



Statement to the 13th Conference of the States Parties of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

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The Hague, Netherlands
December 2, 2008

(Remarks as delivered)

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

I am deeply honored to be here, once again, among so many friends and colleagues at the 13th Conference of the States Parties. I warmly welcome our new Chairman, Ambassador Minoru Shibuya of Japan. We are confident that he will guide us skillfully through our agenda this week and bring us to a successful conclusion. I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to our past chairman, Ambassador Abuelgasim Idris, and thank him for his wisdom and exemplary service to this Organization. As always, I pledge my own support and that of my delegation to making this a productive and successful session.

The Conference of the States Parties provides an important opportunity every year to review from where we have come and to make decisions for the year ahead. This year has been an especially meaningful one. The Second Review Conference in April marked a critical milestone in the work of the OPCW. I feel privileged to have been able to participate in both the First and the Second Review Conferences during my nearly six years with this Organization. We all have much to be proud of in the achievements of the OPCW, but much work remains to be done. I have great hopes for the continuing success of this Organization due to the earnest commitment of the member states, the deft guidance by the Chairpersons of the political bodies, the selfless work of our many facilitators, and the devoted and superior service rendered by our delegations and the Technical Secretariat. Nor could our success have been achieved without the supremely capable leadership of the Director-General, who has served so brilliantly at the helm of this enterprise.

As many of you will recall, the Second Review Conference was quite an ordeal for those of us who participated, with multiple papers and positions over many months, widely divergent views, and then a marathon of long days and a couple of all-night sessions. What we produced in that two-week ordeal last April is a reaffirmation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, a strong renewal of the commitment by all States Parties to the goals and objectives of the Convention and to the implementation of all of its provisions. We set out some guidelines for the future of this Organization, demonstrating that it is a living entity, continuing to work, adjusting to changing circumstances, and thriving. Our agenda here this week in the annual Conference of the States Parties is a critical continuation of that process to make the vision of the Second Review Conference a reality.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will not reach its conclusion when all the declared chemical weapons are finally destroyed, although that will be a remarkably historic event to celebrate. Any who hold the view that final destruction of declared stockpiles will signal the end of the Chemical Weapons Convention are sorely mistaken. The OPCW will continue to have a critical role long after disarmament, in assuring that chemical weapons will never again be developed, produced, or used. This is a covenant of the Convention that the States Parties unanimously affirmed in the Report of the Second Review Conference as this Organization's ongoing, ultimate, and permanent non-proliferation role.

The Second Review Conference expressed concern over the increased danger of the use of chemical weapons by terrorists, and invited States Parties to consult and cooperate both bilaterally and regionally on ways to prevent terrorist use of such weapons. It also recalled the important work of the OPCW Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism and affirmed its continuing relevance. My government strongly supports and encourages that Working Group and the OPCW to be used as a forum for discussion of issues by States Parties and others to share their experiences related to chemical safety and security and the potential threat of toxic chemicals being exploited by terrorists.

The Second Review Conference reiterated that the universality of the Convention is essential to achieve its object and purpose. We have made enormous strides toward universal membership in the Chemical Weapons Convention since its Entry-Into-Force. In just the six years since I have been here, we have added 32 States Parties, with only ten states now remaining to ratify or accede, an accomplishment in no small part due to the tireless efforts of our Director-General. We warmly welcome the ratification of the Convention by The Republic of the Congo, Guinea Bissau, and most recently Lebanon, since our last Conference. We are very pleased that Iraq and the Bahamas are completing their internal procedures for accession and we look forward to both becoming States Parties to the Convention very soon. This is a particularly significant turning point for Iraq and we are proud of the Iraqi government's decision to join the Convention, and the international community, in our mutual efforts to destroy and prevent the use of all chemical weapons everywhere.

It remains vitally important that the states remaining outside the Convention also accede so that the entire world can reap its benefits – a total ban on an entire class of weapons, the destruction of all existing chemical weapons, and the promotion of trade in chemicals and international cooperation in chemical activities not prohibited by the Convention. The essential goal of universality is within our grasp, but we must all continue to pursue the few states that have not yet joined the international community in ratifying this Convention. The United States, for its part, is doing what it can to work to with non-States Parties who are interested in joining the Convention.

The Second Review Conference also reaffirmed that the full and effective national implementation of the obligations under the Convention is essential for its realization. These obligations belong to each and every State Party in the Organization. It is encouraging to note that nearly all States Parties have designated a National Authority. We also note with appreciation that many countries are working on their implementing legislation, and we encourage their efforts in completing this obligation. Despite this progress, many States Parties still have not implemented domestic legislation covering all key areas of the Convention. This is an area that will require more attention and cooperation among States Parties in order to address legal shortcomings. As always, the Technical Secretariat and other States Parties, including the United States, stand ready to assist when needed.

During the Second Review Conference, and in all of the meetings of the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties, the complete destruction of chemical weapons and the conversion or destruction of Chemical Weapons Production Facilities have been stressed. Indeed, these are the central goals of the Convention. Whether in declared storage stockpiles and destruction facilities, or in old and abandoned munitions, wherever they are found, chemical weapons are a bane that we are working collectively to eliminate.

