



OPCW

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LUXEMBOURG

**STATEMENT BY JEAN ASSELBORN
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF LUXEMBOURG
AT THE THIRD REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Mr Secretary-General,
Mr Chairman of the Conference,
Mr Director-General,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me, first of all, to subscribe wholeheartedly to the statement to be made by the European Union.

It is a great honour for me to address this Third Review Conference, which is being held at a key moment for our global efforts in the field of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of disarmament.

Just 11 years after the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997, it already counted 188 States Parties, which represents an exceptional and unprecedented success in the efforts of the international community in its quest for a world free of chemical weapons. Indeed, the Convention has succeeded in prohibiting an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, thanks to an efficient and independent international system of control and verification, representing a set of veritable world standards. To date, it is the only regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to have succeeded in establishing itself so impressively. Along with the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which prohibits the use of chemical and biological weapons and forms an integral part of traditional international law, the regime prohibiting chemical weapons now rests upon one of the most solid legal foundations.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has undoubtedly brought us closer to our common objective of a world which is safer for everyone. My country is proud to count itself among the founding members of the Convention.

Luxembourg remains firmly convinced that our efforts should be focused on the constant quest for security with the lowest possible level of armament. In this context, allow me to pay tribute to the adoption in New York last week of the Arms Trade Treaty, following seven years of negotiations within a multilateral framework. By setting the highest possible common standards for export, import and transfer of conventional weapons, this new legal instrument will not only make trade in conventional weapons more transparent and



responsible, but also help to reduce human suffering and to reinforce international peace, security and stability. That's one more step in the right direction!

Despite the undeniable success of the Convention, we must note that the threat of chemical weapons persists. The recourse to chemical weapons and agents unfortunately remains current.

For this reason, this is an appropriate time to be holding the Third Review Conference, in the context of reinforcing the Convention as well as of the future of the Organisation. In this respect, it is important to continue to make full use of such a unique instrument as the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and of its expertise and skills, so as to prevent any recourse to chemical agents in conflict in the future.

Syria

Since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, together with our European and international partners, and indeed the OPCW, we have called on the Syrian authorities to renounce the use of its chemical weapons under any circumstances and to protect its stockpiles until their destruction has been verified.

Luxembourg warmly welcomes the decision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to launch a United Nations investigation in response to the allegations that chemical weapons had been used in the districts of Khan al-Assal, near Aleppo, and Ataybah, in the vicinity of Damascus.

It is, indeed, imperative that all credible allegations are investigated. If the use of chemical weapons were confirmed, that would represent a clear violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol or other applicable regulations under traditional international law.

I call upon the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with the fact-finding mission led by Mr Sellström, and hope that he will soon be able to report the results of the mission to the Member States of the United Nations.

Luxembourg stands ready to support this important fact-finding mission through deployment of the emergency communication system "emergency.lu".

Universality

The temptation for some to equip themselves with weapons of mass destruction at reduced cost cannot, unfortunately, be ignored. Therefore, we must renew and intensify our efforts to ensure universality of the Convention.

Chemical weapons are still too readily available. In view of the recent crises in North and West Africa, which all developed into trans-regional crises, it is important, today more than ever, to control and protect existing stockpiles, and gradually to destroy them, in order to avoid a situation in which these weapons are diverted and fall into the hands of those who seek to spread terror and instability across entire regions.

Two States which have signed the Convention and thus offer their political support to the objectives and principles of the Convention, and are committed to not compromising its objectives, have not yet finalised their ratification process. Six other States remain entirely

outside the regime of the Convention. I call upon these States to join the regime of the Convention and the international consensus as soon as possible.

Implementation and support for States Parties

In order to contribute to disarmament and to preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all the provisions of the Convention represents a decisive element. The States Parties must undertake all possible efforts to ensure full implementation of all the provisions of the Convention, particularly in the spirit of reinforcing international peace and security and creating a world free of chemical weapons.

In this context, I warmly welcome the targeted support for States Parties proposed by the Technical Secretariat, which enables each State Party to identify the best approach for itself with a view to realising full implementation of the Convention.

I should like to emphasise, in this regard, the fact that Luxembourg does not produce, trade (transfer) or facilitate the financing of chemical agents or weapons for military purposes. This position gives us increased credibility in demanding absolute respect for the Convention and its objectives.

Status of destruction of stockpiles

The destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles remains at the heart of the Convention. Luxembourg would like to congratulate those States that have completed the destruction process. We regret, however, that some States have not managed to meet the deadlines for destruction. We hope that the States concerned will respect the destruction schedules established during the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and complete the destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles.

Environment

Within the framework of the destruction operations, chemical weapons have often been dumped in the sea—the Baltic Sea being one of the world's most affected. In this regard, I welcome the adoption in 2010 by the United Nations General Assembly, on the initiative of Lithuania, of the resolution “Cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea”. This resolution has helped to establish the OPCW as a place for voluntary cooperation for States Parties on the issue of chemical weapons dumped at sea.

International cooperation

With regard to the organisation of activities in international cooperation for the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes, I welcome the assistance from States Parties, by means of financial contributions and contributions in kind, which facilitates the reinforcement of the Organisation's capacities to prevent any prohibited activity and to extend to everyone the advantages of using chemistry for peaceful purposes. This valuable assistance is the foundation for the successful implementation of the provisions of the Convention, and represents an essential pillar in the efforts to reinforce mutual trust among States Parties.

More especially, I should like to underline the initiatives undertaken by the Technical Secretariat, for example within the framework of the Programme for Africa, offering initiatives which are aimed at and adapted to the States Parties concerned, enabling them to strengthen their national capacities and, consequently, to meet fully the obligations they have undertaken under the Convention.

Verification mechanism

In order to support chemical disarmament, on the one hand, and the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons throughout the world, on the other, it is necessary to implement an efficient verification regime. It is also important to adopt more confidence-building measures, to facilitate the exchange of information among States Parties and to improve transparency.

Links with industry, the academic world and scientific research, as well as civil society

Bearing in mind the importance, for the future development of chemicals and their use, of recent developments in the field of scientific research, technology and chemical industry, it seems to us that it is vital to strengthen the OPCW's links with strategic partners in these sectors, and to establish more firmly the role of the OPCW as a central actor in the chemical field as a whole.

I also fully subscribe to the importance attached by this Third Review Conference to the role of civil society, academics, the scientific community and chemical industry in the efforts to promote and raise awareness of the objectives of the Convention.

In conclusion, allow me, Mr Chairman, to thank Ambassador Baghli of Algeria for her tireless efforts and her rigorous leadership of the open-ended working group, which was able to draft a text to serve as the basis for the work of the Review Conference. I am certain that this substantive preparatory work represents a good foundation on which to base the achievement of our common goal: to reinforce the regime prohibiting chemical weapons!

I should also like, Mr Chairman, to express my full confidence in you for the management of this important conference, and I wish all the delegations success in these two weeks of work, to produce concrete results with the traditional consensus.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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