



**STATEMENT
TO THE FIFTEENTH SESSION OF
THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

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**ON BEHALF OF
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THE HAGUE, 29 November 2010

Mr Chairman

Let me join other speakers in congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the fifteenth Conference of the States Parties.

The Australian delegation looks forward to working with you to help ensure a successful conclusion to this Conference with outcomes supporting the achievement of the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Mr Chairman

I would also like to extend a very warm welcome to Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü and to take this opportunity to express my congratulations on his appointment as Director-General of the OPCW. I am confident that his diplomatic skills, commitment and multilateral disarmament experience will serve the OPCW well in the coming period, to ensure that the Convention will go from strength to strength in achieving a world that is free from the threat of chemical weapons. I pledge the full support of the Australian delegation to assist him in his work.

Mr Chairman

The CWC is a cornerstone of the multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Countering the threat of chemical weapons demands undiminished commitment to full and effective implementation of the Convention. Australia has long been at the forefront of efforts to counter this threat.

Mr Chairman

First and foremost, Australia is encouraged by continuing progress in the destruction of chemical weapons and welcomes the commencement of operations to destroy old chemical weapons abandoned by Japan in China. With less than 40% of declared chemical weapon stockpiles awaiting destruction, we are confident that the remaining CW Possessor States will make every effort to meet their extended deadlines. We do not underestimate this challenge especially given the technical, safety, environmental and financial burden that this entails.

Australia fully supports the informal consultations led by the Chairman of the Executive Council, Ambassador Jean-François Blarel of France, on issues relating to the final deadlines for chemical weapons destruction. We believe it prudent for States Parties to be fully prepared for any future situation of unintended non-compliance by CW Possessor States. We support the Chairman's roadmap approach and are hopeful that suitable remedies and confidence building measures will be found to deal with the projected missed deadline. My delegation will continue to work with other States Parties to ensure that any agreed approach does not adversely impact on the Convention itself.

Mr Chairman

Australia has, from time to time, discovered old chemical weapons (OCW) on its territory and has declared these to the OPCW. I am pleased to advise States Parties that 144 old chemical weapons, discovered and stored at a coal-mining site in Columboola, Queensland, last year, have now been verified as such by the OPCW during the first inspection of its kind in Australia (20-22 September).

The Australian Government gratefully acknowledges its appreciation to the Government of the United States for its technical assistance to conduct on-site analysis in support of Australia's efforts to destroy these unusable munitions, the majority of which contain sulphur mustard. During 2011, a transportable detonation chamber will be imported from the United States, assembled at Columboola and used to safely and completely destroy these OCW, in full accordance with the Convention's requirements.

Mr Chairman

Australia supports the Technical Secretariat's draft budget for 2011 including its proposed number and distribution of Article VI inspections. As advised by the then Director-General, we note that it may be problematic to sustain the current numbers of Schedule 3 inspections. Australia believes that the inspection levels should be guided by the Technical Secretariat's recommendations based on its experience and analysis.

Australia also strongly supports efforts to enhance the effectiveness of verification of other chemical production facilities or “OCPFs” especially given the limited numbers of inspections, the relatively vast number of OCPF sites that have yet to be inspected and the increasing relevance of OCPF verification due to advances in science and technology. We therefore welcome the resumption of the facilitation on the OCPF site selection methodology by Ambassador Pieter de Savornin-Lohman of the Netherlands and Ambassador Fauziah Binti Mohammed Taib of Malaysia, and are willing to engage constructively with them and other States Parties. In this regard, Canada's proposal is worth exploring as a fresh approach to help focus OCPF inspections on sites of greatest relevance to the Convention.

Mr Chairman

Apart from its objective of destroying all CW stockpiles, the Convention was established to also prevent States acquiring or developing chemical weapons. However, the reality of today's global security environment has demonstrated that the threat of the use of chemical weapons or toxic chemicals derives from both State and non-State actors, including terrorists. While no international organisation has the sole responsibility for the prevention of, or response to, chemical terrorism, the OPCW clearly has a central role to play.

