



STATEMENT

**TO THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF
THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

BY

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WEAPONS**

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Mr Chairman

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

The Australian delegation looks forward to working with you to help ensure a successful conclusion to this Conference.

Mr Chairman

Events this year have provided a horrific reminder of the indiscriminate human suffering caused by chemical weapons and the threat their use poses to global and regional peace and security. These events are a grave reminder of why we must remain steadfast in our efforts to uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), as well as supporting the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as the guardian of this important Convention.

Like most countries, Australia condemned the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The use of chemical weapons violates the very essence of the CWC, and the global norm it has established on prohibiting the use and development of these weapons.

Australia welcomes the decision(s) by the Executive Council, reinforced by UN Security Council Resolution 2118, which sets-out the extraordinary procedures to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons. These monumental decisions have made it clear that the use of chemical weapons by anyone in any circumstances is abhorrent and will not be tolerated by the international community.

Australia commends the OPCW-UN joint mission for its achievements to date in the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme, including in meeting initial milestones in the elimination of Syria's CW production capabilities. We especially commend the resilience and resolve of mission members, who have demonstrated their professionalism in extraordinary and challenging circumstances. We urge Syria to continue to cooperate unconditionally, to fulfil all of its obligations under the Convention and to ensure the complete, verifiable and timely destruction of its chemical weapons, and all related materials and equipment.

Mr Chairman

These events should not distract us from celebrating the significant achievements of the OPCW in overseeing the destruction of 80 per cent of the world's declared chemical weapon agent stockpiles. The CWC now has a record number of 190 States Parties.

Australia congratulates the OPCW on being awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize. This prestigious award recognises the OPCW's extensive efforts over 16 years, to eliminate chemical weapons and to reinforce the international norm outlawing the use of such weapons in any circumstance. We should now maximise our efforts to enhance global understanding of the CWC and encourage Universality.

In this regard, Australia is actively engaged in encouraging the States still remaining outside the CWC to join the Convention without further delay and preconditions.

Mr Chairman

Australia was pleased to participate actively in the Third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the CWC. This Review Conference provided a valuable opportunity to take stock of developments over the past five years and to reinforce our shared and unequivocal commitment to the global chemical weapons ban. States Parties can be proud of the achievements of the Convention since its entry into force, but continued effort is required. The Review Conference also provided a timely opportunity to map out the OPCW's priorities for the coming five years and to identify where we need to recalibrate and redouble our efforts.

Australia urges Possessor States to make every effort to ensure all remaining stockpiles of chemical weapons are destroyed at the earliest possible date, but no later than their planned completion dates. Australia supports the fast-tracked destruction of Syria's chemical weapons, in accordance with the Executive Council decision and UNSCR 2118, as the utmost priority. We are also committed to ensuring the continued success of the OPCW beyond the destruction of all chemical weapons, so that it can meet non-proliferation challenges now and into the future and help ensure that chemical weapons will never be used again.

Australia's steadfast commitment to the Convention and to its full and effective implementation remains undiminished. Regional exchanges make an increasingly important contribution to our efforts to strengthen effective implementation of the Convention.

We strongly encourage all States Parties which have not fully implemented their Article VII obligations to continue their efforts to establish a National Authority, as well as robust legislation that covers all key areas of the Convention. National Authorities, Customs authorities and other agencies all contribute to ensuring that declarations and OPCW inspections – performed under the verification regime – build confidence internationally that all existing chemical weapons are destroyed and no new chemical weapons are being developed.

Mr Chairman

This year, we were pleased to join regional partners to participate in regional Article X workshops organised by the OPCW and the governments of Malaysia and Indonesia. These workshops successfully enhanced the capacity of regional countries to respond to a major chemical incident, including terrorist attacks, and aimed to strengthen coordination and cooperation on assistance and protection under Article X of the CWC.

While acknowledging that the OPCW is not a counter-terrorism organisation, the OPCW does have an important role in facilitating collaboration between States Parties to prevent chemical terrorism and the exchange of information on best practices on chemical safety and security.

Mr Chairman

Australia congratulates and extends its strong support to Director-General Üzümcü on his reappointment for a further term. We know that under his leadership and guidance the OPCW is in good hands.

Australia has welcomed the Director-General's efforts to promote fiscal discipline, especially at this time of global financial constraint. However, it is vital that the OPCW remains adequately resourced to carry out its core functions - including effective verification, with appropriate access to experts, training and equipment. The OPCW must also be adequately resourced to conduct Education and Outreach activities which contribute not only to awareness raising but also in assisting States Parties to meet their obligations under the Convention.

We are all aware of the need for the Convention to keep pace with developments in science and technology. For this reason Australia recognises the importance of the Scientific Advisory Board and its temporary working groups in keeping the OPCW informed and in ensuring that the CWC remains relevant.

Mr Chairman

The issue of "incapacitating chemical agents" was raised in the lead-up to, and during the Third Review Conference. Australia actively participated in discussions on this issue and stands ready to continue these discussions within the OPCW. Australia believes that these discussions should give due consideration to distinguishing between riot control agents which are defined and permitted under the CWC for use for law enforcement purposes; and other toxic chemicals whose primary mode of action is on the central nervous system.

In this context, I confirm unconditionally that Australia is not developing, producing, using or stockpiling any toxic chemicals, other than riot control agents, for law enforcement purposes and join others in calling on all States to state their position accordingly.

Mr Chairman

I wish you well in your important task in presiding over this Conference and pledge the full support of Australia's delegation as we work towards the total elimination of chemical weapons.

Thank you Mr Chairman