

Statement
by H E M Riaz Hamidullah
Ambassador & Permanent Representative of Bangladesh
to the OPCW at the 106th Executive Council Meeting

Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
Director-General,

Our felicitations to Ambassador Andrés Parral, on your election as the Chair of the Executive Council. You have my delegation's fullest support.

We commend Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat (TS) for the exemplary work in advancing our shared agenda of chemical disarmament.

Mr. Chair,

We all committed ourselves to uphold full and objective implementation of the Convention. As we re-visit the 'General Obligations', set out in the Convention's first Article, we are, however, dismayed at the heinous use of chemicals in Gaza against innocent Palestinian civilians. We would ask the TS to keep close watch on the violations of the Convention in Gaza, as it does elsewhere.

27 years since the Convention came into being, supporting the initiatives in promoting chemical safety and security, especially in the developing countries, deserve equal attention. I say this as Bangladesh sees growing use of chemicals across its developmental sectors. The issue consequently also asks us to do all possible to secure universalisation of the Convention.

OPCW is approaching a new phase with the launching of the ChemTech Centre. Solidifying collective trust and understanding assumes greater importance, especially in upholding technicalities, impartiality and avoiding politicisation. Forging consensus among member states on the technical matters is central. And, we do hope to see the NGOs and CSOs engage, to complement our work, driven by objectivity and transparency.

Viewing from the Global South, we would emphasise for the Organisation to focus more on assistance and protection against chemical threats. Articles X

and XI of the Convention remain key as demands and use of the chemicals continue to evolve. Our national stakeholders and scientific community and practitioners back home often struggle to keep pace with the developments. Recent budgetary adjustments thus concern us as funds have been reallocated from International Cooperation Assistance (ICA) Programme to administrative and operational needs.

In promoting chemical safety and security, OPCW work programme should ensure that the benefits of chemical technology are shared in ways that foster peace, security, and sustainable development, for all. In that context, initiation of fully-funded Junior Professional Programs, specifically from developing countries like Bangladesh, should lend greater ownership to the Organisation.

Maintaining a balanced and diverse composition within the TS cannot be over emphasised. Currently, 42% of the Technical Secretariat staff are from a single regional group. This needs to improve, soon enough, in a multilateral institution. We applaud Amb. Jaime Valenzuela of Chile for his leadership; and would encourage the Working Group to further its work on geographic diversity and representation.

Mr. Chair,

As for the ChemTech Centre, in the long shot, our collective agenda should strike a balance between preventing chemical weapons proliferation and promoting the peaceful use of chemistry in sustainable development. The Centre's work should help us to collectively address the emerging threats and leverage the benefits of chemical advancements for sustainable development, across all our countries, as we heard from the DG this morning. While Artificial Intelligence applications in Chemistry may seem far away for countries like Bangladesh, it is actually not so given our footprint in global supply chains. We therefore look forward to the 'process' as well as 'outcome' of the Global Conference on AI and Chemistry in Morocco, this Fall, with much interest.

In that vein, creation of an e-learning platform is commendable. It should afford us opportunities to knowledge-sharing, particularly to vast majority of students-researchers-practitioners back in countries like Bangladesh.

Mr. Chair,

Given our principled stand on counter-terrorism, Bangladesh commends the progress made by the TS and the Syrian authorities in addressing outstanding issues, as we heard last week. Noting progress at the twenty-seventh round of consultations between DAT and the Syrian authorities this May, we call for constructive engagements in resolving the complex challenges.

Mr. Chair,

Addressing emerging threats with proliferation of toxic chemicals by non-state actors and potential risks of chemical terrorism is a continuing task. We applaud Ambassador Madonsela of South Africa for guiding the Working Group in addressing the threats of chemical terrorism. The proposed action plan, developed thru a Table-Top exercise last year, should enhance prevention, response, and investigation efforts in chemical terrorism.

The Scientific Advisory Board's work is equally noteworthy as it presents insights into the evolving landscape of chemistry and technology. We encourage the Board to explore the intersections of chemistry with other scientific disciplines, including biology and data science, pro-actively.

We similarly commend the Advisory Board on Education on its innovative approach in integrating education with evolving chemical technologies.

We commend the Technical Secretariat for facilitating collaboration that led to Algeria having the OPCW-designated laboratory in Africa. This indeed shows the tangible benefits out of international cooperation and collaboration within OPCW framework, as our National Authorities remain keen on twinning our own Laboratory.

Finally, I would request for this statement to be issued as an official document of the 106th Executive Council and posted on the external server and web.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.
