



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Eighteenth Session
2 – 6 December 2013

C-18/NAT.4
2 December 2013
ENGLISH only

LITHUANIA

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY MR JACEK BYLICA
PRINCIPAL ADVISER AND SPECIAL ENVOY FOR NON-PROLIFERATION AND
DISARMAMENT OF THE EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE
AT THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The candidate countries the Republic of Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹, the Republic of Iceland², the Republic of Serbia¹, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates the Republic of Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area the Kingdom of Norway as well as the Principality of Andorra, Georgia, the Principality of Monaco, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of San Marino, and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

Mr. Chairperson,

At the outset, let me express the appreciation of the European Union for the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Peter Goosen of South Africa, for the most efficient and effective manner in which he has handled the work of the Conference during the last year. Let me also welcome you, Ambassador Sa'ad Abdul Majeed Ibrahim Al Ali of Iraq, as the new Chair of the Conference and assure you of the European Union's full cooperation and support throughout your tenure.

Mr. Chairperson,

2013 has been a very busy year for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as three remarkable events have left their mark in the history of this relatively young, albeit successful, international organisation.

¹ The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

² The Republic of Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.



The first of those is Syria: the biggest challenge that the OPCW has faced since its creation 16 years ago. The European Union stood united in condemning in the strongest terms the horrific chemical attack in Ghouta on 21 August. That attack constituted a blatant violation of international law, and amounts to a crime against humanity and a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The European Union reiterates that the perpetrators and those who ordered the attack must be held accountable. These outrageous circumstances, under which Syria acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the subsequent gigantic task of destroying that country's chemical weapons arsenal within very tight timelines, have put both the Organisation and the international community to a stringent capacity building and efficiency test. I would like to pay tribute to the dedication of the Director-General and all the OPCW staff involved in this operation, for the exemplary way they have set about this demanding task so far. While the challenging work of the OPCW is making progress, the suffering of the Syrian people continues. The Syrian authorities have shown that they can facilitate access for OPCW inspectors – they need to show the same commitment to ensuring humanitarian aid reaches those in need.

The European Union notes the completion of a number of important tasks. We stress the importance of continued achievement of the deadlines set by the Executive Council, including the removal of priority chemical weapons from Syria by 31 December this year. We expect Syria to cooperate fully and transparently with the Technical Secretariat in fulfilment of its obligations under the decisions of the Executive Council and UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and to bear, as specified by the Chemical Weapons Convention, the verification costs related to its chemical weapons. Since the first moment, the European Union and its Member States, were ready to contribute to the success of this endeavour, in the form of considerable financial and in-kind support to the OPCW and the Joint Mission, including by providing air transport for inspectors, technical personnel and equipment going to Syria, and hosting the support base of the Mission. We remain ready to do more and we call on all other States Parties in a position to do so, also to provide assistance in the form of funding, expertise, or equipment in order to help achieve the quickest possible completion of destruction of the Syrian chemical weapon programme.

Secondly, this year, the Third Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, conducted under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Krzysztof Patulej of Poland, as well as your excellent work, Mr Chairman, as Chair of the Committee of the Whole reached a consensus agreement which provides political support, broad guidance and the roadmap to OPCW for the next five years and thereby ensures that the Convention will remain fit for purpose. The European Union actively contributed to that process, as did a number of its Member States, by submitting concrete proposals at the Conference and actively participating in the Open-Ended Working Group, under the able leadership of Ambassador Nassima Baghli of Algeria. It is important to ensure implementation of the Third Review Conference outcomes under the supervision of the Executive Council. The follow-up process should be conducted in cooperation between States Parties and the Technical Secretariat including, as appropriate, stakeholders such as chemical industry associations, the private sector, academia and civil society. Such an approach will support building on existing competencies, developing synergies and avoiding duplication of efforts. The Review Conference covered in a comprehensive manner the important issues on the agenda of this Organisation, and I shall highlight some of those.

To verify destruction of declared stockpiles will of course remain a key priority for the Organisation. We reiterate our concern that the final extended deadline was not met and we

urge the possessor states to continue with their efforts to complete destruction in the shortest time possible in accordance with the Decision of the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of State Parties on the issue of the final extended deadlines.

At the same time, in order to remain effective, the OPCW will need to adapt to its changing security environment as well as to developments in science and technology.

Mr. Chairperson,

Events earlier this year reminded us yet again of the importance of universal adherence to the Convention not limited to but in particular in the Middle East region. With the accession of Somalia on 28 June and of Syria on 14 October, membership has reached 190. The situation in Syria showed that hard work is still ahead of us in order to achieve the object and purpose of the Convention, namely to achieve a world free of chemical weapons and prevent their re-emergence.

