



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Briefing to Permanent Representations based outside of The Hague

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BRIEFING AS DELIVERED

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the Director-General and my own, I would like to welcome you to this briefing for Permanent Representations of States Parties based outside of The Hague, and thank you for sparing time from your busy schedules to attend.

The purpose of this meeting is to facilitate you in preparation for the Twenty-first Session of the Conference of States Parties, which will take place from 28 November to 2 December in The Hague.

This year, the Conference will consider a number of important decisions including the Draft Programme and Budget for 2017. The assessed annual contributions by States Parties total EUR 65,529,600, which remains unchanged from 2016. The Conference will also consider extension of the special fund for OPCW special missions to one further year, without replenishment, as set out in the draft decision submitted to the 83rd Session of the OPCW Executive Council this October.

As you are aware, the 83rd Session of the Executive Council held in October was suspended to provide for and will resume tomorrow, 11 November.

The Conference will also include an agenda item on the OPCW Programme for Africa. The Secretariat continues to implement a wide range of capacity-building activities tailored to the needs of African States Parties. The current phase of the Africa Programme will end this year. The Secretariat has provided a report detailing the programme activities carried out over the past three years and recommending the programme for a fourth phase, from 2017 to 2019.

In relation to OPCW's efforts to engage with chemical industry and the scientific community, the Conference will discuss progress made to date, including with regards to OPCW cooperation with the Chemical Industry Coordination Group (CICG), the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) and the European Chemical Industry Council (Cefic).

Our efforts in fostering international cooperation for peaceful purposes in the field of chemical activities have continued to expand throughout 2016, the CSP will address these plans in a separate agenda item, which I hope will facilitate the adoption of further programmes and projects, tailored to the needs of our Member States.

Last year's Conference endorsed the establishment of an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, based on the recommendations received from the Scientific Advisory Board's Temporary Working Group. The Conference will receive an update regarding Secretariat's efforts in this field.

Other notable items of the Conference will include: status of preparations for the 20th Anniversary, an update on progress towards universality, a comprehensive update on the status of the implementation of the Convention, including destruction progress, the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, our work in the Syrian Arab Republic and an update on our recent efforts to remove the remaining Category 2 chemical weapons from Libya.

Nominations for the third annual OPCW-The Hague Award closed on 30 September and the selection panel has commenced its deliberations. You may recall that this award was established utilising the Nobel Peace Prize money, to honour outstanding contributions in advancing the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Unlike in previous years, the winner of the Award will be announced in the weeks following the conclusion of the Conference.

A number of events will also take place during the Conference week, hosted by Member States and the Technical Secretariat, including, for the first time this year a Commemoration of the Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Weapons on 30 November 2016.

Details on side events that are organised during the Conference week, will become available through journal in future.

Let me now turn to activities being undertaken by the OPCW in relation to the Syrian Arab Republic and Libya, as well as other chemical weapons destruction activities.

Syria

Joint Investigative Mechanism

In line with the United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) continues its work to identify those responsible for carrying out attacks with toxic chemicals in Syria.

The JIM has recently reconfirmed the use of chemical weapons in the conflict in Syria. In accordance with the terms of the supplementary arrangement concerning the implementation the Security Council resolution, the Director-General has so far transmitted to States Parties, the three reports of the JIM. These include the latest report, submitted to the United Nations Security Council on 24 August. On 27 October, the JIM presented its fourth report to the UN Security Council.

Following unanimous adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2314 on 31 October, the mandate of the JIM has been extended until 18 November 2016, with a possibility of further extension.

Fact-Finding Mission

Under the authority of the Director-General, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) continues its work following further reports of alleged uses of toxic chemicals as weapons. In this regard, the Director-General has expressed his serious concern and has encouraged States Parties to share with the Secretariat any pertinent information that they may possess in relation to the FFM's work.

The FFM reports and ongoing activities also form an important resource for the JIM.

Destruction of Syrian CW programme

As may recall, in December 2015, the Technical Secretariat verified the elimination of the remaining Syria's declared chemical weapons, which marked the complete destruction of all chemical weapons declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. However, the security situation in Syria continues to preclude safe access for destruction of one remaining aircraft hangar and two above-ground facilities, which were part of the CW production facilities.

Declaration Assessment Team

The Declaration Assessment Team also continues its work with Syrian authorities to clarify Syria's initial declaration. Replies to some of the questions addressed by the Secretariat have been provided, and we continue to underscore the need for the provision of original documentation regarding Syrian chemical weapons programme, access to officials with overarching knowledge about the programme, and scientifically and technically plausible explanations on outstanding issues.

These steps are necessary in order to resolve all identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in Syria's declaration - for it to be considered accurate and complete. We continue to urge the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate in this regard.

Libya

To date, Libya's remaining Category 2 chemical weapons have been removed from the country and safely transported for destruction operations, which are currently ongoing. The OPCW

acknowledges the efforts of all States Parties that have contributed to the success of this mission, including through contributions to the Trust Fund and providing logistical, transportation, handling and other support. The Conference will, of course, receive a comprehensive update on the progress of the destruction operations.

