

Opening Remarks by Mrs Grace Asirwatham,
Deputy Director-General

A REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR STATES PARTIES IN
ASIA
ON ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION AGAINST
CHEMICAL WEAPONS
XI'AN, CHINA

15 June 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen;

1. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this regional workshop on assistance and protection against chemical weapons. I wish to express my deep appreciation to the government of China for co-hosting this event, and in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Authority, Shaanxi provincial government and other institutions for the excellent organisational arrangements they have made to make this workshop possible. The willingness of Member States to host events like this is an essential element in our ability to operate effectively, and today's event is a demonstration of China's continuing contribution to the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), in particular relating to Article X of the Convention.

2. In 1999 China was one of the first countries to make its declaration under paragraph 7 of Article X, making an offer of individual protective equipment, decontamination and detection equipment. China hosted regional assistance and protection courses for Asian States Parties in May 2008 and subsequently in July 2010. I would like to thank in particular the Chinese National Authority for its hard work and dedication to meeting our common objective.

3. Before I go into further detail on the event which has brought you all together today, I hope you will allow me to say a few words about the achievements and recent developments of the Organisation of which I have the honour to serve as Deputy Director-General.

4. In the 14 years of its existence, the OPCW has covered a great deal of ground. This is evident in the unprecedented support that the Convention has attracted, in a relatively short time, from the overwhelming majority of the international community. The Organisation has recorded significant progress in the areas of verification and destruction of chemical weapons, chemical demilitarisation, assistance and protection and towards the universality of the Convention.

5. I am pleased to report that the Organisation has to-date verified the destruction of almost two thirds of the total declared stockpiles of chemical weapons and the figure continues to rise daily. This is a unique accomplishment in the history of disarmament. The destruction of the remaining stockpiles by the final deadline of April 2012 remains a challenge. The Russian Federation and the United States of America, the two largest possessor States Parties have, however, not wavered in their commitment to their obligations under the Convention. I am confident that their resolve and the traditionally cooperative approach of our States Parties will enable the OPCW to reach a positive outcome concerning total chemical disarmament.

6. The CWC has a strong regime to ensure that chemical weapons do not re-emerge. Earlier this year the Secretariat conducted its 2000th

inspection at an industrial facility. These inspections have been carried out at more than 80 countries around the world. This is an area of work which has to be further strengthened in order to fully serve the long term non-proliferation goals of the Convention.

7. The Technical Secretariat continues its efforts toward the achievement of universal adherence to the Convention in relation to the remaining seven States not Party and in particular the two States not Party in Asia, namely Myanmar and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In this regard, I would like to inform you that a delegation from the Technical Secretariat paid a technical assessment visit to Myanmar from 6-10 June, at the invitation of the Government of Myanmar. The Secretariat has maintained a continued and fruitful dialogue with Myanmar, both by inviting representatives of this country to various OPCW events and through high-level contacts carried out by the Director-General. As regards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Secretariat continues to make efforts to reach out to their authorities.

Ladies and Gentlemen

8. Let me now turn to the subject of Assistance and Protection, which is one of the key objectives of the CWC, and of course the topic of this workshop. By joining the Convention, States Parties completely renounce the option of chemical weapons. In return, each State Party has the right under Article X to request the OPCW or other Member States for assistance and protection against the use, or threat of use, of chemical weapons. In return, all States Parties are

obliged to provide assistance through the OPCW by choosing one or more of three options, namely: to contribute financially to the Voluntary Fund for Assistance; to conclude an agreement with the OPCW specifying the kind of assistance they would be able to deliver, or to declare the kind of assistance which they would be able to provide in response to an appeal by the OPCW.

