



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

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The Hague, Netherlands
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Madame Chairperson, Mr. Director-General, Distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to see so many colleagues today in our initial gathering of 2007. We face a challenging year with many important matters that we need to address. I trust that the spirit of cooperation which enabled us to conclude major decisions in 2006 will abide with us in 2007, and enable us to reach agreement on all the issues that confront us. Ambassador Mkhize, under your able leadership, I am confident that we will be able to overcome all challenges, and I pledge to you my delegation's full support in this Council session and throughout the remainder of your term as our Chairperson.

As we near the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we can take pride in all that we have accomplished. The United States regards the Convention and the operations of the OPCW as shining examples of effective multilateral diplomacy, and will continue to work for the strengthening of both for the next ten years, and beyond. I also want to emphasize the appreciation of the United States for the excellent leadership provided by the Director General and the outstanding work of the men and women of the Technical Secretariat.

We now have 181 States Parties to the Convention, quite an enviable record to compile in only a decade! Last year, States Parties destroyed more chemical weapons stocks than in any previous year, and more destruction facilities are now operating than ever before. Due to our collective effort, only nine States Parties have yet to designate or establish their National Authority, and due to the diligent efforts of States Parties and the Technical Secretariat, more States Parties are meeting their requirement to implement the necessary legislation. Though much work remains with respect to Article VII implementation, we can all take great pride in what we have accomplished to date. I look forward to joining with all delegations in commemorating the tenth anniversary of this landmark agreement.

Tragically, however, recent developments have made clear that we all must redouble our efforts to advance the objectives of the Convention. The recent multiple attacks using chlorine gas to kill and injure innocent Iraqis were repugnant terrorist acts. They were the first flagrant use of toxic chemicals in such a manner since the 1995 sarin attack on Tokyo's subway system, and are a direct challenge to the goals of the Convention and all its members. Unfortunately, there are indications that there may be plans for more such attacks in the future.

Director-General Pfirter, the United States strongly supports your statement made immediately following these attacks condemning them in the "strongest possible terms," and affirming that "the international community has firmly rejected the use of toxic chemicals under any circumstances to inflict harm." We also support your call for "all governments, particularly those in the Middle East region...to join [you] in stating clearly that the use of poison gas is unacceptable." We also welcome that you delivered this message directly to the UN Security Council, which also condemned these attacks. Fellow delegates, this week the Council must follow the Director-General's example, and speak clearly and firmly against this direct challenge to the basic norm that we all work so hard to advance. I hope that the report of this Session will contain a united message against any chemicals being used as weapons.

In 2004, the Government of Iraq stated its clear intent to join the Chemical Weapons Convention, and since that time has taken important steps to bring this to fruition. Last year, the Iraqi Cabinet forwarded to its Parliament a recommendation to join the Convention. Also, on three occasions, most recently in December 2006 in Amman, Jordan, Iraqi officials have met with representatives of the Technical Secretariat and have made great strides in preparing Iraq for implementing the Convention after it joins. I have spoken with those who attended these meetings, and they are unanimous in citing the seriousness and determination of the Iraqis to join this Convention and fully implement their obligations. To this end, we need to send the message to the Iraqi people that this is an Organization that will stand by them and provide advice and technical assistance in the event of such attacks.

The attacks using chlorine are a reminder that while we have accomplished much, there is much more that must be done. They also send a warning as to the evolving nature of the chemical threat we all face. In these recent attacks, groups have sought to exploit a widely available toxic chemical for the purposes of inflicting harm and spreading panic. Even the new leader of Al Qaeda in Iraq recently called for insurgents to expand capabilities beyond conventional means. My fellow delegates, in the coming months and years, we need to ensure the Organization adapts to the evolving chemical threat to the security of the Member States of the OPCW.

An important contribution that the OPCW can make to combat the threat of terrorist use of chemical weapons is to promote the effective national implementation of the Convention, as required under Article VII, including the enactment of penal legislation against chemical weapons-related activities. The proposal put forth by U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce Christopher Padilla at last year's Conference of the States Parties is the type of concrete action that best serves our common objectives. That proposal seeks to bring all chemical producing and trading States Parties into compliance with their Article VII obligations by the twelfth Conference of the States Parties in November of this year. That is a formidable task, but I believe it is achievable, and my delegation looks forward to working with other delegations and the Technical Secretariat to meet this goal.

The United States also hopes that we will be able to agree this year upon establishing a requirement for all States Parties to submit an Article VI declaration each year, even if it states that there is no Article VI activity to declare. Such a "nil declaration" would ease the Technical Secretariat's task of planning verification activities and allow the Technical Secretariat to more accurately monitor Article VII activities. It will establish the same treaty-proscribed deadline for all States Parties and not leave the Technical Secretariat wondering if the State Party is merely late in submitting their declaration or if they have nothing to declare. National Authorities will have to be more proactive in the process of providing timely and accurate declarations. Until we agree upon "nil declarations", I encourage all States Parties with Article VI declaration requirements to submit their declarations to the Technical Secretariat by March 30th, in accordance with the Convention's requirements.

The recent attacks in Iraq also highlight the importance of the Technical Secretariat being able to conduct timely, thorough, expert investigations into allegations of use of chemical weapons if called upon to do so. My delegation is pleased with the progress that the Technical Secretariat has made since the October 2005 Joint Exercise in Ukraine, which involved notional terrorist attacks. I urge the Technical Secretariat to further improve its capabilities in this area, including through active training and the development of the capability to handle and analyze biomedical samples. The Executive Council and States Parties should continue to look for ways to support the Technical Secretariat's efforts in this regard.

As was noted by Dr. Hopkins in his presentation during the destruction informals, I am pleased to report that the United States has now destroyed more than 40% of its Category 1 chemical weapons stockpile, and, despite numerous challenges the United States still faces, is on track to meet the 45% destruction deadline by the end of 2007. The United States has also completely eliminated its former chemical weapons production capacity, in advance of the treaty deadline of April 29, 2007. As always, my delegation and I stand ready to answer any questions you may have. And most importantly, let me again assure you of my country's unwavering and resolute commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention and to the complete elimination of chemical weapons.

With regard to industry issues, it is important that we find a resolution this year on the long-standing issue of the site selection methodology for other chemical production

facilities, or "OCPFs". In addition, my delegation appreciates that, under the adept guidance of CSP Chairman Dastis, a discussion has begun on the issue of frequency of inspections at each type of Article VI facility, which was widely requested by delegations during last year's budget consultations. The U.S. delegation also appreciated the Director General and the TS engaging on an issue so important to numerous delegations.

Fellow delegates, as we approach the tenth anniversary, the OPCW has made remarkable, indeed historic, progress on a wide variety of issues. We have achieved this only through a shared sense of commitment and collegiality. If we maintain that spirit, I am certain that we will add to our accomplishments in the coming year. I never tire of repeating that the OPCW is a model of effective multilateral cooperation. And I firmly believe that at the November CSP, when we look back on what we have accomplished in 2007, we will be able to claim that we have started the second decade of this treaty with firm resolve to continue our pursuit of the fundamental goals of the Convention.

Thank you.

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