



The 20th Conference of the State Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention

The Hague, The Netherlands, 29 November to 4 December 2015

The Statement of the Society for Chemical Weapons Victims Support (SCWVS), from Iran

By: Elaheh Pooyandeh

Mr Chairperson

Director General

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to speak at the plenary session of the 20th Conference of State Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, on behalf of the Society for Chemical Weapons Victims Support, from Iran.

Allow me to extend my appreciation to the Director General Ambassador Üzümcü and the Technical Secretariat as well as to the states parties to the CWC for their efforts in implementing the Convention. Indeed, winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013 has been a significant success for the OPCW and is in accordance with Alfred Nobel's will, where it says that: *"the most or the best work for fraternity between the nations and the abolition or reduction of standing armies"*.

We also believe that the accession of two new countries to the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2015 is one big step towards universalizing the convention.

In addition, the establishment of the, “International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons,” as well as the “Trust Fund for the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons” and recent activities of the Technical Secretariat in this framework, is highly appreciated especially so, since thousands of Chemical Warfare survivors are still suffering in my country, Iran, decades after exposure to chemical warfare agents.

Excellencies

By the tremendous efforts of the international community and civil society, the use of chemical weapons is highly condemned today. But it doesn't mean it has ended.

Chemical weapons are still a threat to humanity. We have witnessed the use of different chemical agents in the recent conflicts in the world. The chemical weapons' stockpiles still exist in some countries and the Chemical Weapons Convention is not yet an entirely universal treaty.

On behalf of tens of thousands of Victims of Chemical Weapons in my country, we urge all the non-member states to join the Chemical Weapons Convention immediately. We urge the states parties who possess chemical weapons to fully destroy their stockpiles and we request the international community and civil society to continue raising awareness about the consequences of chemical weapons.

Mr. Chairperson

As a young person, I strongly believe that the young generation who are going to be the future leaders; need to know more about the disastrous effects of chemical weapons on the humankind and the environment.

It is regretful today that our children and youth all around the world are playing violent video games, including those that endorse the use of chemical weapons under euphemistic names such “poison spell,” in order to exterminate their cyber enemies.

We are very close to complete destruction of the declared chemical weapons arsenals and yet, our young people are learning – through their play - to deploy them. This is

unforgivable and needs the immediate action of all governments, civil society and individuals.

Mr. Chairperson

The history of the use of the chemical weapons needs to be kept alive in order to save the succeeding generations from such horrors. The *Oral History Project* of the Chemical Warfare Survivors in the Society for Chemical Weapons Victims Support and the Tehran Peace Museum is an effort in this regard.

Considering the histories, recollections and perspectives of victims of chemical weapons in our future programs and supporting the victims through their lives are our responsibilities. Choosing Professor Mahdi Balali-Mood, who is a distinguished medical expert in treating these victims, as one of the winners of the OPCW-The Hague Award in 2015, reflects the OPCW's tendency as well.

In conclusion, Mr. Dehkordi- a survivor of chemical warfare who has also travelled here from Iran - wishes to share some of his personal reflections. I invite you all to listen to him:

“Mr Chairperson

Director General

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

I was exposed to chemical weapons 31 years ago and this has changed my whole life. I cannot count the number of times I have been hospitalized and I cough very painfully every day. I have suffered from burnt eyes, I have struggled for my every breath and I have watched many of my friends who have died in silence in recent years. This has not been my choice.

Now, on behalf of all fellow victims, I'm here to ask each one of you to take every necessary step for the abolishment of chemical weapons.

I am also here to pass a peace message from my fellow victims who are working hard to raise awareness on consequences of the use of chemical weapons to save our future generation from reemergence of such disasters and to spread friendship among all the people around the globe.

I wish you all success in your important responsibility in this regard.”

Thank you very much for your attention.