



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Third Review Conference
8 – 19 April 2013

RC-3/NAT.56
19 April 2013
ENGLISH only

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ROBERT MIKULAK PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AT THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE THIRD REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Mr Chairman,

In our plenary address to the Third Review Conference on 9 April, the United States urged the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to candidly face the facts about the chemical weapons situation in Syria and make a strong declaration in its report. We also called upon this Review Conference to embrace its international responsibility and, in its words and actions, to defend a vision of a world free of chemical weapons.

Regrettably, the text we have before us today falls far short of the commitment made by the States Parties of the Convention “for the sake of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons.” Today we are facing a challenge to that solemn commitment in Syria. There is a very real possibility that chemical weapons have been used in Syria—a State not Party to the Convention, which last summer admitted to possessing a chemical weapons arsenal and made clear its willingness to use it against so-called “external aggression.” This arsenal is in a country engulfed in armed conflict. The instability and volatility of the escalating violence in Syria dramatically increases the risk of use, intentional or unintentional; of transfer; or of acquisition of chemical weapons by a non-State actor. Any of these could have devastating effects on the people of Syria, or on Syria’s border nations, most of which are Parties to this Convention, and on the entire region. None of these facts and implications have been reflected in the Political Declaration before us.

No doubt it was the gravity of the threat to peace and security posed by the chemical weapons situation in Syria that prompted the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the first time in the history of the OPCW, to address a Review Conference. His message was clear and direct: All serious claims of alleged chemical weapons use in Syria should be examined without delay, without preconditions and without exception. He further emphasised the responsibility of Syrian authorities to assure the international community of the security of its chemical weapons stockpiles. The statement of the United Nations Secretary-General is not even referenced in the document before us, particularly his call for Syrian authorities to assure the international community of the security of their chemical weapons stocks. Some delegations would not even allow a reference to the United Nations Secretary-General’s address to the Conference, despite the support of virtually all delegations.

On 27 March, the Executive Council of the OPCW met to discuss the request for a United Nations investigation in Syria and the support role which the OPCW would play. This



special meeting resulted in an Executive Council Chairperson's text, supported by all 41 Council members, setting out four essential elements: Deep concern that chemical weapons may have been used in Syria, use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances would be reprehensible, unequivocal support for the investigation initiated by the United Nations Secretary-General, and a call for all parties in Syria to fully cooperate with the United Nations investigation.

The Political Declaration we have just approved reiterates the deep concern about use of chemical weapons in Syria and the statement that any use would be reprehensible. Those statements are important. But the fact that the Political Declaration contains such vague language on cooperation with the United Nations Secretary-General's investigation is clear evidence that we are heading in the wrong direction. Some delegations now refuse to accept language that was acceptable to them two weeks ago on cooperation with the United Nations Secretary-General.

At the conclusion of our plenary statement, the United States warned that, if this Review Conference remained silent on the Syria threat, it would be a silence heard around the world. Indeed, it would be a silence most clearly heard by those who would use chemical weapons to the detriment of all mankind. The Political Declaration before us is not far removed from silence; it is a faint whisper from a gathering of States Parties that should speak loudly and clearly when the world faces a real threat from chemical weapons.

Mr Chairman,

I request that this document be circulated as an official document of the Conference.

- - - 0 - - -