



OPCW

Executive Council

Eighty-Sixth Session
10 – 13 October 2017

EC-86/NAT.16
10 October 2017
ENGLISH only

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR YUN-YOUNG LEE
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, distinguished colleagues,

At the outset, I would like to assure you my delegation's full support as you ably guide this session to a successful outcome. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, for his comprehensive and informative report this morning. I'd like to praise him and the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their dedicated work and efforts.

We are at the crossroads as this year marks the 20th Anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the founding of the OPCW. The OPCW has made a remarkable achievement in destroying about 96% of all chemical weapons declared by Member States, especially with the Russian Federation completing the chemical weapons destruction programme this year well ahead of schedule. I sincerely congratulate the Russian Federation on this achievement and, at the same time, eagerly look forward to the completion of the US chemical weapons destruction programme by 2023.

Although the complete elimination of declared chemical weapons is within our grasp, we cannot afford to be complacent. Our shared goal of a chemical weapon-free world continues to elude us more than ever before. To our regret, we again witnessed the persistent use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic as we received confirmation from the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission that sarin or sarin-like substance was used against innocent civilians in Khan Shaykhun this April, causing a lot of casualties.

The Republic of Korea condemns this chemical attack in the strongest possible terms and urges the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) to make a thorough investigation of this incident as well as the use of mustard agent in Um-Housh in September 2016. We should not let those behind these attacks go unpunished and redouble our efforts to prevent the recurrence of chemical weapons use by anyone under any circumstances.

My delegation also deplores the fact that, despite the Chemical Weapons Convention being one of the most universal disarmament treaties, four countries, including North Korea, still remain outside the Convention. The Republic of Korea calls upon the OPCW to step up its efforts for the universalisation of the Convention and will continue to support its efforts



The rapidly evolving global security situation presents us a new set of challenges and demands our focused attention on how to address them in a timely manner.

The prevention of the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors is clearly one of those challenges we face. Turning our most feared nightmare into reality, the third and fourth JIM reports in 2016 confirmed the use of toxic chemicals as weapons by ISIL. As the prevention of the acquisition and use of chemical weapons by non-State actors warrants our immediate action, we look forward to the OPCW's early adoption of the draft decision on Addressing the Threat posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors, of which the Republic of Korea is a co-sponsor.

My delegation would like to stress the importance of identifying future priorities to keep us on track towards fulfilling our noble goals collectively and effectively in the years ahead.

The Republic of Korea would like to reaffirm its commitment to the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities, calling for active engagement of all Member States to help provide a foundation for the best outcomes of the Fourth Review Conference which will be held next year.

The Republic of Korea has contributed to strengthening international cooperation in the field of chemical safety and security by hosting the Seoul Workshop on the Peaceful Development and Use of Chemistry in the Asian Region since 2012 and will continue to do so to build up national capacities in those areas. In this regard, I am glad to announce that the 2017 Workshop in Seoul will be held next month. The Republic of Korea also supports the Trust Fund for the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons with its financial contribution.

On a final note, the Republic of Korea would like to express its sincere gratitude to the Council members who supported Mr Kim Won-soo, the Korean candidate for the position of Director-General of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, in the process of the informal straw polls. I wish to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias González on his successful outcome in the selection process. And I'd like to commend the Chairperson's dedicated contribution to building the consensus among the Executive Council members.

My delegation believes that under new Director-General's leadership the OPCW will develop into a more effective organisation, successfully meeting the challenges on the path towards a world free of chemical weapons. The Korean Government will continue to render its full support and play a full part in the various valuable initiatives pursued by the Organisation.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

- - - 0 - - -