



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

Ambassador Eric M. Javits, Head of the U.S. Delegation
The Hague, the Netherlands
May 16, 2006

Madame Chairperson, Mr. Director-General, Distinguished delegates:

As always, it is a great pleasure to see so many friends and colleagues gathered here today. I am especially pleased to be able to welcome Ambassador Mkhize to her first session as the chairperson of the Executive Council. I am certain that under her capable leadership, she will guide us to successfully address the many challenging issues that are before us this week. And I want to take this opportunity to pledge to you, Ambassador Mkhize, my full support and that of my delegation throughout your tenure as the chairperson of the Executive Council.

As I am sure all of you are aware, the United States on April 19 requested that our final chemical weapons destruction deadline be set at April 29, 2012, the latest date allowable under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Our request also acknowledges that, while the United States is making every effort to complete destruction by 2012, our best projections indicate that the U.S. destruction effort will likely extend beyond that date. That request is now a formal document for consideration at this Session.

Following the submission of our extension request, Mr. Dale Ormond, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for the Elimination of Chemical Weapons, provided an in-depth briefing on April 20 to outline the status of the U.S. destruction program. Not all delegates were able to attend that briefing. And even for those who were able to attend, it takes time to digest and assess the amount of information that was provided. For these reasons, I asked Mr. Ormond to return to The Hague to repeat his presentation and to answer any further questions from delegates. Yesterday, Mr. Ormond provided an abbreviated, but still extensive, briefing at the destruction informals. He is with us today to address any further questions, and working-level experts will be available throughout the week. In addition, I am pleased to inform colleagues that the Principal Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Dr. Tom Hopkins, is also with us today. Dr. Hopkins is the Department of Defense's treaty manager, and a senior adviser on chemical weapons destruction matters. Dr. Hopkins has asked to address this body to underscore the U.S. commitment to completing the destruction of its chemical weapons stockpiles as soon as possible.

The United States is indeed dedicated to the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and to the success of the OPCW as a model of effective multilateral action against an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Previously, I have reminded you all that my government began destroying our chemical weapons stockpile years before the Convention entered into force and expects to spend over 32 billion dollars before we are finished. I have spoken about the funding and assistance the United States provides to other States Parties seeking to destroy chemical weapons stockpiles. And allow me to echo Dr. Hopkins in that the United States remains committed to the goal of reaching destruction of 100% of our stockpile by the 2012 deadline, or, if that is not possible, completing destruction as soon as feasible thereafter. But now it is time for me to listen.

Delegates have questions about our request. That is to be expected, and we are here to listen and to answer those questions to the best of our ability. Delegates have concerns about the situation, and its implications for the Convention. We are here to listen to those concerns, and discuss how they may be addressed. And delegates have, I suspect, good advice and constructive ideas about the way ahead. We are definitely eager to listen to those. The United States remains firmly committed to the fullest possible transparency regarding our destruction program and our request, and we welcome a thorough dialogue with interested delegations.

Other possessor states have also submitted extension requests or related documents, some for consideration at this Session, and some for the July Session. We look forward to constructive, practical discussion of all these documents over the coming weeks.

The difficulties possessor states have encountered in meeting the destruction deadlines laid out in the CWC are seen by many as a challenge to the success of the Convention. I believe, however, that success or failure will be determined by our ability to deal soberly and wisely with the circumstances before us. The success of the Convention is not dictated by the technical and political vagaries that have slowed various destruction efforts -- rather, it is in our collective hands. And I assure you that the United States will continue to work closely with States Parties to ensure the continued success of the Convention.

Madam Chairperson, Colleagues, the 45th Council Session is also significant because it is a milestone for the follow-on actions agreed to by the Tenth Conference of the States Parties to ensure effective national implementation under Article VII of the Convention. The United States has been, and continues to be, an active proponent of efforts to achieve full implementation of Article VII obligations. We have been active not only here, in meetings in The Hague, but on the ground around the world, providing support to States Parties seeking to fulfill their obligations.

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. has carried out two such visits in Asia. In addition, 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 one other 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 based on useful comments received from other States Parties and practical experience gained while utilizing the IAP during Technical Assistance Visits. My point, colleagues, is that this is not simply rhetoric. The United States believes in the CWC, and believes that effective national implementation of the CWC is important. We are not pursuing a political agenda: our goal is simply greater security for all.

Not all situations are equal, and some States Parties face greater challenges than others. This does not eliminate the value of establishing clear deadlines. What it does mean is that we must judge the case of each State Party that fails to meet the target individually, on the merits, with full information about the circumstances. For this reason, it is critical for States Parties to submit their implementation plans and other information required by the CSP-10 decision to the Secretariat, and equally critical for the Secretariat to make this information available to the Council. Only then can we fairly consider the reasons for continued delay. A State Party that has been diligent but unsuccessful in meeting a deadline is not to be regarded in the same way as a State Party that has made little or no effort.

By this Session, all States Parties were to have established their National Authorities. Through the efforts of the TS and individual States Parties, we have seen real progress. 90 percent of all States Parties have designated their National Authority. Seven of the 17 remaining States Parties only joined the Convention in 2005 or 2006. We cannot yet declare victory; this is progress, but we must continue to assist, encourage and press these 17 states to fulfill this basic task.

It is important not to focus only on this point, however. At the December Conference of States Parties, we will once again assess what we have accomplished on the entire range of Article VII obligations. My delegation is concerned that we do not know, and cannot tell from the documents before us, how many States Parties have in fact developed plans for achieving full implementation by CSP-11, as called for in the Conference decision. It is essential that the OPCW know what problems member states are facing and how they plan to move forward if the Organization is to provide meaningful assistance. And it is just as important that member states develop plans for their own use if they are to make satisfactory progress in the limited time remaining. I hope that the Council can obtain this information without further delay, and initiate consultations with individual States Parties to provide assistance and encouragement while there is still time to make further progress.

Madame Chairperson, these are but two of the challenging issues we must tackle during the course of your time as chairperson. There will certainly be other matters of great importance that we will discuss, ranging from the 2007 budget to organization of the Second Review Conference working group. It will be critical to approach all these issues in a spirit of cooperation and, as always, to strive for consensus decisions. I believe that the experience of the last few years establishes that when we address important issues in a collegial and cooperative manner, there are few problems that cannot be resolved. As a result, we can take collective pride in making great strides towards achieving the ultimate goal of the Convention: a world free of chemical weapons. It is to that goal that the U.S. remains solidly committed, and to that effort that I pledge my full support and that of my delegation. Thank you.

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