



Statement

by

Ambassador Suljuk Mustansar Tarar
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OPCW
at the
Fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention
(15-19 May 2023)

Mr Chairperson,

We congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the Fifth Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). I assure you of my delegation's full support in the upcoming days. We are confident that you will be able to steer this conference to a successful conclusion.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by Ambassador Rahman Mustafayev of Azerbaijan to the OPCW on behalf of the NAM member states and China.

I wish to thank the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia for leading the preparations to this Conference.

We welcome the remarks by the Director General OPCW Ambassador Fernando Arias and congratulate him on successfully steering the work of the OPCW and last week's landmark opening of the OPCW ChemTech Centre.

Mr Chairperson,

Last year, we marked 25 years of entry into force of Chemical Weapons Convention. The CWC remains one of the most successful disarmament treaties. The key strength of the CWC, Mr Chair, is within the text of the convention. Whereby we have set rules to refer to when it comes to national implementation, legislation and destruction, cooperation and assistance, and the working of the organization. My delegation believes that the Convention is a complete text and it sets out a complete mandate for the organization.

The Convention embodies the idea that unity based on principles of equity serves the interests of all: it enables a healthy and productive environment for the advancement of common interests, and ultimately leads to strengthening our shared objective of promoting global peace and security.

Pakistan's strong support for the Convention is based on our consistent policy of endorsing all legal instruments and initiatives that promote disarmament, non-proliferation, regional and international security on a just and equitable basis as well as recognize the right of all nations to equal security.

Mr Chairperson,

The destruction of existing stockpiles of chemical weapons is a key goal of the Convention. We hope to achieve this goal later this year once the US has completed the destruction of its remaining stockpiles.

The destruction of Abandoned Chemical Weapons in China is also ongoing. We welcome the new destruction plan adopted by the concerned States parties along with the OPCW and look forward to its effective implementation.

While the elimination of all declared chemical weapons will signify a major achievement in disarmament, it will not necessarily mean that the world has been completely rid of these weapons. For such an assurance, the universality of the Convention is a necessity. This means that every country in the world legally abides by the global prohibition on chemical weapons including the obligation to accept verification. We call upon all countries that are absent from the list of CWC States Parties to join the Convention at the earliest.

Mr Chairperson,

The Review Conference is an important inflection point. We would discuss our joint achievements and limitations but also need to discuss the future direction of the organization. We look back at an organization where spirit of consensus was at the heart of decision-making and progress – an organization that was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013 for its contribution to global peace and security.

Consensus is at the heart of international arms control and disarmament negotiations. In the past five years we took some decisions foregoing our tradition of consensus. If we continue to abandon the spirit of consensus or reinterpret it in a partisan manner, we may have a divided organization. With the CWC as our unifying force, Mr. Chair, we still have the opportunity to safeguard one of the most successful disarmament treaties.

We hope that further progress in OPCW's efforts with regards to Syrian Arab Republic will be made only through cooperation, coordination, and remaining within the remit of the Convention.

Mr Chairperson,

The OPCW Technical Secretariat (TS) deserves commendation on its work and cooperation with the States Parties. Promoting national implementation of the Convention has remained a priority for the OPCW and a cooperative approach has yielded dividends and offers the best avenue for future progress.

On its part Pakistan has long maintained an effective legal regime pursuant to the Convention's requirements. We had established our national authority in the year 2000. We have declared a national protective program and are pursuing all possible measures to enhance national capacity and potential to guard against chemical threats.

In collaboration with the TS, we continue to host several regional and international capacity building courses in Pakistan. We have also established a sub-regional Assistance and Protection Centre in Pakistan which serves as a centre of excellence in the region.

Mr Chairperson,

The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and Advisory Body on Education and Outreach (ABEO) have rendered valuable work and advice both at scientific and outreach level. Their contributions have helped OPCW to reach at important decisions regarding its implementation efforts such as inclusion of new chemicals and preparation of OPCW's training materials.

Mr Chairperson,

International cooperation remains the bedrock of the Convention's universal support. The Review Conference needs to reiterate the critical importance of full implementation of Articles X and XI of the Convention. We believe that the technological and economic development of states parties should progress unhindered. We therefore urge all States Parties as well as the TS to ensure that when equipment is requested for protection programmes it should be provided in an objective manner, without promulgating barriers to a States' right to self-protection.

Pakistan has contributed to various capacity building activities under both Article XI and X and will continue to do so in the future including through the ChemTech Centre.

The network of OPCW designated laboratories needs to be enhanced. We welcome new additions to this network but there is need for improving this network and its technical capabilities. In this context, we call upon the OPCW TS to provide necessary support to expand the network of designated laboratories specifically in regions that have none or a very small number. Pakistan has also established an OPCW designated laboratory.

The ChemTech Centre can be of great value to members states including by providing tailor-made enhancing laboratory capability courses and broader capacity building and knowledge sharing activities. With the completion of existing chemical weapons destruction in sight, my delegation believes that it is the International Cooperation and Assistance that would help chart the future trajectory of the organization.

Mr Chairperson,

The Convention requires that due regard should be given to as wide a geographical basis as possible in hiring of TS staff. There is a lack of equitable representation in the TS and we hope that as per Article VIII of the Convention it would be addressed.

In this context, any amendments to the OPCW tenure policy should be reflective of organization's fundamental principles. We recognize the need for the DG to retain reservoir of knowledge and expertise to ensure the efficient working of the organization. It may be noted that the DG has been accorded the ability to, in exceptional cases and to ensure the financial and technical betterment of the Organisation, extend contracts of personnel. However, extensions beyond the seven-year tenure, should be reserved for exceptional cases and provisions contained in Article VIII paragraph 44.

Mr Chairperson,

As we look to the future some additional issues requiring attention include:

- (i) Devising some coordination mechanism to address the discrepancies in compiling data of bilateral trade of chemicals between states parties taking place at an increasing level and at a fast pace;
- (ii) Need to initiate dialogue for a unified system of chemical trade;
- (iii) Facilitate discussions for universal, inclusive and objective mechanism for promoting responsible international trade in chemicals; and
- (iv) Inclusive way of defining guidelines and scope of export controls beyond informal mechanisms which currently rests with a few States outside the framework of the Convention.

Mr Chairperson,

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate our commitment to the Convention and the success of this Review Conference. It is our earnest hope that the Review Conference will help usher in a new future for the organization, based on the principles of consensus, cooperation and respect for all States.

Thank you
