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**STATEMENT
BY
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DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE OPCW
TO THE
FIRST COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK, 16 OCTOBER 1997**

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1899, 26 nations attending the First Hague Peace Conference declared a prohibition against the use of poison gas, marking the birth of a dream of a world in which such weapons would be banned forever. Almost one hundred years later, on 29 April this year, fulfilment of that dream became a reality with the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is thus an immense privilege and honour for me to be able to speak to you today as the first Director-General of the Convention's implementing body - the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and to inform you about the successful launch of the momentous task of eliminating chemical weapons.

Why does the Chemical Weapons Convention hold such promise when previous efforts have been less than successful? The answer lies in its unique qualities. It is the first multilateral treaty to be simultaneously comprehensive, non-discriminatory and verifiable. It is comprehensive in that it aims to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction within specific pre-determined time-frames. It is non-discriminatory in that all States Parties to the Convention, without exception, relinquish the right to engage in any chemical weapons related activities. The Convention is verifiable in that it provides for on-site inspections, including short notice challenge inspections to clarify and resolve any questions concerning possible non-compliance.

It is therefore evident that the Convention has broken new ground in the history of disarmament and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. Negotiated over more than 20 years, the text of the Convention was adopted by the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva in a time of hope and optimism. The Cold War had just ended and barriers, both real and perceived, were falling, paving the way for precisely this type of treaty - negotiated on a multilateral basis, as opposed to the bipolar accords with which the world was more familiar. This in part explains its impressive membership for so young a multilateral instrument:

eighty-seven states were party to the Convention upon its entry into force. Now, 100 states have ratified or acceded and a further 67 have signed the Convention. Thus, in terms of membership, it is now second only to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, which by the way had only 47 ratifying states as it entered into force.

The Convention is not only evidence of a new era in international relations but it is also an important part of the momentum in the field of disarmament which the world has witnessed over recent years. Successful implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention will be a key component in the further development and strengthening of a nascent broader international regime to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ensure confidence regarding their elimination. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons faces unprecedented challenges as it embarks on the implementation of the Convention. No other international agency of its kind has been constituted with so wide a mandate. I am happy to be able to be here among you today, however, and say that although it is indeed early days yet, work is going according to plan and hopes for the future are bright.

Lying at the heart of the Convention is the unique system it creates to verify compliance with its provisions. Essentially, the success of the Convention will depend on the success of the verification regime. I am happy to inform you that solid progress has been registered in the first six months of operations. During the preparatory phase, it had been assumed for budgetary and planning purposes, that only three states, the Russian Federation and the United States and one unnamed other would declare possession of chemical weapons. In fact, already seven states have declared either possession of chemical weapons or the capability to produce them. This list does not include the other declared possessor of chemical weapons, the Russian Federation, which has yet to ratify. Thus, a clearer picture is already emerging about the quantity and locations of chemical weapons activities, past and present, in the world - an essential step in the process of the eventual elimination of this class of weapon.

The Secretariat continues to receive a steady flow of information from the States Parties. As of 30 September, it has received initial declarations from 63 States Parties. In addition, other required notifications, such as notification of a state's National Authority, points of entry for inspections and standing diplomatic clearance numbers are also being received. Intended transfers of specified highly toxic chemicals produced in small quantities for protective, medical, pharmaceutical or other peaceful purposes (so called "Schedule 1 chemicals") are also now being declared to the OPCW so that such chemicals can be tracked.

Progress has also been solid as regards the second leg of the Convention's verification system - on-site inspections. The very first OPCW inspection was launched on 4 June 1997, just over a month after entry into force. This took place in the United States at a facility which had been in the process of destroying its stockpiles of chemical weapons at the time the Convention entered into force. Altogether, 80 initial inspections and visits have been conducted on the territory of 17 states. This includes both chemical weapons related facilities and facilities producing Schedule 1 chemicals. The Convention requires that the initial inspection of facilities of this type should be completed within six months of its entry into force, an onerous requirement but nevertheless, one we aim to achieve. In addition, permanent monitoring of chemical weapons destruction operations is underway at three CW

destruction facilities in the United States. More than 100 inspections will be completed before the end of the year.

The OPCW has also been working hard to actively assist states in implementing the Convention nationally. The declaration requirements for States Parties, for example, are extremely complex and some states have experienced difficulties in compiling the requisite information. Nonetheless, as a result of the combined efforts of States Parties and the Secretariat, the momentum has been maintained and the situation as regards national compliance with all provisions of the Convention continues to improve.

