



Statement to the Forty-Fourth Session of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

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The Hague, The Netherlands
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Madam Chairperson, Mr. Director-General, Distinguished Delegates,

Let me begin by expressing my great pleasure at seeing all of you once again. I was particularly glad to welcome back to the Chair my good friend Ambassador Alfonso Dastis, who unfortunately is not present at this moment, but to whom I pledge the full cooperation and support of my delegation during the coming week. This will be Ambassador Dastis's final regular Session as Chairman, and so I take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation for all his hard work over the past year.

I would also like to take a moment to recognize some other transitions: Brian Hawtin will be leaving the Technical Secretariat at the end of this month. I want to thank him on behalf of the United States government for his dedicated service in the office of Deputy Director-General over the past years. I also wish to warmly welcome Ambassador John Freeman, who will succeed Mr. Hawtin as DDG, and Mr. Krzysztof Paturej, our new Director of Special Projects.

Mr. Chairman, we should note that this time of the year has special significance for the OPCW. The use of chemical weapons at Ypres took place in the spring, as did the chemical attacks at Halabja. As the Council takes up its work anew this spring, we should re-dedicate ourselves to the objective of ensuring that such attacks will never happen again.

Ladies and gentlemen, it seems clear that one issue will dominate our deliberations this year: the status of the efforts of possessor states to complete destruction of their chemical weapons stockpiles. In particular, we will be considering requests for extensions of the April 2007 deadline. One such request is already before this body. Another delegation has proposed a specific date for an intermediate deadline that was previously extended "in principle."

The United States made clear in 2003 that we would not be able to meet the deadline of April 29, 2007, and we were granted an extension "in principle" of the 100 percent deadline. We intend to propose a specific date for that extension no later than April 29 of this year, as called for by the Convention. We had, to be frank, hoped to present our request at this session of the Council. However, the details of our proposal are being considered at very senior levels in Washington, and we are not yet in a position to present them. I can tell you, however, that we intend to seek the maximum extension allowable under the Convention, to April 29, 2012.

The U.S. has consistently sought to be as transparent as possible about our destruction program. At yesterday's session of the destruction informals, we provided updated information on our efforts to meet our 45 percent intermediate deadline of December 31, 2007. In addition to our formal proposal to extend our 100% deadline, my Government intends to present a briefing to explain in greater detail the reasons for the proposed extension and our plans for destruction.

While the details of our request will be presented at a later date, I would like to stress a few points now:

- The United States remains committed to the complete destruction of our chemical weapons as rapidly as it can safely be done.
- The U.S. possesses the second-largest chemical weapons stockpile in the world. We began efforts to destroy our stockpile years before the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force. Since EIF, we have destroyed more than ten thousand metric tons of agent – 36 percent of our stockpile.
- The U.S. has committed unprecedented resources to this program. Right now we spend roughly 1.5 billion – with a "B" – dollars a year on CW destruction. Total costs, by the time the program is concluded, are expected to exceed 32 billion dollars. We're spending far more to destroy these weapons than we spent to produce them.
- Our destruction program is running behind schedule for specific, concrete reasons.
 - Many of these are strictly technical: difficulties in dealing with gelled or polymerized agent, the presence of contaminants in some of our stocks, and unexpected difficulties in destroying rocket components have all slowed our progress.
 - Others are regulatory or legal: for example, safety and environmental permitting, reviews, and, when the unforeseen occurs, investigations -- all of these have repeatedly delayed startup of facilities or caused protracted shutdowns. Community concerns over the safety of our destruction technologies have compelled us to develop new technologies, which required significant testing and refinement before they could be implemented. We regret these delays, but we absolutely must ensure the safety of our workers, the international inspectors, our communities, and the environment, and we must uphold the sometimes-messy process of taking into account public concerns in a participatory democracy.
 - We will make every effort consistent with these constraints to expedite the destruction of our chemical weapons stockpile. What we are not prepared to do is jeopardize the safety of our people or the environment.