CW destruction activities

Turning now to broader chemical weapons destruction activities, significant progress continues to be made.

As of 31 October, 93.1% (65,780 MT) of the total amount (Category 1) of chemical weapons declared by Member States had been destroyed. The aggregate amount of Category 2 chemical weapons destroyed stands at 1,319 MTs, or 72.8% of the total amount declared.

The Russian Federation has destroyed 95.3% of its declared (Category 1) stockpile. The destruction operations continue at Kizner CWDFs where 67.4% of chemical agent has been destroyed. This facility is expected to complete operations by December 2020.

The United States has completed destruction of 90% of its (Category 1) stockpiles. The United States commenced destruction operations at the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP) on 7 September 2016. Destruction of remaining stocks is scheduled to be completed by September 2023.

China and Japan continue to work together on abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) recovery and destruction operations at Haerbaling and at the mobile destruction facility (MDF) in Shijiazhuang. A tripartite meeting is scheduled to be held in Beijing on 8 and 9 December.

In response to a request made by Iraq, the Secretariat has procured training courses in medical response, safety, decontamination, detection, and handling of chemically contaminated items for Iraqi workers assigned to destruction sites. This training will assist Iraq in its preparations for the destruction of remnants of chemical weapons stored at Al-Muthanna.

As you know, the next Executive Council visit is scheduled to take place to the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP), United States in March 2017. It is the last chemical weapons destruction facility scheduled to become operational by April 2020.

International Cooperation and Assistance (ICA)

Mr Hamza Khelif, Director, ICA, will provide you a detailed presentation on the International cooperation and Assistance programme shortly.

Terrorism and non-state actors

In other developments, the OPCW Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) and its Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors (SWG) have continued to work in response to keen interest of Member States to explore in more detail issues related to the legal accountability of

non-State actors, measures to prevent hostile uses of toxic chemicals, and ensuring an effective response to the toxic chemical events.

In addition, we have continued to engage with other international organisations through the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), which forms part of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The OEWG has met three times this year, and covered a number of issues, including progress of the 2016 Comprehensive Review of the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). The last such review was held in 2009.

In the context of the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors, States Parties have exchanged their views on draft decision “Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors”. The Group will continue to work in the run up to the 84th session of the EC in March 2017.

Earlier this year, the Technical Secretariat announced the establishment of a Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM) to respond to a request from a State Party for emergency measures of assistance in case of the use of chemical weapons. The TS also circulated a note in October to States Parties containing guidelines for procedures for a request for assistance.

Future of the Organisation

With the verified elimination of the declared chemical weapons stockpiles in sight, the OPCW continues to transition to a post-destruction phase.

In this regard, the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW was established in July and held its first meeting at the end of September. The Working Group’s report will make a contribution towards the preparations for the Fourth Review Conference in 2018.

In support of the OPCW’s vision - to secure a world free of chemical weapons – and its mission, the OPCW issued a paper “The OPCW in 2025: Ensuring a World Free of Chemical Weapons”. This outlines a strategic framework seeking to build on implementation of the CWC achieved hitherto, and to enhance the OPCW’s responsiveness to new challenges over the next decade.

In April 2016 the Secretariat issued a revised Medium-Term Plan for the years 2017 to 2021, which defines a future vision for the OPCW based on a single strategic scenario. The new Medium-Term Plan now also contains a number of Medium-Term goals across key result areas of the Organisation.

Universality

Turning now to our efforts to promote universalisation of the Convention, since the accession of Angola and ratification by Myanmar in 2015, we have remained strongly committed to

promoting further avenues of cooperation with the remaining States not Party (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Israel and South Sudan).

The Secretariat has continued to make efforts to reach them and encourage your governments to use your contacts with the remaining four States not Party, to urge them to join the Convention without delay.

Twentieth Anniversary

Preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the OPCW next year are well under way and Mr Chen Kai, Director of External Relations Division, will provide you more details on our preparations shortly.

Public promotion of the OPCW and its work

The Secretariat continues to improve our media tools and has recently launched the official overhaul of the OPCW website, in consultation with key stakeholders. The website is expected to be launched in the second quarter of 2017.

As a part of the OPCW History Project, Professor Marie Chevrier of Rutgers University in the United States of America, has been commissioned to write a book-length history of our Organisation. The publication is expected to be available in time for the twentieth anniversary celebration.

Closing

In closing, I would like to strongly encourage your participation in the Conference of the States Parties, and look forward to welcoming you in The Hague.

The Conference will conclude another important year for the Organisation, in the run-up to the Twentieth Anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the support of our States Parties remains as important as every to the success of our mission.

My colleagues - Mr Chen Kai, Director of External Relations Division and Mr Hamza Khelif, Director of International Cooperation and Assistance Division - will brief you on the preparations for the 20th Anniversary and the ICA activities respectively. I propose to receive questions and comments after all of our presentations are delivered, if it's okay with you.

Thank you very much for your attention.