



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Third Review Conference
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SINGAPORE

STATEMENT BY SINGAPORE AT THE THIRD REVIEW CONFERENCE

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to join previous speakers in extending my congratulations upon your assumption of Chairmanship for the Third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to review the operations of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

My delegation would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the Open-Ended Working Group in considering the key issues to be deliberated at this meeting.

Objectives of the Third Review Conference

The Chemical Weapons Convention strives for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. It is a key contributor to international efforts for non-proliferation.

I wish to reiterate Singapore's commitment to the full implementation of the Convention. In this regard, we reaffirm the work of the OPCW in providing a forum for consultation between States Parties.

With the constantly changing international landscape, and emerging trends that could impact the future operation of the Convention, we believe that the Third Review Conference comes at an important juncture in the evolution of the Convention. So, let us build on past successes, and ensure the continued relevance of the Convention into the future.

Universality

Universality is a fundamental requirement to achieving the objective and purpose of the Convention. Universal membership is needed to bind all countries to the goal of a world free of chemical weapons. Singapore welcomes the accession of five new States Parties since the Second Review Conference. The number of Member States has now risen to 188, leaving eight States not Party to the Convention. We urge all States that have yet to ratify or accede to the Convention to join without further delay.



Destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles

The Convention aims to eliminate the threat of chemical weapons, by calling for the complete destruction of all chemical weapons stockpiles and production facilities. The fulfilment of this obligation by possessor States is crucial for achieving the object of the Convention.

Notable progress has been made towards the destruction of global chemical weapons stockpiles and to date, nearly 80% of these stockpiles have been destroyed. Singapore appreciates the significant resources that have been allocated for destruction operations. We acknowledge the commitment of the remaining possessor States to complete their destruction work in the shortest possible time.

Impact of scientific and industrial developments on the verification regime

The Convention's verification regime, while already comprehensive, must keep pace with the latest developments in science and technology.

The increasing convergence of scientific fields, particularly between chemistry and biology, has been identified as an area that may affect the future implementation of the Convention. As discussed in the report by the Scientific Advisory Board, the convergence of these two disciplines could result in the discovery of new chemical production pathways that may have implications on the verification regime of the Convention. Advances in other scientific fields, such as nanotechnology and improved manufacturing technologies, may also lead to their application for purposes prohibited by the Convention.

As such, we stress the importance of monitoring ongoing developments in science and technology that could impact the implementation of the Convention. It is crucial to thus ensure the relevance of the Convention's verification regime.

We also wish to emphasise the importance of continued capacity building, and commend the efforts of the Technical Secretariat in conducting regular training and confidence-building exercises. Singapore's DSO National Laboratories participated in the recent third confidence building exercise for biomedical sample analysis. We believe that all participating laboratories have benefitted significantly from the exercise.

Verification activities of the OPCW

The verification regime administered by the OPCW is an important aspect that safeguards the Convention's credibility. It provides reassurance that States Parties are complying with their obligations under the Convention. We applaud the work of the Technical Secretariat in striving towards continuous improvements in the efficiency, and effectiveness of the verification system.

With regard to the selection of relevant sites for verification, Singapore notes the regular performance analysis conducted on the site-selection methodology for other chemical production facilities (OCPF). We are confident that the review process will be able to refine the site-selection process and identify those with greater relevance to the object of the Convention.

Article VI declarations

Article VI of the Convention grants States Parties the right to develop, produce, otherwise acquire, retain, transfer and use toxic chemicals and their precursors for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. This is based on the principle that States Parties subject their Schedule 1, 2 and 3 chemical facilities, as well as OCPFs, to verification measures that are based on submitted declarations. In this regard, Singapore reiterates the importance of providing timely and accurate declarations under Article VI of the Convention, to enable the consistent implementation of verification activities. While we welcome the improvements in timeliness of submissions, we note that discrepancies between the declarations of importing and exporting States Parties still occur.

We urge the Secretariat to continue providing assistance and advice to States Parties and to carry on developing tools, such as the Electronic Declarations tool for National Authorities (EDNA), and the Declarations Handbook, to aid States Parties in improving the accuracy of declarations.

National implementation measures

Since the adoption of the plan of action on Article VII obligations, considerable progress has been made on its implementation. Singapore is heartened by the increasing number of States Parties adopting the necessary implementation measures. However, we are also aware of the various challenges preventing States Parties from fully implementing the provisions of the Convention. Hence, we encourage the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to continue its support programmes for States Parties requiring assistance in their national implementation efforts.

Assistance and protection under Article X

Singapore acknowledges the importance of Article X and fully supports the OPCW's activities to develop capabilities and readiness against the threat of chemical weapons.

Since March 2008, Singapore has offered the 'Emergency Response to Chemical Incidents' training course, as a pledge of assistance under Article X. In May 2013, we will host the third run of the course, which to date, has benefitted participants from more than 20 countries in Asia. It has also provided opportunities for the sharing of experiences on the management of hazards posed by chemical agents.

Conclusion

Mr Chairman, in this uncertain and ever changing global environment, the implementation of the Convention must evolve and adapt to remain relevant and achieve its objectives. No doubt there are challenges in doing so, but I am confident that under your able leadership, and with the full commitment of all States Parties, we will be able to work towards the universality and continued relevance of the Convention. My delegation would like to request that this statement be issued as an official series document of this session.