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INDIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR R.N. PRASAD
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF INDIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE SEVENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Mr Chairman, this being the last regular session of the Executive Council to be chaired by you, may I first of all take the opportunity to compliment and congratulate you for the exemplary manner in which you have discharged your onerous responsibilities as the Chair.

I should also like to take this opportunity to commend the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for the good work being done by them, especially in the context of the responsibilities that have been entrusted to the OPCW in the course of the last six months or so.

My delegation endorses and associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of NAM and China.

Mr Chairman, elimination and destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons stockpiles have pretty much dominated the proceedings of this body since September last year. Our discussions have not always been easy. But so far, we have managed to work on the basis of consensus. The deadline of 30 June 2014 which we have given ourselves for the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons remains an important marker for all of us. We welcome the revised proposal submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic on 23 February 2014 which aims at completing the removal of all chemicals from its territory by 13 April 2014, except for the chemicals in two inaccessible sites. The sixty-day plan submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic is a realistic and workable plan. We appreciate the cooperation that is being extended by the Syrian Arab Republic and we very much hope that such cooperation will continue so as to enable us to meet the 30 June 2014 deadline. Given the difficult and trying circumstances in which this task is being undertaken we would urge all concerned to show flexibility and reasonableness in the period between now and 30 June 2014. In regard to destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons production facilities, we would like the Syrian Arab Republic to do whatever is necessary so that the task of destruction of these facilities could commence soon in line with the provisions the Convention and past practices.



India has consistently supported the complete destruction and elimination of chemical weapons worldwide. We are of the firm view that the international legal norms against the use of chemical weapons anywhere and by anyone must not be breached. Timely destruction of chemical weapons by all States Parties is critical for upholding the credibility and integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is not only a unique, non-discriminatory, multilateral disarmament treaty but has also met with much success since it came into force in 1997.

India encourages those States that are not Parties to the Convention to consider ratifying or acceding to the Convention at the earliest.

Let me now turn to some other issues.

The first is in regard to industry inspections. Inspections are mandated under Article VI to ensure that the activities in chemical facilities located in the jurisdiction of a State Party are in accordance with their obligations under the Convention. By its very nature, any inspection causes some inconvenience to the inspected firms. For this reason, there are provisions in Article VI itself to ensure that inspections do not become intrusive and hamper technological and economic development of States Parties. This delicate balance envisaged in the Convention needs to be kept at all times.

Then, Mr Chairman, there is the matter of transfer discrepancies. Transfer discrepancies are detected, compiled and reported by the Technical Secretariat every year in respect of the trade during the previous year. The Secretariat merely reports the discrepancies to the States Parties and expects the States Parties to get in touch with each other and reconcile these discrepancies. Obviously, no State Party can resolve a transfer discrepancy without the response of its partner country. Reconciliation has to be a collaborative effort. Our view is that once a State Party has contacted the other State Party with notice to the Technical Secretariat, the discrepancy should be deemed to be cleared by the State Party and the defaulter State Party alone should be responsible.

In regard to the Electronic Declarations of National Authorities (EDNA) we feel that this has been a very useful innovation of the Technical Secretariat, both from the point of view of the OPCW and States Parties. India has not only been using EDNA but has also been associated with the OPCW in its trial runs. So far, declarations of Schedule 1 chemicals could not be done in the EDNA but in its latest version, EDNA 3, this also has been incorporated. This is a most welcome development and India would like to make its Schedule 1 declarations electronically. We would appreciate very much if the OPCW could sponsor a training course for the States Parties for better usage of EDNA 3.

My delegation also has a comment on the criteria being used for selection of candidates for training programmes sponsored by the OPCW. India actively participates in such training courses and we find them to be useful. As a country with a large chemical industry base and one that is frequently and intensively inspected, India has an obvious interest in these training programmes. On our part, we also help the OPCW to conduct its training. At present, the OPCW invites online applications from candidates directly. We feel that more weight should be given to those people who actually work in the chemical industry and whose work is related to the implementation of the Convention. Involving National Authorities in a suitable manner with the application process for such training programmes would be appropriate.

And in the end, Mr Chariman, just a word about the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). We are of the view that recommendations of the SAB should be discussed and deliberated by the States Parties in sessions of the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties before the Director-General accepts and adopts the recommendations.

Mr Chairman,

I would request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Council.

Thank you.

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