

Ms. Kathryn Millett
Biosecure, UK
Presentation to 21st CWC Conference of States Parties (CSP)
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
The Hague, The Netherlands
28 November – 2 December 2016

Mr. Chairman, Director-General, Excellencies, CWC Coalition Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be able to speak on behalf of Biosecure at this august meeting for the first time. Biosecure is a proud member of the CWC Coalition and our team has been active in the biological weapons field for over 15 years working to promote public awareness and industry engagement in the Biological Weapons Convention, as well as working on issues of convergence of biology and chemistry.

Mr. Chairman,

These are difficult times for multilateral disarmament. This year has been marked by increased division among states over key disarmament issues and the collapse of consensus. We have seen deep schisms arise over the issue of nuclear weapons and efforts to usher in a world-wide ban on these weapons, continued stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament, and failure to achieve any progress at the recent BWC Eighth Review Conference in Geneva last week. With the continued use of chemical weapons in armed conflict now entering its fourth year in violation of international humanitarian law, the universal norm prohibiting the use of toxic chemicals as weapons has been weakened.

Despite these worrying developments, the Chemical Weapons Convention represents a high water mark in international efforts to address unconventional weapons – in an environment where progress can be hard to come by. We applaud States Parties on their combined efforts towards the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles and the uncompromising reaction of the international community in condemning the use of chemical weapons by any actor, under any circumstances. However, much remains to be done if we are to rid the world of the scourge of chemical weapons.

Firstly, we encourage States Parties to redouble their efforts to keep pace with developments in science and technology and their implications for the CWC, particularly in the realm of biological and chemical convergence. These developments continue to offer benefits and challenges for the regime. The sterling work of the OPCW in this area should be recognized. The creation of the post of Science Advisor had been instrumental in this regard. Continued attention on S&T will be especially important in the lead up to the next Review Conference and experts from academia and industry will have valuable insights upon which you should draw.

Secondly, the continued use of toxic chemicals as a method of warfare, banned by the Chemical Weapons Convention and thus a violation of the treaty, by any actor, must be stopped and the perpetrators held accountable. On that basis, we commend the decision adopted by the 83rd OPCW Executive Council and the one-year extension of the OPCW/United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. There can be no middle ground on

this issue: to fail to bring perpetrators to account for their actions is to continue to weaken the norm against the use of toxic chemicals as weapons.

Third, States should continue to work to achieve full universality of the Convention, bringing in the last four outstanding countries as well as geographic areas which are not yet under OPCW verification auspices, so that the Convention truly becomes universal. There can be no justification for any State to remain outside this Convention. Biosecure urges the remaining States to ratify or accede without delay. In doing so, they will confirm a commitment to ensure that chemical weapons are never again used and to completely eliminate these abhorrent weapons.

Mr. Chairman,

While the Chemical Weapons Convention was negotiated at a time before the rise of the so-called 'humanitarian disarmament' approach that enabled the development of the landmine and cluster munitions ban treaties, at its heart, the Convention's efforts to prevent the use of chemical weapons is about protecting humanity and preserving human life – thus it is a humanitarian disarmament endeavor in all but name. Among the defining characteristics of humanitarian disarmament are its reliance on collective and collaborative action between states, civil society, and other actors; its interdisciplinary and innovative approach to creating complementary practical tools and perspectives; and, its focus on those victimized by weapons. While the CWC is an arms control treaty, Biosecure encourages States and other stakeholders to take advantage, where appropriate, of a more humanitarian disarmament approach to the work of the Convention. There are numerous ways that this can be done.

Firstly, we call upon State Parties to continue and expand the involvement of civil society – including non-governmental organizations, academics, industry, and other interested stakeholders – in the work of the OPCW and the CWC. Only by engaging all stakeholders globally will the OPCW retain its relevance and public awareness. We welcome the great strides that have been made in recent years on inclusiveness and openness at OPCW meetings as well as the timely establishment of an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, but argue that much can be done to improve transparency and access to Conferences of State Parties. We urge States to reconsider the current practice in the NGO registration system to attend meetings which is unnecessarily protracted, complicated and opaque, and completely out of step with NGO registration in other multilateral processes.

Secondly, we firmly believe that the evolving challenges posed by non-state actor use of toxic chemicals as weapons requires innovative responses to mitigate this risk. Other disarmament areas could provide some inspiration: for example, an initiative by the NGO Geneva Call to engage armed non-state actor groups in signing a Deed of Commitment forgoing the use of landmines has met with great success. This initiative complements activities to strengthen norms at a top-down state level with a grassroots bottom-up approach. Such an activity could be pursued with regards to a Deed of Commitment on the use of chemical and biological weapons.

Lastly, we strongly urge State Parties to provide better and more sustained assistance to victims of chemical weapons. Recalling that at the heart of the Convention lies a humanitarian imperative, the level of assistance provided by States to chemical weapons victims remains shockingly low and underfunded. While the OPCW's readiness to provide effective and timely assistance to victims under Article X is of the utmost importance, there

remains an urgent need to recognize and provide for the longer-term medical, physical, and psychological care of victims as well as that of their families and communities. In addition, while the OPCW's International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons and the voluntary trust fund was a welcome initiative, it is poorly resourced and lacks even basic utility for victims. For example, the majority of chemical weapons victims are not native English speakers, so at the very least, translation of the webpage into other languages should be provided. We therefore call on States Parties to provide better support for this essential pillar of work.

Thank you for your kind attention, and I wish for this statement to be made part of the final CSP record and posted on the external server and website.