



Chemical Weapons Destruction

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Statement to the Forty-Sixth Session of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
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Madame Chairperson, Mr. Director-General, Distinguished delegates: As we begin this Executive Council session on a day of particular importance to Americans, I am especially pleased to greet so many friends and colleagues. Over the past few years, this organization has been uniquely privileged to make enviable progress due to a spirit of collegiality that has generated consensus. We collectively have all strived to develop a positive and friendly atmosphere and to make the OPCW an example of effective multilateral cooperation. Usually we Americans celebrate our Independence Day with fireworks, but there are no fireworks in my speech today.

Ambassador Mkhize, as always, I pledge to you my full support and that of my delegation not only for this Council session, but for your entire tenure as our Council chairperson. Although such pledges are customary, I believe that they deserve special emphasis today.

The conclusion of the 45th Executive Council was a challenge to the spirit of collegiality I spoke of earlier. In the weeks since then, my delegation, and I, personally, have worked hard to revive that spirit. And I appreciate the positive responses that we have received. I believe that collegiality is not synonymous with lowest-common-denominator solutions: we can be tough on the issues while still being respectful of and cooperative with each other, and our exchanges of views can yield solid results for all of us.

At the last Executive Council session, my delegation presented the U.S. request for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of our chemical weapons stockpile to April 29, 2012. We recognized that this was a critical issue for this organization. We sought to provide ample information, and to listen attentively to the comments, suggestions, and concerns of others. It was for this reason that we did not immediately present a draft decision document. At that EC, and subsequently, we have heard from many delegations. We have appreciated your thoughtful and constructive comments, and recognize the concerns that have been raised.

My government has strong views about the importance of the Council's role and responsibilities, but we appreciate as well the contribution of observer delegations. Your views are an important part of the Council's deliberations.

All of those contributions were taken into consideration in preparing the text of a draft decision document that has now been submitted, and I think you will find that many of the thoughts and suggestions that have been expressed are reflected in the text in one form or another. The United States hopes that members of the Council will give thorough consideration to the text that has been provided, and that this decision document can be endorsed by the Council at its next session.

Let me emphatically reiterate that the United States is committed to the earliest possible completion of destruction of its chemical weapons stockpiles. That commitment should be patently manifest from the assurances of my government at every level and from the enormous amounts it has spent so far, and will continue to spend to complete destruction. We are making every effort and continuing to seek opportunities to improve our CW destruction with a view to meeting the 2012 deadline or completing destruction as soon after that date as feasible. We are equally committed to full transparency on the status of our program. We remain ready to meet with any delegation to address any questions or concerns about the U.S. extension request, and will continue to set a high standard in transparent reporting about our progress.

Last Wednesday, the Director-General introduced his draft program of work and budget for 2007. My delegation looks forward to a constructive round of intersessional consultations and a positive recommendation on the budget at our next session. I would like to commend the Director-General for his budget proposal. That he has presented a zero nominal growth budget that accommodates the growing obligations of the organization is evidence of the outstanding management that he has provided.

In particular, we are pleased to see the proposal for more industry inspections, especially those of other chemical production facilities. This is a clear step in the right direction. My delegation hopes that we can follow up on it with agreement on an equitable procedure for OCPF site selection.

We have heard the concerns of others about so-called "political" nominations of sites to be inspected. We agree that purely political considerations have no place in such a process. It is essential, however, that we have a process that allows States Parties to take into account information that is relevant to inspection site selection, and one that does not produce illogical results in practice. A procedure that meets these objectives will have a greater deterrent effect for a given number of inspections. A procedure that does not meet these objectives simply means that we will need to spend more money and conduct more inspections to achieve a reasonable degree of confidence.

We also welcome the increased attention being paid to inspector training. As the tenure policy begins to take hold, and the inspector corps has more and more new recruits, the need for an expanded and more in-depth training regime takes on added importance -- both to ensure that inspections go smoothly, and to ensure that inspections provide the assurance they are intended to provide.

Fellow delegates, I believe it is important to comment on an issue that was a focal point for our deliberations at the last EC session. The emphasis and significance the United States has placed on full implementation of Article VII obligations have been apparent to all. Indeed, that has been quite clear since the First Review Conference. We believe implementation of Article VII is an essential part of weaving our common safety net to prevent the spread of chemical weapons. This was always true; but in the twenty-first century, the threat of chemical weapons is not just on the battlefield. The threat now also comes from terrorists and non-state actors, and they threaten us in our homes and our cities. Strong national implementation efforts under Article VII are the key to the OPCW's capability to address this new challenge.