We are heartened that Albania and A State Party have completed destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles. This is a significant accomplishment and we gratefully offer our congratulations. It is also noteworthy that India is very near completing the destruction of its stockpile. Those of us who possess chemical weapons have special responsibilities to secure these weapons, to declare them, and to destroy them under international monitoring. Destruction by some possessor states, including the United States, has not been as rapid as any of us would wish, but it is relentlessly, *relentlessly* moving forward and gaining momentum. The inevitability of the scourge of chemical warfare being purged forever from our planet becomes more apparent with each and every weapon destroyed.

For our part, the United States, with the second-largest stockpile in the world, has destroyed over 56 percent of its chemical weapons and all of its binary chemical weapons – that is to say, all of the munitions, parts, components and chemicals associated with the most modern chemical weapons system ever developed by the

United States. We have destroyed all of our former production facilities, completed operations at our Newport destruction facility, and have destroyed over 96 percent of our total stockpile of nerve agent. The United States understands our obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and we are fully committed to the complete destruction of our stockpiles as rapidly as possible. We have worked hard to eliminate the weapons of greatest risk first, and now continue with all deliberate speed to destroy the remainder as quickly and safely as possible.

The Executive Council's visit to Russia's Shchuchye facility in September provided an opportunity for representatives of the Council to observe the enormity and complexity of Russia's ongoing destruction efforts. This visit, like the earlier one to the Anniston facility in the United States, is an important part of the series of exchanges which contribute to confidence building, and which demonstrate the commitment of the United States and the Russian Federation to the complete destruction of their stockpiles. We have invited the Executive Council to send a delegation to Pueblo, Colorado, and Umatilla, Oregon, during the first week of June 2009 for the next in this series of visits.

Mr. Chairman,

We face a number of important issues this week, the most critical being adoption of the Program of Work and Budget for 2009. Intensive consultations have been continuing on the budget, and we urge our colleagues on the Executive Council to come to agreement as quickly as possible in recommending the budget to this Conference. Due in part to the tough negotiations on this and other budget issues, I would like to offer my profound thanks to Martin Strub of Switzerland, who has patiently conducted consultations on the budget over the past several months.

Our other dedicated and tireless facilitators have also been engaged in ongoing consultations on Article VII implementation, Article X assistance and protection, improving Article XI programs, and Universality. We hope that as that work continues this week, we can achieve consensus on the decisions or report language relating to these important subjects during this Conference. Discussion of some of the issues under the industry cluster recently took on new life with new facilitators beginning consultations on the enhancement of declarations for Other Chemical Production Facilities and low concentration limits for Schedule 2A/2A* chemicals. I wish each and all of our facilitators success in their efforts to achieve consensus on these important issues.

Mr. Chairman,

As I plan my retirement and departure from The Hague, I beg your indulgence for a few final reflections on this remarkable institution of which we are all a part, the OPCW. The First and Second Review Conferences were last minute high wire acts from which we were fortunate both times not to trip and fall to failure. The next Review Conference and the final extended deadlines for destruction of chemical weapons will present exceedingly difficult issues for the future of this Organization. We need to move toward – and past -- 2012 and that next Review Conference with determination and the realization that there is much that all of us still have to do to ensure the continued success of the OPCW well into the future. We have faced difficult challenges many times in the past. Yet we have successfully resolved so many contentious issues that I remain confident that this Organization can continue to do so in the future.

All of us in the OPCW are multilateralists. Achieving excellence in the multilateral field is a shared enterprise in which each participant is indispensable. The underlying factor for our success is the ethos of consensus – that mutual devotion and commitment to come to agreements that everyone can accept and support. Consensus empowers all of us. Here everyone's voice counts, and everyone is part of the group's achievements. If our political bodies, the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties, turn to voting to resolve issues – and that is always possible -- I fear that this Organization will devolve into the factionalism, acrimony, and bitterness that we have seen so often in other international bodies.

I am grateful to all my past and present colleagues for consistently choosing the consensus path through all of the years that I have been here, although it has not always been easy. It has required long hours and myriad discussions to hear all parties with interests in the issue, and it has required the commitment and creativity of leaders, facilitators, and delegates alike to find the solutions. The OPCW can reinforce that tradition and its strong record of achievement through the difficult challenges that lie ahead. My fervent hope is that all of you, and those that succeed you, will keep the flame alive and never waver in carrying on the exemplary tradition of hard work, consensus building, and success that has marked the OPCW as a unique and vital multilateral institution.

I will repeat what I have stated many times in different forums – the OPCW is truly a model of effective multilateral diplomacy.

I bid each of you a very, very fond farewell, with my thanks for the unflagging cooperation so generously extended to our delegation. I will always treasure the professional and personal friendships made here at the OPCW that so have enriched my life.

I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the 13th Session of the Conference of States Parties.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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