The European Union calls upon all States not Party to ratify or accede to the Convention without delay. We encourage the Technical Secretariat to continue its efforts in this direction in a targeted and tailor-made manner, and reiterate our willingness to actively contribute to this common objective with concrete action.

Mr. Chairperson,

Whilst we underline the importance of cooperation amongst States Parties, we also wish to highlight the need for cooperation, and the coordination that this requires, more broadly. Through cooperation and coordination, effectiveness is maximized and efficiencies are achieved by avoiding duplication. The European Union believes in the importance of the OPCW's cooperation with other relevant international organisations, as the recent close cooperation between the UN and the OPCW in the case of the Syrian operation has vividly demonstrated. Moreover, the added value of regular engagement and cooperation with all stakeholders, including the chemical industry and civil society ought to be fully utilized. We are convinced that substantive engagement with civil society, including during the Conferences of States Parties as was also the case during the Third Review Conference, enriches the work of the OPCW. It also contributes to improving the transparency of the Organisation, something to which the European Union attaches great importance. Opportunities for cooperation exist also at the regional and sub-regional levels. In this regard, coordination is necessary between work carried out on the basis of various Articles of the Convention.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union believes that the various provisions of the Convention, including in particular provisions under Articles VI, VII, X and XI, and efforts to promote universality, form an organic whole, all contributing to promoting the overall prohibition on chemical weapons.

The European Union's commitment to the implementation of all provisions of the Convention is exemplified, inter alia, through its voluntary financial contributions. Through its latest contribution of over 2.1 million Euros, now under implementation, it continues to support activities in all areas of the Convention, including national implementation,

assistance and protection and international cooperation. These activities take place in, and are directed to, States Parties from all regional groups with particular emphasis placed on support to the OPCW's Programme for Africa. We encourage States Parties to take advantage of the assistance provided through the funded activities, by participating in them according to their own needs.

The European Union underlines the importance of full national implementation of the Convention and urges all States Parties to put in place and enforce all the necessary legislative and administrative measures in accordance with Article VII. The European Union remains concerned that 16 years on, a relatively high number of States Parties have yet to do so. We welcome the Technical Secretariat's efforts to explore new ways of achieving progress in this area including training and outreach. We also recognise the often very serious competing challenges some States Parties are facing, and therefore wish to highlight again the relevant assistance available through the activities organised by the Technical Secretariat. The European Union stands ready to continue assisting in this process, not only through its voluntary financial contributions, but also through further concrete action.

Moreover, in our efforts to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, all provisions of the Convention are important, including in particular provisions on challenge inspections and investigations of alleged use and verification according to Article VI. We need to ensure that the Article VI verification regime is as effective as possible by ensuring that Article VI inspections are directed to the sites of the most relevance to the object and purpose of the Convention.

The European Union attaches great importance to the work carried out under Article X. We also stand ready to discuss concrete proposals put forward under Article XI, in accordance with the relevant decision taken by the Third Review Conference. We also recognize that the implementation of all articles of the Convention constitutes a tangible contribution to the effort to prevent and respond to acts of terrorism in the chemical field.

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union wishes to thank the Chairperson of the Executive Council Ambassador Olexander Horin of Ukraine as well as the Vice-Chairs, the Facilitators and the Technical Secretariat for their dedicated work. We are pleased with the fact that it has been possible for States Parties to agree on the OPCW Programme and Budget for 2014, including its revision due to the impact of the Syria operation, to be adopted during this Conference.

Last but not least, we would like to congratulate the Director-General Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü on the well-deserved renewal of his mandate in appreciation of the way that he has steered the efficient functioning of the Organisation, in particular during the course of this very challenging endeavour regarding the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons.

Mr. Chairperson,

Finally, this year we celebrated the awarding to the Organisation of the 2013 Nobel Prize for Peace. Such occasions serve to remind us of the essence of the OPCW's work: to achieve a world free of chemical weapons by destroying existing chemical weapons and preventing their re-emergence. We are also reminded that this endeavour is a collective one and that it can only be achieved through a cooperative and multilateral approach. As highlighted by the

European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, in her Statement of 11 October to mark this remarkable achievement, "this comes as a reward for OPCW's unceasing efforts to achieve the goals of the Chemicals Weapons Convention, the only international instrument banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction".

We are looking forward to working with all delegations in a constructive and open manner at this Conference and we trust that it will be a success.

I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Conference.

Thank you for your attention.

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