I look forward to working constructively with all of you on the U.S. request, and the extension requests of other possessor states. I believe that, working together, we can develop sound consensus recommendations to the Conference of States Parties on these proposals.

Madame Chairperson, while destruction deadlines are the most visible of the challenges we face this year, there are also others. The Council must devote take the time and attention it needs to address extension issues, but it must not become paralyzed by them. In particular, 2006 is a critical year in our ongoing effort to achieve full national implementation of obligations under Article VII.

In 2005, under the two –year "action plan" adopted at the Eighth Conference of the States Parties, significant progress on national implementation was achieved. Nevertheless, member states collectively recognized that more remained to be done, and in November, the Tenth Conference adopted a decision setting out tasks for this year in some detail. That decision was crafted to promote full implementation of Article VII by CSP-11. It included a number of tasks for States Parties, the Technical Secretariat, and the Executive Council, with a number of deadlines, milestones, and objectives to be met during 2006.

It seems to us that it is important for both the Secretariat and this Council to monitor progress both early and often. Only by doing so can the Council take prompt and constructive action that will achieve results. For example, States Parties who had not fully implemented Article VII obligations were urged, in the CSP decision, to inform the OPCW, preferably by the end of 2005, of their plans to achieve full implementation by CSP-11, and of the obstacles that they face in doing so. This information is essential if the Technical Secretariat and interested States Parties are to provide meaningful support and assistance. To date, 35 States Parties have responded. This is

welcome news: it will allow us all to focus our efforts to support these States Parties in the most constructive ways, and it will help those States Parties in identifying and taking the next, critical steps. A substantial number of States Parties, however, have not yet provided the information requested by the Conference. We strongly urge all States Parties to respond to the urging of the Conference of the States Parties and provide this information as soon as possible.

The United States wants to help others to meet their obligations. Our track record demonstrates this conclusively. In 2005, in cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, the U.S. conducted technical assistance visits to ten States Parties in Africa, six in Latin America and the Caribbean, and three in Eastern Europe. During the first half of 2006, and again in cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, the U.S. is planning assistance visits and information sharing meetings at the request of three States Parties in Africa, five in Latin America and the Caribbean, one in Eastern Europe, and three in Asia. Moreover, the U.S., in conjunction with the Government of Romania, has developed the Implementation Assistance Programme and has made this tool available to all States Parties in English, and it will soon be available in its entirety in Spanish and French. We are continuing efforts to refine and expand this tool.

I need not remind any of you of the efforts to provide assistance that have been exerted by the Technical Secretariat under the guidance of Legal Adviser Onate. But it's hard to help when you don't even know what the problems are. We need to find new ways to reach out to those States Parties who have not submitted information; to persuade them that this is both feasible and important; and to remind them that help is available. And we need to find ways to offer further advice, encouragement and political support to those that have taken this step and opened a dialogue with the Organization, but still have more to do. To date, we have relied on Conference decision documents and the good offices of the Director-General to spread this word. I submit that it is time for us, as a Council, to do more. We are leaders in our respective regions. Individually, and collectively, through the offices of our Chairman and Vice-Chairmen, we have the ability to get out the message, and provide the Director-General with crucial political reinforcement.

This is a positive – not a punitive – step, and one that the Council, and we as individual Council members, could take now. Let's not wait until autumn and wring our hands about what to do about States Parties that have not met their obligations. Let's reach out to them *now*, and help them achieve our shared goal. My Government believes that the Council, through its officers and its members, should take the initiative to engage with these States Parties on the implementation of their Article VII obligations.

Madame Chairperson, my delegation and I look forward to working with you, the Director General, the new Council officers that we will elect later this week, and all delegations to ensure that we have a successful EC session and that over the coming year we will be able to reach consensus decisions on these—and other—key issues to achieve the goals of the Convention.

Thank you.

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