



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twentieth Session
30 November – 4 December 2015

C-20/NAT.45
1 December 2015
ENGLISH only

LUXEMBOURG

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PIERRE-LOUIS LORENZ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF LUXEMBOURG TO THE OPCW
AT THE TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

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

First of all, allow me to state that Luxembourg fully aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by H.E. Ambassador Jacek Bylica, Principal Advisor and Special Envoy for Non-Proliferation and Disarmament of the European Union.

Let me congratulate you, Mister Chairman, Ambassador Eduardo Ibarrola-Nicolín of Mexico, for your election to the Chair and assure you of the cooperation of my delegation along the deliberations of this Conference. I would like to thank your predecessor, H.E. Ms Vesela Mrđen Korać of Croatia, for her work as Chairperson of the Nineteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. I would also like to seize the opportunity to thank H.E. Mr Francesco Azzarello, President of the Executive Council, as well as the Bureau for their important work.

Thanks also to you, Director-General, for the tireless efforts you and the Technical Secretariat deliver day after day in order to get our world ever closer to the goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

We have come a long way. The Chemical Weapons Convention stands, unequalled, as the most successful disarmament Convention so far, being the sole international instrument to verifiably ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction and edging ever closer to universality. Indeed, Luxembourg warmly welcomes the two new States Parties to the Convention, Myanmar and Angola. Congratulations for this important achievement.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is the strongest and most effective such convention: indeed, it has proper “teeth”, so to speak, as it imposes a strong verification regime, allowing thorough inspections of States Parties’ declared chemical weapons arsenals, stockpiles and facilities. Consequently, it is the only convention that has given rise to a world-class organisation, the OPCW, which today can pride itself not only of top expertise and capacities, but also of a serious track record of disarmament missions in the field, as for instance today



in the Syrian Arab Republic, under extreme conditions, while witnessing a gruelling civil war.

Deservedly, the OPCW has received the Nobel Peace prize in 2013 in recognition of its contributions to international peace and security. Furthermore, this year, at the commemoration of the centenary of the first use of chemical weapons on a massive scale during World War I, States Parties have adopted the Ieper Declaration which condemns the use of these terrible weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. This declaration is yet another piece in a long list of statements of condemnation in the strongest terms of any use of any toxic chemical as a weapon.

Yet, the threat of the use of chemical substances as weapons remains real, and we witness this dramatic reality on a recurrent basis in the Syrian Arab Republic. Indeed, the shocking reports reaching us from the battlefields in the Syrian Arab Republic remain a stark reminder that chemical products and substances continue to be used as weapons, on a systematic and repeated basis. Some actors still consider them a legitimate means to use as a weapon, despite their use being a blatant violation of international law amounting to a crime against humanity as well as a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Luxembourg stands firm in condemning all use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and expresses its grave concern about the findings of the Fact-Finding Mission reports.

Although the Joint UN-OPCW mission has been a huge success – removing under the most dangerous of circumstances and within very tight deadlines an entire chemical weapons stockpile out of Syrian territory and destroying 98% of the declared chemical substances so far – we continue to be faced with a grim reality.

The Fact-Finding Mission's reports have repeatedly confirmed that the alleged incidents in the Idlib province in March 2015 likely involved the use of one or more toxic chemicals – including chlorine – as a weapon. Witnesses have highlighted the “invariable” presence of helicopters during the attacks, a military asset which only the Syrian Government possesses. Clearly, this is a breach of, both, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013)! These atrocious acts cannot go unpunished. Furthermore, the FFM has confirmed “with utmost confidence” that during an incident in the town of Marea, in the Aleppo Governorate on 21 August 2015, at least two people were exposed to sulfur mustard and that it is very likely that the effects of sulfur mustard resulted in the death of an infant.

These incidents are extremely worrying and compelling, thus underlining the importance of the Executive Council decision taken at its Fiftieth Meeting on 23 November 2015, unanimously condemning all use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and expressing grave concern about the findings of the Fact-Finding Mission.