9. To ensure transparency of the assistance and protection mechanism of the Convention, each State Party is also required to provide the OPCW with annual information on its existing protective programmes. So far, 143 Member States out of 188 have submitted such information. The Conference of States Parties adopted a format, which will help to ensure that all submissions of States Parties are structured in a uniform manner.
10. The threats associated with non-state actors' use of chemical weapons have created a renewed interest in the OPCW's coordination of emergency assistance to States Parties. Threats involving the use or possible use of chemical weapons call for rapid and coordinated responses at national, regional, and international levels. Article X on Assistance and Protection provides the basis for such coordinated action. The OPCW will swiftly dispatch experts and equipment to determine the type of chemicals used, the extent of the support required and to coordinate all of the in-coming assistance that will be provided.

Ladies and Gentlemen

13. OPCW and its Member States regularly hold field exercises to test and improve their readiness to conduct a major assistance operation. In October 2010, the Technical Secretariat jointly with the Government of Tunisia conducted the Third OPCW exercise on delivery of assistance, ASSISTEX 3 which brought together teams from 11 Member States, United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs and combined teams from 4 sub-regions who were previously trained by the Secretariat. The exercise, one of the largest events in the history of the OPCW, aimed at testing its procedures while responding to a request for assistance under Article X of the Convention as well as its actual ability to provide such a response. I am pleased to say that the exercise did indeed enable us to test most of the OPCW's field procedures and capabilities, and also to draw important lessons from this experience. It also enabled us to test the scope of our cooperation and coordination with other organisations, local emergency management authorities, and emergency-response units.
14. Of course, we recognise that improvements can always be made in our approaches. Among the measures that we are considering to improve the implementation of Article X is the development of a concept of training centres, or centres of excellence, in different regions and sub-regions. These centres will provide training within OPCW guidelines to train the trainers and instructors, to help build national/sub regional teams ready to respond to a chemical emergency as well as to facilitate regional emergency response networking. We also intend to increase the focus on regional activities like this one in order to enhance the effect of our efforts and ensure we reach the largest number of states with our available

human and financial resources. Further, the OPCW is developing an e-learning system to conduct an interactive basic training module for National Authorities online.

15. This week's workshop will cover the subject of protection of civilian populations against chemical weapons. It will promote discussion and analysis of several Assistance and Protection-related issues such as the rights and obligations of States Parties under Article X of the Convention, submissions of declarations of protective programmes, and analysis of areas needing greater attention. It will also provide an overview of assistance-and-protection activities in the region, as well as the challenges and opportunities ahead of us.
16. Before I close, I would like to say a few words about the future of the Organisation. The OPCW is entering a transition period. Progress in chemical disarmament will soon lead to significant reduction of verification in the context of demilitarisation. In the long term, industry verification along with other measures will provide the necessary assurances of compliance with treaty obligations. This will require a review of both the intensity and the focus of our industry verification regime.
17. The OPCW will also need to monitor developments in science and technology. The changing nature of the global chemical industry and the potential for the manufacture of new types of chemicals can impact the verification regime of the CWC. Enhancing effective domestic implementation of the Convention and deepening our existing programmes that assure the Convention's continuing effectiveness are matters of immediate importance. Such an

endeavour will ensure that the CWC remains relevant against both traditional threats as well as new and emerging challenges, and will require the close cooperation and support of all States Parties.

18. An Advisory Panel of eminent experts that was set up by the Director-General is currently deliberating on these and other relevant issues. It is expected to finalise its report at the end of this month which will be an important input as we collectively embark on charting a new course for the OPCW.
19. This is the first time, ladies and gentlemen, that I am attending a regional workshop on Assistance and Protection since I assumed my duties as Deputy Director-General of the OPCW. I look forward to working closely with all of you to effectively implement the provisions of the Convention.
20. You have a very intensive workshop programme ahead of you in the coming 3 days. I believe these discussions and the results of this Workshop will add greater momentum to strengthen the application and the effectiveness of the CWC's provisions on assistance and protection.

I once again thank the host country for the excellent arrangements and its gracious hospitality, and I wish the meeting every success.

Thank you for your attention.