



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Second Session
27 November – 1 December 2017

C-22/NAT.38
29 November 2017
ENGLISH only

SRI LANKA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ADAM M.J. SADIQ
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SRI LANKA TO THE OPCW AT THE
TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

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

At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Sri Lanka, allow me to extend warm felicitations to you, Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of Morocco, on your election as the Chairperson of the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. I am confident that under your astute guidance, the deliberations of this Conference will lead to a successful conclusion.

I wish to take this opportunity to express our profound appreciation to Ambassador Dr Christoph Israng of Germany for his able stewardship and wise counsel during the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

Further, I would like to convey our sincere thanks to Director-General, H.E. Ahmet Üzümcü, for his outstanding leadership, and the Technical Secretariat for its dedicated and indefatigable efforts in guiding the activities of the OPCW toward the cherished goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to express Sri Lanka's strong support for the nomination of Ambassador Fernando Arias of Spain for the post of Director-General of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW. We are confident that the OPCW will be in the safe hands of Ambassador Arias.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Her Excellency Ambassador Haifa Aissami Madah, on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which established the OPCW. During the last two decades, the OPCW has facilitated the near universal disarmament of an entire class of a weapon of mass destruction. This makes the Chemical Weapons Convention the most successful international



disarmament treaty in the world. With currently 96 percent of declared chemical weapons stockpiles verifiably destroyed, under the supervision of the OPCW, this 20th anniversary marks another milestone in the global endeavour to free the world of chemical weapons.

Since the establishment of the OPCW in 1997, there have been major positive developments impacting on the economic and geo-political significance of Asia, Africa, Latin America & the Caribbean. Today, around 84% of the world population lives in countries of the Asian, African and Latin American & Caribbean regions and 73percent of Member States of the OPCW are located in these regions.

Also, the importance of the chemical industry has substantially increased in these regions. In order to prepare this Organisation for the future, we believe that due attention must be given to these developments. Not only regarding the growing need for assistance and resources in the area of capacity building, but also with regard to the representation of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean in the executive body of this Organisation. In this regard, we wish to highlight the urgent need to review the composition of the Executive Council, to reflect equitable geographical distribution, the importance of chemical industry, and the political and security interests of Member States in the contemporary world.

In strengthening the future role of the OPCW as an efficient and effective disarmament organisation, my delegation commends the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities, under the able leadership of Co-Chairs, H.E. Sabine Nölke, Ambassador of Canada and H.E. Bruce Koloane, Ambassador of South Africa. We are confident that the working group will formulate a balanced, well focused programme of work and methods, to be taken up at the Fourth Review Conference next year.

Sri Lanka firmly believes that chemicals should only be used for peaceful purposes. The full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all provisions of the Convention, including Article XI, is vital to avoid hampering the economic or technological development of States Parties. In this context, we appreciate the efforts by the Technical Secretariat in organising last week's "Review and Evaluation Workshop on the Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI". We also appreciate if the ideas shared during this workshop will be taken into consideration by Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities and presented at the Fourth Review Conference.

Sri Lanka had experienced the horror of terrorism for almost three decades, My delegation therefore underlines the importance of countering terrorism and believes that the ongoing discussions in the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism under the able stewardship of H.E. Momar Diop of Senegal, and at the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors under the guidance of H.E. María Teresa Infante of Chile, are imperative to address the serious threats of chemical terrorism.

The shifting security landscape in which we witness the rise of non-State actors demands our full attention. As highlighted in the working group discussions, the strengthening of capabilities of States Parties is crucial to address this rapidly evolving phenomenon. In this regard, the competence of non-State actors to manufacture and use chemical weapons underscores the need for the full and effective implementation of Article VII and must be addressed as a future priority of this Organisation.

Further, Sri Lanka believes that the Technical Secretariat should assist States Parties which already have national legislation implemented to review and upgrade their existing national measures in keeping with current developments. Technical assistance and support for such measures should be provided through tailor-made programmes, following a careful study of the needs of States Parties, since one size does not fit all.

Sri Lanka highlights the crucial need for international cooperation and assistance in the areas of verification and capacity building. In this context, we welcome the participation of National Authorities in capacity-building programmes, but we reiterate the importance of having an effective review and evaluation mechanism at the end of each programme. My delegation believes that the success of capacity-building programmes largely depends on the effective functioning and commitment of National Authorities themselves.

Sri Lanka attaches importance to the strengthening of national capacities in chemical emergency responses. In this context, I am pleased to note that the National Authority of Sri Lanka, with the assistance of the OPCW, conducted the 5th Regional Basic Training Course on Emergency Response to Chemical Incidents in Colombo from 6 to 10 February this year. This course was attended by 37 participants from various agencies in the region, with the objective of providing participants adequate training on civil defence, civil protection, and decontamination operations in contaminated areas and counter-measures in the event of incidents involving chemical warfare agents or toxic industrial chemicals.

Further, as a part of the 18th edition of the OPCW Associate Programme under the industry segment, a Sri Lankan company, Camso Loadstar (Pvt) Ltd, together with the National Authority of Sri Lanka, for the third consecutive time trained two participants from Nigeria and Ethiopia.

My delegation wishes to take this opportunity to express its profound appreciation to the Russian Federation for completing the destruction of its entire declared stockpile of chemical weapons, which is a significant victory for the international community.

Sri Lanka also welcomes the progress in the elimination of Libya's remaining Category 2 chemical weapons outside Libyan territory and commends the Technical Secretariat and all other associated States Parties and organisations for their continuing assistance in this process.

Further, Sri Lanka would like to call upon States still in possession of chemical weapons to take the necessary steps, without any further delay, to expedite the destruction of their declared chemical weapons stockpiles, old chemical weapons and abandoned chemical weapons, since the existence of such chemical weapons continues to pose a threat to global security.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone, either State or non-State actor, and anywhere, irrespective of circumstances, is reprehensible and completely contrary to the provisions of the Convention and all norms of international law. In this regard our delegation takes note of the findings described in the seventh report of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism. We strongly condemn the use of chemical substances in Khan Shaykhun in April 2017 and the use of mustard gas in the town of Um-Housh in September 2016. The use of chemical weapons in Syrian Arab Republic is of grave concern and we would like to emphasise that the perpetrators of those atrocious acts must be held accountable.

In conclusion, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official series of documents of this Conference and to be placed on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank you.

--- 0 ---