



Statement to the Forty-First Session of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

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The Hague, The Netherlands
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(Remarks as delivered)

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

Let me begin by extending a warm welcome to all present, but especially to the representatives of those States Parties who are joining the Executive Council for the first time, or rejoining us after a period of absence.

I would also like to offer my congratulations to our new Chairman, Ambassador Dastis of Spain. I am confident that your deft guidance will keep us working smoothly and effectively over the next year, and I offer the full support and cooperation of my delegation. Let me also express my gratitude to your distinguished predecessor in the chair, Ambassador José Antonio Arróspide of Peru, for his leadership over the past 12 months.

Ladies and gentlemen, we face a busy agenda and a number of important tasks this week. But at this time there is no issue as critical and urgent for the OPCW and its member states as that of achieving full national implementation of obligations under Article VII of the Convention. At the Eighth Conference of States Parties in 2003, all member states committed themselves to a plan of action to achieve full national implementation by the 10th Conference of States Parties. That deadline is now just over four months away.

A great deal of hard work – and a great deal of progress – has taken place in the last few months. I see from the Director-General's latest report that 39 States Parties have received or will shortly receive on-site technical assistance visits from the Technical Secretariat. My own government has conducted a further ten such visits, with the support and participation of the Technical Secretariat (TS), and is planning more. We have been impressed by the many States Parties that have taken serious steps to put in place necessary national implementation measures. I would like to single out OPCW Legal Adviser Santiago Oñate for his outstanding leadership in directing TS efforts in this area and his personal involvement in many of the assistance visits. I also thank Ralf Trapp of the Technical Secretariat and Ronald Munch of Germany, the Council's facilitator for the action plan, who have made important contributions to this effort.

Significant progress has indeed been made in meeting Article VII obligations, particularly during the course of 2005. But we should not spend too much time congratulating each other just yet. With just 4 months of our 2-year action plan left to go, it seems clear that a number of States Parties that only recently began to take serious action will fall short of the goal of full national implementation by the 10th Conference. More troubling, it seems very likely that by the time of the Conference, there will still be a number of States Parties that have not taken even the first, most basic steps – though I am pleased to say that no current members of this Council fall into this latter group.

We need to redouble our efforts in these last few months: those of us that can provide assistance must do so; those that have national implementation tasks yet to complete, must work assiduously to accomplish them. This is not the time to give up or to reduce our effort, but to make a renewed push.

Colleagues, I want to be clear about why this is such a priority: this is not a matter of arbitrary deadlines or formalistic compliance with treaty provisions. The measures we are all obligated to take are measures that will also safeguard our citizens against the deliberate misuse of deadly chemicals. We have waited many years, in some cases, for these measures to be taken. For 2 years, we have pursued a vigorous campaign of assistance. We have waited long enough.

We view the requirement established by CSP-8 for Article VII compliance as a critical requirement. It is clear at this point that not all States Parties will meet that deadline. At the Conference, we will need to appraise the success of our action plan, and we will need to consider what further measures may be appropriate to ensure that all States Parties fully meet their Article VII obligations in the shortest possible time. To succeed at the Conference, we will need to begin over the next few weeks to discuss these matters. How will we evaluate the progress of individual States Parties? What criteria will we apply? What incentives or measures are appropriate in the case of States Parties that have not met our shared objectives? Is there a difference between a State Party that is working hard to address its situation, but has not yet completed its efforts, and a State Party that has done nothing whatsoever?

We believe that these questions should form the centerpiece of the facilitations chaired by Mr. Munch during July and September, with the aim of developing clear recommendations for endorsement at the September Council meeting. By the end of this week, the United States will table a national paper providing our thoughts on how we should proceed. Our objective is to foster an open and constructive discussion, and, ultimately, contribute to the success of the 10th Conference. We look forward to an energetic and thoughtful dialogue over the coming weeks.

Mr. Chairman, another issue on which member states have made significant progress during 2005 is the need to reach agreement regarding a site selection procedure for inspection of other chemical production facilities. The United States places great importance on completion of this work by the November CSP. We appreciate the efforts of the facilitator, Johan Verboom of the Netherlands, who has driven the consultations on this critical issue. We are sorry that Johan will be leaving us soon, and that he will not be here to see the fruits of his labor.