While the verification system forms the core of the work of the OPCW, there are other important tasks to be undertaken, a critical one being the implementation of Article XI of the Convention (Economic and Technological Development). The intimate relationship between disarmament and non-proliferation commitments on the one hand, and free trade and cooperation for peaceful purposes on the other, is reflected in this Article and it is thus essential that the careful balance is preserved as the Convention is implemented. In addition to providing training courses for personnel of national authorities so as to permit them to properly and effectively implement the Convention at a national level, the Secretariat is working on a number of projects and programs aimed at promoting technical cooperation between States Parties.

None of this is to say that we are without challenges. One of the most important of these is the need to develop a culture of transparency as regards the work of the OPCW. It is true that the Convention itself requires that confidential information be protected and it is true that it was this reassurance which allowed such an intrusive verification system to be accepted in the first instance. But the preservation of confidential information in the field of chemical industry needs to be balanced with the need to be as open and transparent as possible about activities in the military field. I have therefore urged all States Parties to strive to overcome their traditional reluctance to be open, not only to the OPCW but also to the outside world, about chemical weapons related matters. If we are to have any credibility as a body capable of overseeing the elimination of chemical weapons, we must be able to provide information on the Organisation's activities, and the progress being made in identifying and destroying chemical weapons stockpiles and programmes. Our mandate is to protect confidential information, not to perpetuate secrecy. As Director-General of the OPCW, one of my paramount objectives is to transcend these difficulties. There are already signs that this is happening. India, for example, publicly declared its chemical weapons related activities while making declarations to the OPCW. Forty-five out of 49 States Parties which had submitted their initial declarations by 28 July 1997 agreed to the release of general information about their declarations. The fact that some of these states have taken these courageous decisions in spite of the fact that they perceive considerable security threats in their respective regions highlights their commendable long-range vision that only through personal example and truly global action will the Convention be able to achieve its ultimate goal of complete universality. I believe that actions such as these are commendable in their own respect, and contribute towards demonstrating that the Convention is indeed working in a successful manner.

Another fundamental challenge is to promote universality of the Convention. Already the prognosis is good - four of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security

Council are States Parties, and the Convention captures the overwhelming majority of the world's chemical industry. Unfortunately, some key states remain outside, and in that regard my utmost priority is to facilitate ratification of the Convention by the Russian Federation. With 40,000 agent tonnes of chemical weapons, the presence of the Russian Federation is essential if the Convention is to fulfil its aim of eliminating chemical weapons in a comprehensive manner. The presence of the Russian Federation in this regime is also important because of its role in the overall global security arena and because it is one of the five permanent members of the Security Council. Reflecting the importance of their participation, a number of states have offered to assist in the destruction process once Russia is on board. There is progress: The question of ratification is on the Duma's agenda for the period 8-22 October. I, and other senior officials travelled to Moscow last month to discuss the matter with the Russian authorities. I am happy to report that there is a clear desire on the part of the Russian Federation to join this Convention. Given the willingness of other states to assist Russia financially, and the political will which has been demonstrated by the Russian authorities to join the Convention, I am optimistic that a positive vote will occur and that we will see the Russian Federation as a fully fledged member of the OPCW by the Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties.

The OPCW's efforts in this regard will have to be complemented by individual and collective actions by its Member States. From among the 67 signatory states, the ratification of the CWC by the Russian Federation will have by far the most dramatic impact on the prospects for the Convention's ultimate future success. Russia is currently the largest declared possessor of chemical weapons in the world, it has one of the largest chemical industries, is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a member of the G-8. My firm conviction is that its ratification of the CWC will pave the way for a number of other ratifications, including those of states neighbouring Russia, which at present are clearly awaiting a political signal from Moscow. The fact that my first official visit as Director-General was to the Russian Federation - still a signatory state, rather than a Member State of the OPCW - is a measure of the very highest priority which I attach to early Russian ratification of the CWC.

As the Russian Parliament is finalising its debate on CWC ratification, the next few days will become the litmus test of whether Russia intends to live up to its leadership role on international security and disarmament issues, or whether it will choose what is, in my view, the dangerous path of isolationism. I firmly believe that the Russian people through their representatives in Parliament will make the right choice, and the Convention will be ratified now. This is the only outcome which will be consistent with the pressing requirement for Russia to integrate - both politically and economically - with the rest of the world and not distance itself from it.

