much work to be done on old and abandoned chemical weapons, including those that are sea-dumped. Furthermore, the future threat of the development and use of chemical weapons, both by states and non-state actors, will remain. Therefore, flexibility, expertise, and political support is required to ensure the Secretariat can respond to all manner of contingencies.

The Secretariat's capacity to conduct and support investigations has been expanded over the last ten years. Continued efforts to integrate these and explicitly connecting it to existing Convention-based mechanisms may help to ensure the long-term resource, acceptance, and impact of these activities.

Industrial verification is a central component of efforts to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Optimising verification methodologies and practices is a priority. International cooperation and assistance will take on increased relevance and visibility as it is a front-line defense against chemical weapons. Capacity-building, implementation support, chemical safety and security, and outreach and engagement for the peaceful uses of chemistry are crucial elements and may benefit from being considered as strategic priorities. A shift toward greater needs-assessments, customization, and interconnection will add value through increasing ownership of implementation activities for State Parties.

Furthermore, the ever-present concern about lagging national implementation requires attention. Full and effective national implementation of the Convention is the absolute basis

upon which all efforts to prevent chemical weapons rest. The Secretariat has been clear in its reporting that there is a way to go to strengthen and deepen national implementation. For many State Parties, this is a challenge. To overcome this requires continued capacity building work by the Secretariat, but also the support of State Parties who can share experiences and invest in the process.

The ChemTech Centre provides new infrastructure to enhance Secretariat-wide work, including verification and inspection capabilities, but also in support of ICA activities. To realize its potential, the work of the ChemTech Centre will need to be sustainably and effectively funded. The ChemTech Centre is for all State Parties, and its work must enjoy full political support – a voluntary support model will likely undermine and curb its potential.

Chairperson,

Human resource underpins all of the work of the OPCW. It is time for State Parties to establish a formal process to consider, evaluate and potentially amend the tenure policy of the Secretariat, to ensure that the Secretariat can obtain, train, and retain the very best personnel.

Progress on this will complement efforts by the Director-General to improve gender and geographic diversity. However, there is only so much the Director-General alone can do. State Parties are ultimately responsible for the size and shape of the Secretariat, and responsible for facilitating pathways for well-qualified, suitable candidates to seek positions within the Secretariat.

Chairperson,

The world in which the OPCW operates is changing fast, and the anxieties, risks, and threats that face the Convention are becoming more diverse, more complex, and more de-centralised.

Civil society must be allowed to support the work of the OPCW to a greater extent than it has so far been granted. New challenges cannot be dealt with alone.

The exponential speed at which developments in science and technology take place are simply beyond the scope of State Parties and the Secretariat to fully grasp by themselves; more actors than ever before are driving change, many with little knowledge of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We run the very real risk that implementation of the Convention becomes out-paced by science and technology, and we must not allow this Convention to be hollowed-out through isolation and disengagement. This will be, I hope, the Review Conference in which State Parties sincerely and strategically recognise that meaningful engagement with civil society is required to implement the comprehensive nature of this Convention. We stand ready to work with State Parties and the Secretariat to find ways to enhance and deliver on a more cooperative and meaningful relationship.

We wish you a productive Review Conference and thank you for your attention.

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