



OPCW

Executive Council

Seventy-Eighth Session
17 – 19 March 2015

EC-78/NAT.15
17 March 2015
ENGLISH only

JAPAN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MASARU TSUJI
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAPAN TO THE OPCW AT THE
SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,

Let me begin by welcoming you, Ambassador Moerzinger, back to the Chair of the Executive Council. We are confident that, under your able leadership, this session of the Council will produce substantial progress. I assure you of my delegation's fullest support and cooperation.

This year 2015 marks the 100th anniversary since chemical weapons were first used on a large scale in WWI. We are confident that this anniversary will help to renew the determination of the international community to further strengthen the cooperation for the realisation of a world free of chemical weapons.

On the chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, this issue remains the priority for this Council and this Council should continue to be fully engaged until the complete elimination of chemical weapon materials and the destruction of its production facilities. It is important that the destruction process will be completed as soon as possible in order to secure non-proliferation of chemical weapons and to ensure regional stability. We welcome the progress that the destruction process outside the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic is now close to completion. In accordance with the related decisions of the Council and by cooperation with members of the international community including Japan, declared chemical materials have been removed from the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic and 98% of it has been destroyed. Japan highly appreciates the positive engagement of the international community and the States Parties as well as efforts by the Secretariat, which have advanced the destruction process while overcoming various challenges.

With regard to the chemical weapons production facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic, though there is a delay from the planned schedule, we see certain progress such as the completion of verification on a part of the underground structures and the completion of preparatory work for the commencement of actual destruction of several aircraft hangars. Japan would like to extend its appreciation to the Secretariat and the relevant parties for their hard work and calls for further continuous efforts for the complete destruction of facilities in order to prevent potential future chemical weapons production.



On the issue of the initial declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic, we highly appreciate the Declaration Assessment Team for trying to clear discrepancies or doubt in the initial declaration. Though we highly appreciate the effort and professionalism of the Team, we are concerned that many issues of the initial declaration remain to be addressed. We would like to stress that, in order to assure the full implementation of the obligation to destroy the chemical weapons, any concerns and doubts regarding the accuracy and completeness of the initial declaration must be clearly and comprehensively addressed. We would like to urge the Syrian Arab Republic to double its efforts to sincerely fulfill the obligations of the Chemical Weapons Convention and fully cooperate with the Declaration Assessment Team.

Regarding the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, Japan reiterates its support to the decision of the Council (EC-M-48/DEC.1), which was adopted by an overwhelming majority on 4 February. In particular, we highly commend the Mission for its dedication despite the very volatile security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and the difficult challenges for the Mission. Japan extends its strong support for the continuation of the work of the Mission, which was endorsed by the United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 on 5 March. We request that the Secretariat will continue to provide information to this Council on the progress of the mission as well as on future plans.

There was a disturbing news report that ISIS used chemical weapons material, namely chlorine, in a suicide attack in Iraq last January. With this case as an example, under the current international security situation, the risk of proliferation of chemical weapons including the risk of proliferation to non-state actors is increasing. We have to continue to work on ways to improve the effectiveness of this Convention.

First, promoting the national implementation is not only the States Parties' obligation under the Convention, but also one of the most important steps in enhancing the implementation of the Convention. National implementation measures will serve as a fundamental tool for preventing the re-emergence and proliferation of chemical weapons, as well as for adequately controlling chemical products. In this context, we note with concern that 40% of States Parties have yet to establish national legislation that cover all initial measures. Further efforts to encourage and facilitate the national implementation by the States Parties are necessary. We would like to encourage all the relevant States Parties to fully implement national measures.

Second, the universality of the Convention is also important. Japan appreciates the efforts by the Secretariat to promote the universality of the Convention. Japan welcomes positive progress for accession to this Convention by Myanmar and believes that further continuous efforts need to be made both by the Secretariat and the States Parties to encourage and assist States not Party to join the Convention.

Lastly, we have seen how the FFM has been functioning as a useful tool for gathering information on suspected use of chemical weapons. Under the current international security environment with threats such as terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors, this new role of the Technical Secretariat will provide us with new insights for the future function of this OPCW in addressing the risk of proliferation of chemical weapons materials.

Last but not least, let me touch upon an important issue for Japan, the abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs).

The destruction of ACWs is one of the most important commitments of Japan based on the Convention. In accordance with the decision at the Sixty-Seventh Session of the Council (EC-67/DEC.6, dated 15 February 2012), Japan has been making utmost efforts to destroy ACWs in China, including investing enormous resources in the ACW destruction projects.

Although these ACW destruction projects entail various serious challenges and uncertainties, the projects have made significant progress through cooperation between Japan and China. As for one of the recent destruction activities in Haerbaling, the largest burial site of ACWs, a test destruction operation started on 1 December 2014, and by this, the project reached an important turning point. In Wuhan, the actual destruction operation by the Mobile Destruction Facility has already started. From mid-November to early December in 2014, 121 ACWs were consolidated at the Wuhan site from 3 surrounding warehouses to Wuhan, and they were destroyed from 26 to 29 of December in 2014.

The risk of explosions and leaks of chemical agents during the destruction process of ACWs is higher, as ACWs have either corroded or deformed, because they have been buried underground for a long time. Given the circumstances, for implementing ACW destruction projects, we need extremely high technical standards and special measures for guaranteeing the safety of people and for protection of the environment.

With respect to Dioxin in Shijiazhuang, as was pointed out at the last Conference of the States Parties, there was the possibility that Dioxin might have been produced within the off-gas treatment process. Though figures from samples of the ambient air were below air safety standards of China, given the importance of this issue, we will continue our investigation together with Chinese experts, while seeking impartial-party advice from experts in this regard.

From the viewpoint of ensuring the transparency in these important projects, Japan considers it important to brief the Council with updates on the progress made in the ACW destruction projects. My delegation will give a detailed explanation on the progress under the relevant agenda item. Further, Japan and China will invite the Director-General and the Council delegations to Haerbaling ACW site in the second week of June 2015.

I would like to stress once again that, without the close coordination and constructive cooperation between Japan and China, these unprecedented difficult projects could not have been carried out. Japan reaffirms its commitment to exert the greatest possible effort for further progress of the projects with the adequate cooperation of China.

In conclusion, I would like to reassure you of the support of this delegation to ensure the successful conduct of the Council.

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

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.