There is no basis whatsoever to question Russia's support of the Convention and its belief that the CWC will be instrumental to strengthening Russia's national security. To start with, the signing of the CWC in 1993 would have been impossible without the critical Russian involvement. Chemical weapons are now excluded from the Russian military doctrine. The Russian leadership, including President Yeltsin, has on many occasions confirmed its strong commitment to the CWC. The Russian Parliament on a number of occasions, most recently in April 1997, made important declarations in support of the CWC. The Duma stated, in particular, that it "recognises the great international importance of the CWC ratification by

Russia”, “the need to completely exclude the possibility of the use of chemical weapons”, and “intends to make a contribution to the implementation of the Convention’s goals”. The outcome of the ratification debate in Moscow - eagerly awaited around the world - will be, of course, the ultimate test of the validity of these statements.

The Russian Duma has listed four basic concerns which are being weighed in the ratification debate. These were summed up in its Address to the First Session of the Conference of the States Parties of the OPCW in April 1997. I have recently written to the leadership of the Russian Parliament setting out my views on each of the four specific topics of concern contained in that important document. I believe they will have been helpful to the members of Parliament in making the right choice in favour of the CWC ratification.

First and foremost among them is the issue of funding for the destruction of chemical weapons and the related possibility that Russia might not be able to complete destruction of its chemical weapons on time.

Member States of the OPCW are well aware of the need for international assistance for the destruction of the Russian chemical weapons. The United States and many countries in Europe have already announced their offers of help. I believe that - assuming Russia ratifies the CWC - the scope of international assistance will increase in accordance with the commitments already made once the Russian CW destruction programme gets well underway. Some critics contend that international assistance so far has not been sufficient. However, others see it as seed-corn to provide a jump-start to the destruction project.

I believe it is too early to say at present whether or not Russia will be able to complete destruction of its CW stockpile within the time frames established by the Convention. While one can not predict the future with certainty, if Russia implements its obligations under the Convention in good faith, and still would be prevented from completing destruction of its stockpile due to reasons beyond its control, such force majeure circumstances will of course be taken into account by other Member States. It would run counter to the spirit and, in this particular case, to the letter of the CWC to punish a State Party which is willing to comply with its obligations under the Convention, but is unable to do so for very specific and objective reasons.

That said, legally speaking, concerns over the costs of destruction are not directly linked to the decision on whether or not Russia should ratify the CWC. Russia has pledged to destroy its chemical weapons anyway. The Parliament has recently adopted the federal law on destruction of chemical weapons and the President signed the Decree launching the Federal programme for the destruction of chemical weapons. Therefore, the destruction of chemical weapons in Russia is already the law of the land. If Russia chooses to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile being part of the OPCW it will most probably enjoy the broadest possible international support and assistance, which it most certainly will not have, should it decide to stay outside the CWC. In the latter case - to comply with its own internal decisions - Russia will have to destroy its chemical weapons on its own and in all likelihood also being subject to economic sanctions under the Convention. The only real budgetary consequence of the decision to ratify the CWC, therefore, would be the costs of Russia’s participation in the OPCW. These costs will be modest, especially compared with the advantages of membership, including trade in chemicals.

The second concern mentioned in the Duma's Address relates to the burden of the costs of verification of the Russian CW facilities which in accordance with Articles IV and V of the Convention has to be borne by Russia. The final decision on which categories of costs would have to be reimbursed by the inspected State Party to the OPCW will be made at the second session of the Conference of States Parties scheduled from 1- 5 December. If Russia becomes an OPCW Member State by then it will be able to fully participate in the taking of this important decision.

The Secretariat of course is mandated to apply the Convention's verification regime in a balanced way in all Member States. There can be and will be no discrimination against any country in this regard. Nor there will be procedures particularly favouring one State over another. Furthermore, the OPCW will carry out its verification mission in the most cost-effective way possible, consistent with the requirements of the Convention. If such cost effective schemes, in particular sequential inspections, are introduced, the amount of reimbursement which Russia will have to pay to the OPCW for verification of its CW facilities in 1998 - provided the Secretariat's assumptions about the number of the relevant Russian facilities are correct and that the destruction schedule has not changed - would be indeed modest - probably of the order of not more than 3-4 million US dollars. Depending on the outcome of the decisions to be taken in the near future, hopefully with the Russian participation, this amount may be reduced even further. As for the Russian contribution to the regular OPCW budget in 1998, it would most likely not exceed 4 million US dollars. All in all, we are talking about an annual total contribution of less than \$10 million.

The third concern deals with the requirements for conversion of the Russian former chemical weapons production facilities. I indicated to the Russian parliamentary leadership that I believe the real magnitude of this problem has been vastly exaggerated as Russia seems to only have 5 former chemical weapons production facilities. Still any issue deserves to be judged on its own merits.