The OPCW, through the actions of both the Technical Secretariat and States Parties, has made, and continues to make, a significant contribution to global anti-terrorism efforts. However, there is a widely held view that there is scope to enhance the OPCW's anti-terrorism efforts. In this regard, we welcome the fact that the Sixtieth Session of the Executive Council requested the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism to examine further the OPCW's contribution to global anti-terrorist efforts, with a view to recommending additional measures as appropriate. We are also strongly encouraged by the collaborative efforts of the Technical Secretariat and States Parties in this regard. The Working Group has so far held very productive joint meetings with the Facilitations on Article X and Article VII. We hope the Working Group will be able to consider other relevant areas in the near future.

Australia believes that States Parties can benefit from sharing experiences with each other, as well as with industry and other stakeholders, on measures to strengthen chemical safety and security as a means to reduce the risk of chemical attacks by terrorists and to develop national capacities to respond, in line with the report of the Second Review Conference.

We therefore welcome recent initiatives on this topic, such as workshops which have been undertaken in various regions including the Asia-Pacific (hosted by Australia), South East Asia and Europe, as well as the conference to be held soon in Africa. The table-top exercise held last week (22-23 November) in Warsaw, Poland is another case in point. This exercise, jointly organised by the OPCW and the Government of Poland, addressed the preparedness of States Parties, particularly those in Eastern Europe, to prevent and respond to the use of toxic industrial chemicals in a terrorist attack. We believe that this was a very useful workshop which will provide a model for similar exercises to be organised in other regions.

We believe that there would be value in sharing the outcomes of both the Warsaw table-top exercise and the African conference with all States Parties through a meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism that could be held early next year. We also support calls for the OPCW's industry outreach activities to be broadened to cover chemical safety and security. Finally, we welcome the Director-General's plans to organise a special event in

2011 on “International Cooperation and Chemical Safety and Security” on the occasion of the International Year of Chemistry.

Mr Chairman

It is a remarkable achievement that there are presently 188 member countries to the Convention. Only seven countries in the world stand in the way of achieving universality of the Convention, and thereby a complete global CW ban. We therefore commend the Director-General and States Parties for their continued efforts to ensure that further progress is made, despite the challenges of achieving this ambitious but necessary goal.

Australia believes that achieving an enduring and effective global CW ban requires not only universality, but also the full and effective implementation of the Convention by its States Parties. We continue to stress the importance of ensuring States Parties make every effort to accelerate the enactment of national legislation or administrative arrangements that cover all key areas of the Convention, and to identify and declare all relevant chemical facilities. Australia will do what it can to assist requesting States Parties to achieve these fundamental Convention requirements.

Mr Chairman

When it comes to protection against chemical weapons and response to any incident involving the use of toxic chemicals, assistance and protection can be provided in accordance with Article X. It is timely, therefore, to thank the Technical Secretariat and the Government of Tunisia for organising and hosting Assistex 3, an international assistance and protection exercise which took place from 11-15 October. While this was the third major exercise of its kind, it was the first to have also included an investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons. This experience has further highlighted the need for a rapid and well-coordinated response, among multiple stakeholders, to any chemical attack.

I would also like to congratulate the Technical Secretariat, the Facilitator for Article XI, Mr Chen Kai of China, and sponsoring States Parties for their roles in the preparations and conduct of the workshop on Article XI issues, which was held in The Hague last week (24-25 November). This workshop was very successful in enabling cooperation and exchange of ideas among States Parties and relevant stakeholders regarding the peaceful uses of chemistry to further the economic and technological development of States Parties.

Mr Chairman

In closing, Australia remains steadfastly committed to the object and purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We look forward to further close cooperation with the Technical Secretariat and other States Parties in the coming year so that further progress is made towards achieving strong and effective verification and universal adherence to the Convention.

Thank you Mr Chairman