The best proof of the importance the United States attaches to Article VII is not the statements I have made here. It is the financial support we have provided and the experts the United States has sent on Technical Assistance Visits. At our last session, many of you spoke about the value of the "positive approach" to Article VII. I want to emphasize that the United States also strongly believes in the power of a positive approach -- one that is specific, tailored, and action-oriented. My government's experts and funds have been some of the engines driving this process and helping States Parties to make progress. You can find the details of our efforts in the national paper tabled by our delegation on 3 July and available at the desk.

We recognize that many on this Council attach great importance to Article VII implementation, and that, quite candidly, some elements of the U.S. approach to this issue have not always commanded wide support among delegations. However, I firmly believe that we all share a common belief that full national implementation is of paramount importance to all of us. I also believe that we can all agree on the importance of reviewing our progress on the various tasks set out by the 10th CSP; on evaluating our progress; and on considering what steps need to be taken to ensure a positive outcome at the 11th Conference. That is the common ground on which we can continue to make needed progress on Article VII.

My delegation believes that a successful outcome is still not assured. That concern, and our desire for a successful outcome, are what motivate us. A successful outcome would be one where all States Parties that have yet to implement Article VII fully have informed the OPCW of both the challenges they face and the plans they have

developed that would permit implementation by CSP-11, so that we may monitor progress more realistically. It would be one where every State Party has designated a National Authority; and it would be one where every State Party that has yet to do so has at least submitted implementing legislation to its legislature for consideration, or provided clear and specific explanations as to why this was not possible. We in this room may not always agree on whether the glass is half full or half empty; we may not always agree on what steps to take; but the key is to address the issue in a positive manner in pursuit of consensus, and I personally pledge to all delegations that this will be the U.S. approach.

With the 11th Conference of States Parties five months away, it is important that the Technical Secretariat and individual States Parties increase efforts to assist those member states that still fall short on Article VII. We must also keep in mind the agreement reached at the 10th CSP last November, which tasked this Council to monitor implementation of the Conference decision and take appropriate action to ensure full implementation of Article VII. When deadlines are missed, or member states are not on target to achieve our shared goals, the Council must take meaningful action. To do otherwise would be to defy our mandate from the Conference and ignore our duties under the Convention. Let me be clear that "meaningful action" and "consultations" include constructive, substantive Council support; outreach and encouragement at the political level; and obtaining a clearer picture of a State Party's circumstances and situation. We must also intensify our efforts in the coming months to find a political consensus on appropriate actions to be taken with regard to countries that have not fully met Article VII obligations by the time of the November EC and the 11th CSP.

We believe that under the leadership of our able and congenial facilitator, Ambassador Maarten Lak, and our esteemed Legal Adviser, Santiago Onate, States Parties have continued to make great progress, particularly on establishment of National Authorities. However, there is still a significant amount of work that needs to be done, especially with regard to drafting, submitting, and adopting national legislation and administrative measures.

Madame Chairperson, these are but some of the preeminent matters that are before us this week. There are certainly other issues that the Council needs to address. For example, we are now at the point where we can finally agree on the financial rules of this organization. This is a long-awaited achievement that will enhance the administration of the OPCW. We must also re-focus our attention on pursuit of universality. The Technical Secretariat is preparing for a conference in Rome in October, and it is critical for States Parties to begin efforts now to encourage the highest possible level of participation by non-States Parties. Finally, we are about to commence the process of preparations for the Second Review Conference when the working group holds its first meeting this coming Friday or Monday.

The First Review Conference was a clear success, due to the spirit of cooperation that I mentioned previously. I will dedicate myself and my delegation to retaining that atmosphere, and to a continued effort to achieve consensus on the entire range of issues before us. If we persevere in that mode, we will not only achieve great success at this Council session, but at the December Conference of States Parties, and ultimately, at the Second Review Conference. The United States remains solidly committed to the Convention and the OPCW, and we will continue to work with all delegations so that both are models of success that we can proudly offer to the rest of the international community. Thank you.

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