The very fact that the Convention permits conversion of former chemical weapons production facilities indicates that conversion is viewed as a means to alleviate not worsen economic difficulties. It is for this purpose that the Convention does not require the destruction of standard buildings and standard equipment at such former chemical weapons production facilities. Only those features of buildings and items of equipment which are characteristic of chemical weapons production facilities and which differ from the prevailing commercial chemical industry standards need to be destroyed. As for the frequency of subsequent inspections of converted facilities, it will be determined solely by the degree of risk the converted facility poses to the purposes of the Convention. The right to re-inspect such facilities can not and will not be abused by the Secretariat, all the more so because the Convention provides effective means to guard against any such abuse.

One request for conversion from a current State Party, which will have to be decided upon in accordance with the Convention at the December session of the Conference, has already been endorsed by the Executive Council. In doing so the Council has taken into account the economic need to convert the facility in question and to retain standard buildings which formerly housed a chemical weapons production plant. The logic of the Council's decision

should allay the Russian concerns about conversion and, thus, send an important and reassuring signal to Russia.

Finally, Russia - being the largest declared chemical weapons possessor and a country with a sizeable chemical industry - clearly deserves a prominent place in the OPCW. I am convinced that timely ratification of the Convention will provide Russia with ample opportunities to assume a position in the Organisation commensurate with its status. Timely, means now, immediately, otherwise Russian inspectors will not be able to be recruited, Russians nationals will be unable to compete for the remaining vacant posts within the Secretariat and, last but not least, Russia will have no place in the decision making process of the OPCW. Instead it will have to rely on a bilateral arrangement, under conditions which may well not be as advantageous as those established under the CWC, in order to be able to ensure the international community that the Russian domestic chemical weapon destruction law is being observed. Russia will not enjoy the benefits of a universal regime under which every Member State is treated on equal grounds. I do not see why the Russian Government and the Duma would wish to opt for such an alternative, not even for financial reasons, when the obvious way - offered to them by the international community and the OPCW itself - is immediate ratification. Such action will ensure that Russia is able to continuing playing a prominent role in world affairs. I appeal to those who represent the Russian Federation to send this sincere message back to Moscow now, today, immediately, before my Organisation is left with no alternative but to give up on the matter of Russian participation in this noble cause. I also appeal to all States of the OPCW, in particular the major players, to help the Duma to understand the potential gains, both political and financial, of accelerating the ratification process. I ask them to signify once again, their preparedness to help alleviate this burden inherited by the present Russian administration and its financial consequences, thus helping to ensure the success of our commitment to a world free of chemical weapons, which is the foundation stone on which our infant Organisation is built. In doing so those Member States will be demonstrating their true commitment to this first, truly multilateral, disarmament treaty.

Timing is, therefore, critical. In accordance with the Convention's provisions Russia will become a full member of the OPCW 30 days after it deposits its instrument of ratification of the Convention here in New York with the UN Secretary-General. Therefore, in order to ensure that Russia participates and has the right to vote on all matters during the December session of the conference, its instrument of ratification should be deposited no later than 31 October.

The successful launch of the OPCW verification regime on one hand and the Russian ratification of the CWC on the other will be the two most important developments in global chemical disarmament in 1997. When both have materialised the international community will be able to look with more certainty at the prospect of creating the world free of chemical weapons.

There are some other key states whose ratification is also important to the universality of the Convention and we are doing all in our power to bring them within the fold as soon as possible. With regard to states that have not even signed the Convention, we will continue our efforts to stress the political, economic and technological benefits of joining. As the number of States Parties increases, chemical weapons will be progressively delegitimised

and, by the same token, political constraints on their development will be substantially reinforced.

In assuming the responsibility of the post of Director-General of the OPCW, I did so in the firm belief that the way forward was to promote transparency and open-mindedness and to lead a lean and dynamic organisation. My first six months in office have further persuaded me of the importance of this approach. In the coming months, I will work tirelessly to promote and sustain transparency as regards States Parties' military activities affected by the Convention. I will also do everything in my power to assist and encourage the Russian Federation to ratify the Convention - an essential step in the Convention's long-term success and viability as a disarmament regime. There is a great deal of hard work ahead. At this juncture, however, it is appropriate to pause and reflect that the first six months in the life of the Chemical Weapons Convention have shown that a multilateral disarmament agreement can, and in fact is, working - something which I assume is the sincere desire of all countries. This Convention, a first in many respects, is a major boost for similar efforts in other fields of disarmament and for this we can be justifiably proud.

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