In light of the United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), which condemns the use of chlorine as a chemical weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic as a violation of both United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and of the Chemical Weapons Convention, Luxembourg calls on the Syrian Arab Republic to extend their full cooperation to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission. Further light must be shed on these incidents and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

That is why, thanks to the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), Luxembourg places very high hopes in the successful setting up of the Joint Investigative Mechanism in order to identify, in close cooperation with the FFM, the perpetrators of chemicals attacks in the Syrian Arab Republic. Perpetrators of crimes of such a magnitude and cruelty must face consequences and cannot go unpunished.

Also, we remain concerned that outstanding questions have yet to be adequately addressed by the Syrian regime. Serious discrepancies surround both declared and undeclared stockpiles and storage facilities. We expect the OPCW to investigate fully the inconsistencies in Syrian declarations. As long as questions remain on both the veracity of the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration as well as the continuing use of chemical weapons, the Syrian Arab Republic cannot claim to be in full compliance with its obligations to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the United Nations and the international community.

Luxembourg therefore urges the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the Declaration Assessment Team in a transparent, honest and timely manner so that we can close this chapter once and for all. Luxembourg reiterates its call on the Syrian Arab Republic to take the necessary measures to ensure that its chemical weapons programme is completely and irreversibly eliminated. In the same vein, the Syrian Arab Republic must provide sufficient and adequate evidence in order to clarify all discrepancies in the Syrian initial declarations.

Finally, Luxembourg continues to believe that the Syrian Arab Republic, as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, is solely responsible for meeting the costs arising from the elimination of its chemical weapons programme and the verification thereof. The Syrian Arab Republic must meet its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. In this respect, Luxembourg supports the EU's decision of February 2014 to encourage the use of frozen Syrian funds in order to pay for the destruction effort and related verification activities.

Despite the recent accession – as mentioned in the beginning – of Myanmar and Angola, the ultimate goal of the Chemical Weapons Convention remains unfulfilled until this day. Four States continue to stay aside these internationally accepted rules and norms. This remains a challenge to international peace and security. Luxembourg strongly supports the objective of universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and therefore renews its call upon the four remaining States to make every effort to sign and ratify as soon as possible.

Luxembourg welcomes the 'The Hague Ethical Guidelines' addressed to chemistry practitioners to support awareness of ethical norms for scientific research and development.

Important stocks and arsenals of chemical weapons remain. I wish to seize this opportunity to urge, once more, those States that are still in the process of destroying their declared chemical weapons stockpiles to do everything in their power to make further progress in the destruction process in view of ridding the world of these prohibited weapons as soon as possible.

In view of the 2018 Review Conference and in light of the current status of the Convention as a landmark disarmament instrument, please allow me to briefly elaborate on the challenges that lie ahead of us.

When we look at the world today and consider the worrying developments in the international security environment, we must recognise:

- (a) a deepening mistrust and a rise of tensions between States;
- (b) a growing number of terrorist activities, which do not respect national borders and whose cruelty shocks the world; and
- (c) in several respects, international law, treaties and conventions are under threat, as some States have violated several provisions of such important instruments, which form the basis of our international community of States.

Considering these developments, the next Review Conference must serve as an occasion to reaffirm our commitment to international law as the fundamental basis of the international community of States. It is crucial to achieve a common perspective on what world we wish to live in: a place where States honour their commitments and respect international laws and norms, thereby strengthening mutual trust and furthering international cooperation rather than nurturing confrontation. This Convention has made a decisive contribution in this respect and must be further strengthened to maintain its relevance in today's world. Over the years, the OPCW has become an effective organisation, accumulating extensive expertise and competences. These must, at all cost, be protected and preserved, and the Organisation's work must imperatively continue to follow ongoing developments. Considering today's terrorist threat, it is important to extend the Organisations' work towards the prevention of the abuse of chemical products and substances as weapons as well as their diversion away from peaceful purposes.

In conclusion, allow me to stress that Luxembourg is looking forward to working with all delegations in a constructive and open manner at this Conference and that we trust that it will be a success.

I would like to request that this statement be considered an official document of the Twentieth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and be published on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.

- - - 0 - - -