



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR BHASWATI MUKHERJEE
Permanent Representative of India to the OPCW and
Leader of the Indian Delegation to the
Third Review Conference
April 8 - 19, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

May I express my felicitations at your election to the Chairmanship of the Third Review Conference. Historically, India and Poland share the warmest bilateral relations. We have great confidence in your multilateral skills and personal abilities to steer this Conference to a resounding success.

2. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Her Excellency, Ambassador Nassima Baghli, for her outstanding contribution in steering the deliberations of the Open Ended Working Group with consummate diplomatic skills to a successful conclusion. May I also thank our Director General Ambassador Ahmet Uzumcu for his unstinting support throughout the preparatory period and for his important statement this morning. The Conference was honoured by the presence and participation of UN Secretary General H.E. Mr. Ban Ki Moon and H.E. Mr. Frans Timmermans, Foreign Minister of the Netherlands. This underlines growing international recognition of the vital role of the OPCW towards the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mr. Chairman

3. India fully endorses the statement made by H.E. the Ambassador of Iran on behalf of the NAM States Parties to the CWC and China.

4. The Third Review Conference is taking place at a time when the Organisation is passing through a crucial period of transition. Globally there are new and potential challenges to international peace and security. The OPCW as the only multilateral disarmament organisation has a key role to play in this regard.

5. The Founding Fathers of the Convention, some of whom are present here today, had with extraordinary wisdom in Article VIII paragraph 22 of the Convention, provided for such Review Conferences at intervals of five years to undertake review of the operation of the Convention, including any relevant scientific and technological developments. The Director General is to be congratulated for having organised a high level meeting on relevant scientific and technological developments at the end of the first week of RC3.

6. Any review from the last Review Conference to this one, would need to be seen in the perspective of the Final Extended Deadline of 29th April 2012 and the political decision to address this issue taken by the Conference of States Parties at its 16th session [C16/DEC11]. It was decided in paragraph 3 (h) of that decision that "This RC3 is to conduct a comprehensive review of the implementation of this decision at a specially designated meeting of this Conference." India attaches great importance to this special meeting being held for a full day this coming Thursday.

7. Disarmament is a primary goal of the Convention and should remain the priority till the complete destruction of all chemical weapons is achieved. India has amply demonstrated its commitment and sense of responsibility by destroying all its chemical weapon stockpiles under OPCW verification within the timeframe prescribed by the Convention. We urge Possessor States to fulfil their obligations within the shortest possible time.

8. Universality is another key issue, fundamental to the success of the Conference and intrinsic to any review. Since the last Review Conference, five new States Parties, Guinea Bissau, Lebanon, Bahamas, the Dominican Republic and Iraq have acceded to the Convention and are to be felicitated. However, eight States remain non-party to the Convention including two signatory States and six non-signatory States. We call upon all non-States Parties to ratify the Convention so that this important disarmament instrument can achieve full universality.

9. A recent development of much concern to India is the alleged use of chemical weapons near Aleppo in northern Syria. India firmly believes that the international legal norm against the use of chemical weapons anywhere, anytime, must not be breached. One of the cornerstones of the Chemical Weapons Convention is the complete destruction and elimination of chemical weapons all over the world and immediate assistance to States Parties in the tragic event of actual use of such weapons. We must strive to ensure the safe and secure custody of chemical weapons stockpiles and to prevent terrorists and non-state actors from gaining access to such stockpiles. We support the ongoing investigation of these allegations by the UN in cooperation with the OPCW and look forward to its findings.

10. Allow me now to highlight a few issues which India considers of particular significance:

National Implementation

- There is an urgent need of developing effective national implementation of the Convention in all States Parties.

Article XI

- Full effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI is essential for the realisation of the object and purpose of the Convention. The time is appropriate to move ahead on this issue.

New Scientific and Technological Developments:

- New technologies such as combinatorial chemistry and molecular modelling can impact the scientific bases of the Convention. Methods must be evolved for ensuring that such new and emerging technologies do not have an adverse impact on the object and purposes of the Convention.

Verification

- India, with its large and growing chemical industry, has the second largest number of declared facilities and has been filing chemical industry declarations in an exemplary fashion. India receives one of the largest number of inspections from OPCW and we have a flawless track record of verification inspections. Despite the obvious difficulties, faced, as a large number of our facilities fall within the SME category, we have cooperated and subjected our industry to OPCW inspections. The OPCW nevertheless needs to evolve transparent and objective criteria and modalities for inspections.

Export Controls

- India has strong and law-based national export controls which fulfill all our CWC obligations as well as commitments under UNSCR 1540. India has committed to maintain the highest international standards with reference to control of chemical, biological and toxin items. In this regard, India has actively engaged with the Australia Group and other export control regimes with a view to seeking full membership.

Mr. Chairman,

11. A successful Conference necessitates a vigorous review of the Convention and a forward looking Political Declaration. Both, in our view, form an intrinsic whole. The review document, thanks to Ambassador Baghli, has large sections in consensus language which need not be revisited. The Political Declaration, on the other hand, would require strengthening in order to guide the OPCW during this period of transition. The discussions, while being open and transparent, should be in a format and in a setting conducive to negotiation. We are confident that under the guidance of Ambassador Paturej, as supported by the Ambassador of Iraq in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee of the Whole, a balanced but forward looking Political Declaration and a thorough Review would be achieved. India, as always, is available to support the process either in her present capacity as Chairperson of the Executive Council or in a national capacity.

12. In conclusion, the insightful words of the renowned Security Adviser Bernard Baruch at the end of World War II still remain relevant. He said on atomic warfare, and I quote,

“Science has torn from nature a secret so vast in its potentiality that our minds cower from the terror it creates.”

13. Today with new challenges including alleged use of chemical weapons near Aleppo in Northern Syria, we also should recall what Bernard Baruch said on peace and disarmament. In 1947 among the rubble and ashes of the aftermath of World War II, he noted:

“If the history of past 50 years teaches us anything, it is that peace does not follow disarmament – disarmament follows peace.”

14. We need to strengthen the OPCW, the only global multilateral disarmament organization and provide guidance and insight for addressing the challenges that lie ahead. We must do so resolutely and in the clear knowledge that as States Parties it is incumbent upon us to do so. We have no other choice.

Thank you,

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