Whoever may be Johan's successor as facilitator, we believe that, with diligent work and a constructive approach by all delegations, it is reasonable to expect agreement at the September EC on a site selection procedure. Consensus on this matter will be a key element in ensuring that we have a fair and effective method for inspecting OCPF facilities. In pursuit of that important goal, we would hope that delegations are prepared to roll up their sleeves and continue work through the month of July.

Mr. Chairman, the United States had requested that the issue of setting the 45 percent destruction deadline for Russia also be put on the agenda for this Executive Council. As explained earlier, we agree, after hearing the encouraging presentation by the Russian Federation at the destruction informals yesterday, with Russia's request this issue not be included in this EC agenda. However, to briefly reiterate, we believe that it is critical to begin

deliberations on this important issue, with the goal of reaching agreement at the November CSP. The continued absence for an extended period of time of a specific date is not in the best interest of the CWC, and inaction this year by the EC and the CSP on this important matter would not be responsible. Establishing a firm date would facilitate planning by donor countries, and encourage timely action by the Russian Federation for the elimination of Russia's CW stocks. We look forward to a full discussion within the Council over the coming months, with a view to reaching agreement on a revised 45% deadline at the September EC for action by the 10th Conference.

We have all just received copies of the draft OPCW program and budget for 2006. If we are to arrive at consensus recommendations for the Conference at the 42nd Council meeting, we will need to work on this, too, during the month of July, and provide strong support to our Canadian and Norwegian facilitators. I remind the Council that we have been tasked by the Conference to not only make a recommendation on the budget itself, but also to specifically consider the budget methodologies employed by the Technical Secretariat, to further refine budget objectives and indicators of achievement, and to examine human resource management within the Secretariat. These tasks are important and need to be addressed, but they also increase our workload.

The Conference's direction that the Council examine human resource issues touches on questions of staffing and recruitment that have generated substantial discussion over the course of this year. We know that the Director General has been fully aware of the concerns expressed by member states, and has been actively working to ensure that the Technical Secretariat has sufficient staffing to do the work set out by the member states. We look forward to further productive, transparent discussions with the Director General and senior members of his staff on this critical issue during this Executive Council and in the coming months.

The United States is grateful to the Technical Secretariat, and to the Director General for his capable leadership in guiding the Organization during a critical rebuilding period over the last few years. We appreciate his administering the tenure policy as fairly and prudently as possible despite the many difficulties inherent in it, as well as this leadership in getting the OPCW budget process converted to an RBB process, and then offering a zero nominal growth budget for the year 2006.

We are also grateful to the Chairman for his offering a guideline for the election procedure of the Director Generalship for the next four years as a useful reminder and transparency measure.

We are gratified that the Director General has indicated his willingness to stand for re-election. And the U.S. will be pleased, when the time comes in September at the next EC, to support the recommendation to the CSP for his election to another full term.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we note with great regret that this will be the last Executive Council session at which we will be aided by the formidable knowledge and tranquil demeanor of Mr. Sylwin Gizowski. As some of you know, whenever we talk about the "drafters of the Convention," we are talking, among other people, about Sylwin. He played a leadership role at the Conference of Disarmament when this Convention was negotiated. Later he played key roles in the Preparatory Commission charged with setting up this organization – first as the Polish delegate, and then as a member of the Provisional Technical Secretariat. Since the Convention entered into force, he has taken on the job of supporting the OPCW governing bodies, managing documents and procedures, and quietly tutoring chairmen and delegates in the arts of multilateral diplomacy. It has always been a great comfort to have Sylwin sitting at the side of the various Chairpersons to provide his wisdom and knowledge when needed. I want to add my personal appreciation for all that he has done for this organization, and to emphasize that this appreciation also comes from the United States.

Mr. Chairman, a number of important topics need to be discussed this week. With goodwill and cooperation, we believe that significant progress can be made on these critical issues, particularly Article VII. My delegation and I look forward to working with you, the Director General, and all delegations to ensure that we will have a successful Executive Council session, and that we will be able to look back with pride on our accomplishments at this week's end.

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