



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE)

Actions Taken by International and Regional Organisations to Implement UNSCR 1540

“Supporting the Aims of Resolution 1540 through the Chemical Weapons Convention”

Statement by Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, Director-General, OPCW

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REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Mr Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed an honour for me to address the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism on a subject of vital importance and, an area where the OPCW makes a substantial contribution towards our common goal of improving regional and global security. The mandate of the OPCW is to implement a comprehensive prohibition on chemical weapons – a prohibition codified in great detail in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Our mission statement defines our vision. It is: “Working together for a world free of chemical weapons”. By implementing the provisions of the Convention on disarmament and non-proliferation, we aim to completely rid the world of an entire class of weapons of mass destruction that has brought untold suffering to humankind. Since the scope of this undertaking is global, our success is driven by consensus building, international cooperation and offering assistance and protection against chemical weapons.

We implement a wide range of programme areas that all spring from the singular objective of completely uprooting both the incentive and the means for producing or using chemical weapons. I will mention some of these programmes. These are the ones that most directly support the objectives of UNSCR 1540.

Today, nearly 95% of the world’s declared chemical weapons have been destroyed under international verification. This amounts to more than 70,000 tonnes of the deadliest poisons ever produced including Syrian and Libyan chemical weapons. Complete elimination of the declared stockpiles is a milestone in sight. It would be an unprecedented achievement in the history of disarmament. Apart from clearly contributing to global security, possibilities for non-State actors gaining access to military-grade stockpiles have been virtually eliminated.

Related measures to prevent re-emergence of chemical weapons will remain a crucial and enduring part of our mission and mandate. Here, the obligations created by the Convention branch off into two main areas; industry verification and data reporting on the one hand, and promulgation and enforcement of national legislation on the other.

Industry inspections are the most direct non-proliferation and confidence building measure. Since its inception, the Organisation has conducted nearly 3500 industry inspections to verify that the production and consumption of chemicals are intended for solely peaceful purposes. It should be noted that the measures outlined in the operative paragraphs of Resolution 1540 that deal with chemical weapons correspond to obligations that States Parties have already assumed under the Convention.

Resolution 1540 stipulates that States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, or acquire in any way, weapons of mass destruction. This is fully in line with the general obligations of Article I of the CWC. Furthermore, in its Article VII, the Convention establishes the requirements for national implementation measures. Each State Party must adopt all necessary measures to implement its obligations under the Convention. This includes extending its penal legislation making it illegal for anyone from undertaking any activity that is prohibited under the Convention (Article VII 1.c).

The effectiveness of legislative and other regulatory measures and of the internal structures to administer them is critical to the enforcement of the Convention. It provides the tools to prevent non-State actors from gaining access to materials that could aid the development of chemical weapons. Full compliance at the national level with the obligations of the Convention provides a good measure of protection against proliferation. In view of the need to ensure full implementation of the Convention, the Conference of our States Parties adopted a plan of action to promote national implementation of the Convention globally.

OPCW dedicates considerable effort and resources to assist our States Parties in fulfilling their obligations. The Secretariat reviews drafts of implementing legislation and provides comments thereon in order to ensure that the drafts meet the requirements of the Convention. Our Internship Programme for Legal Drafters and National Authority Representatives assists States Parties in drafting implementing legislation.

Periodic regional meetings, including in your region, and the Annual Meeting of National Authorities offer valuable opportunities to review and discuss the status of implementation and to offer technical assistance as appropriate. The Mentorship programme facilitates the transfer of best practices between States. These activities have produced concrete results: of our 192 States Parties, 189 or 98% have established or designated a National Authority. This is a crucial channel of communication between the OPCW and its States Parties. 118 States Parties have adopted legislative and/or administrative measures to implement the provisions of the Convention that are the most pertinent to its object and purpose. Criminalising activities that the Convention prohibits and establishing measures that would enforce those rules accord entirely with the objectives of UNSCR 1540.

Controls on transfers of scheduled chemicals are vitally important, especially given the rise in the international trade in scheduled chemicals and the growing importance of free-trade zones. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of scheduled chemicals of dual use are traded internationally every year for purposes that are not prohibited under the Convention. It is evident that this perfectly legitimate trade needs, however, to be monitored and controlled. The OPCW works closely with customs authorities and the chemical industry.

In January this year, I signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the World Customs Organisation (WCO). The MOU sets the terms for close coordination with the WCO, which is essential for enforcement of the transfers' regime on a global scale. This strengthened partnership will enhance the security of the global supply chain. The global chemical industry has consistently supported the implementation of the Convention. Today, with increasing risks of possible attacks on chemical facilities, measures for safety and security at chemical plants assume high importance. The Organisation's international cooperation activities include an active programme for promoting chemical safety and security in our States Parties. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of the OPCW, composed of 25 eminent experts, provides its recommendations for mitigating the proliferation risks emanating from scientific and technological advances.

Terrorism is borderless. We know from our recent investigations that DAESH has in fact used chemical weapons in Syria and in Iraq. The need for vigilance cannot be overstated. The international legal framework offers several avenues for enhanced cooperation and coordination between international organisations in the context of counter-terrorism. We have long-standing cooperation with the 1540 Committee. The OPCW's Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism regularly reviews the opportunities for enhanced interaction and coordination between the concerned international entities including the 1540 mechanism. A Sub-Working Group focusses particular attention on the problem of non-State actors. This group is chaired by H.E. Mrs Maria Teresa Infante, Ambassador of Chile in the Hague

We also have an active partnership with the United Nations Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF). Together with the IAEA, the OPCW co-chairs, the working group on preventing and responding to WMD terrorist attacks with chemical or biological weapons. In January this year, the OPCW hosted a table-top exercise with the participation of 15 different organisations to test an inter-agency mechanism to respond to a chemical terrorist attack. This mechanism will enhance the inter-operability of relevant organisations for an effective, coordinated response. We believe that the newly established OCPW Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM) will provide an important capability to this mechanism.

Mr Chairman,

We must continue to reinforce efforts to fully implement our legal obligations whether these originate in international treaties such as the CWC or instruments such as UNSCR 1540. OPCW remains ready to further strengthen its cooperation with international institutions, regional organisations, scientific communities, chemical industry and the civil society in general. It is my

hope that we can forge yet closer links with this Committee, as this is entirely consistent with our mutually shared goals of protecting and promoting international peace and security.
Thank you.