



**Statement by
Ambassador Venu Rajamony,
Permanent Representative of India to the OPCW
at the 85th Session of the Executive Council,
11-14 July 2017**

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Director General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates

At the outset Mr. Chairman, I welcome you back as Chair. We are confident that under your able leadership this session will have a successful conclusion. I assure you my delegation's continued cooperation during this session.

I would like to thank the Director General for his statement and commend him and his team for the efforts they have made in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and for advancing the shared goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

My delegation endorses and associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of NAM States Parties to the CWC and China.

Mr. Chairman,

This is a historic session, the first after the OPCW has completed 20 years of its existence. It is a moment for us to ponder about the accomplishments of the Convention as well as the challenges that confront it. The success of the Chemical Weapon Convention, is the result of collaborative efforts of the States Parties, the chemical industry, the community of scientists and civil society, working in tandem with the OPCW. The non-discriminatory principles enshrined in the Convention, the commitment of the States Parties and the competence of the Technical Secretariat – all have combined to rid the world, almost completely, of the existing chemical weapon stockpile and also made countries vigilant about chemicals or chemical technology being diverted for illicit purposes. This is, not in the least, to suggest that the world can rest on its laurels. Rather, the challenges have become more daunting; discovery of new toxic molecules, advancements in deployment and dissemination techniques and emergence of non-state actors are among the important developments that call for greater vigilance and for renewing our efforts. It should be our endeavour to spread this message during the current 20th year celebrations of the CWC. In this regard, I am happy to inform you that the National Authority of India along with other stakeholder departments and the chemical industry had organised a commemorative event in the chemical industry hub of Ankleshwar, located in the western State of Gujarat, on 13th June, 2017.

Mr. Chairman,

India attaches great importance to the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention. All chemical weapons anywhere in the world must be destroyed. Complete destruction of chemical weapons is the most important undertaking made by every State Party to the Convention. We urge all possessor States to take necessary steps to expedite their destruction processes.

To this end, my delegation welcomes the completion of destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and progress made so far in the matter of destruction of Syria's chemical weapons production facilities. We hope that the remaining task of destruction will be completed in the earliest possible time. With regard to the initial declaration by Syria and Declaration Assessment Team's findings, my delegation would encourage further consultations between Syria and the Technical Secretariat with the objective of resolving all outstanding issues in a spirit of trust and cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

We have taken note of the reports of the Fact-Finding Missions on the incidents in Um-Housh and Khan Shaykhun in Syrian Arab Republic. My delegation is deeply concerned at the reported use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. We hope that OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) will take forward the findings of the FFM and identify the perpetrators of this abhorrent act.

My delegation is deeply concerned with reports of acquisition of chemical weapons and their delivery systems by the so-called 'Islamic State' or ISIS/ISIL. We condemn the use of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals in Syria and Iraq by terrorists. We believe that our work in the OPCW should help to eliminate all possibilities of any future use of chemical weapons.

It has been our consistent position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at anytime, by anybody, under any circumstances cannot be justified and the perpetrators of such abhorrent acts must be held accountable.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the core commitments pledged by each Member State to the Convention is to promote the peaceful uses of chemistry. Flow of chemicals and technology across national borders for peaceful purposes ought to be intensified and the provisions of the Chemical Weapon Convention should not be used for hampering these trans-national movements. This is the spirit of Article XI of the CWC. India welcomes the renewed thrust the OPCW is giving to this matter. My delegation encourages active participation of member states in the upcoming Review & Evaluation Workshop on Article XI in order to develop concrete proposals which could be considered at the 22nd Conference of the State Parties and the fourth review conference.

Mr. Chairman,

While it is true that the Convention is neither a Counter-Terrorism Treaty nor a Chemical Safety Treaty, we note that the OPCW has emerged as a forum for consultation and cooperation between the States Parties which includes exchange of ideas and discussion of best practices in the area of chemical safety and security. In this regard, my delegation notes the efforts of the Chairpersons of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors. We also firmly believe that the full and effective implementation of all

the provisions of the Convention including the National Implementation under Article VII will make a significant and effective contribution towards global counter-terrorism efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

The OPCW motto “working together for a world free of chemical weapons” evocatively encapsulates the philosophy of the Convention. A world free of chemical weapons means two things (a) that the existing stockpile of chemical weapons is irreversibly destroyed and (b) re-emergence of chemical weapons is scrupulously prevented. Liquidation of existing stockpiles has been almost completed despite the process being expensive, technologically challenging and with potential consequences to the environment. The former is much more certain and simpler than the latter that is preventing re-emergence of chemical weapons. Re-emergence could happen anywhere or any time, with known or unknown chemicals and with no warning. Free availability of raw materials and enhanced access to technical knowhow through the internet are factors which help subversive elements to craft chemical weapons with comparative ease. Emergence of non-state actors further exacerbates the situation. To this end, my delegation commends the efforts of the two Co-Chairpersons of the Open Ended Working Group on Future Priorities (OEWG-FP).

We believe that the work of the OEWG-FP should be States Parties-driven and address all issues related to the future of the Organisation in a balanced and comprehensive manner. We would like to see the work of this OEWG-FP progress through established channels of the policy-making organs (PMOs) without any artificial timelines and bearing in mind time-tested methods of work of our Organisation, particularly decision-making by consensus. My delegation will continue to participate actively in the OEWG-FP to which we attach importance.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the important tasks of this Council is the appointment of the new Director-General of this Organization. My delegation is of the view that the appointment process should be open, fair and transparent in order to ensure support for the new Director-General from all quarters. My delegation also stresses the need for formulating clear rules of procedure for the appointment of a new Director-General.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, I would request that this Statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the OPCW’s public website.
