



National Statement
of the
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
by
His Excellency Mr. Buddhi Athauda,
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka
to the OPCW at the 18th Session of the Conference of the States Parties

3rd December 2013, The Hague

Chairman of the Conference of States Parties, Ambassador Saad Ibrahim
Director General of the OPCW Ambassador Ahmet Uzumcu
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to address the 18th Session of the Conference of States Parties representing Sri Lanka.

Mr. Chairman, I assure you of the support and cooperation of my delegation for a successful session of the Conference of State Parties.

My delegation and I extend our sincere appreciation to the outgoing chairperson, His Excellency Peter Goosen, Ambassador of South Africa for his tireless commitment, during the 17th Session of The Conference of States Parties.

Sri Lanka, as a founding State Party of the Chemical Weapons Convention is proud to offer our whole hearted congratulations to Director General Ahmet Uzumcu and the entire staff of the OPCW, on being bestowed with the Nobel Peace Prize, in response to the enormous effort during the past 16 years, towards reaching a planet free of chemical weapons. Undoubtedly, the awarding of the Prize is testimony and the ultimate recognition of the contributions made by the OPCW, in effectively implementing the CWC.

Sri Lanka wishes to also express our congratulations to the Director General of the OPCW and his entire team, for working tirelessly towards the achievement of universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. With two countries joining this year, the total number of States Parties is at 190. My delegation urges the other nations to join and commit to the CWC without any conditions and without any delay.

Furthermore, the decision by the Director General to establish the annual OPCW award funds is yet another innovative initiative, which my delegation fully endorses. While truly strengthening the work of the OPCW in the international arena, the scope and reach of the organization would be enhanced. The noble vision of the CWC, a world free of chemical weapons, is more than a dream. Today we stand on the threshold of realizing such a world and need to ensure that this message is taken to every person in every part of the globe. It needs to filter through society and the younger generations need to understand the impact of chemical weapons and the work of the OPCW in making our planet a safer and secure place to live in. I earnestly request the OPCW to consider increasing efforts and allocating more resources in a joint effort with States Parties for the promotion of the convention, particularly through the use of modern media platforms.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the NAM countries by His Excellency S. A. Araghchi, Deputy for Legal and International Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran.

Sri Lanka is satisfied with the steady progress being made by possessor states to complete the destruction of their stockpiles, and we would like to remind you that Sri Lanka will stand behind a world free of chemical weapons. This could only be achieved through universal conventions.

Sri Lanka firmly believes that the chemicals should be used only for peaceful purposes. It was in that spirit that Sri Lanka hosted the Tenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Asia in Colombo in June 2012, which provided a platform for the National Authorities to discuss the regional issues on schedule, chemical import and export monitoring mechanisms and chemical security and safety in the region.

Having eradicated brutal terrorism that plagued Sri Lanka for about three-decades and having firsthand experience on atrocities of terrorism, the effects of such conflict are extremely familiar to us. Since the dawn of peace, the government of Sri Lanka has continued to make all efforts on reconciliation, resettlement and reconstruction. Sri Lanka has surprised the world by resettling close to 300,000 refugees in the shortest time period ever. We have built about 1127 schools and over 700 km of new roads only in the northern region of the country.

Citizens in every corner of Sri Lanka now enjoy free healthcare, free education while cherishing family life, with love and care. Children get to play cricket and football no more living in fear of being kidnapped by the ruthless terrorists to be made child soldiers and suicide cadres. With such initiatives, the administration has gained immense popularity and brought about solid political stability. This political stability coupled with other unique competitive factors, makes Sri Lanka one of the fastest developing economic hubs in South Asia.

Mr. Chairman,

Sri Lanka's firm commitment to her global duties saw the country host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Colombo just two weeks ago, during which His Excellency the President Mahinda Rajapaksa assumed duties as the Chairperson-in-Office of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Chairman,

Addressing the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly, His Excellency the President Mahinda Rajapaksa, stressed the importance of multilateral engagement. He stated, and I quote '*The world needs no policing by a few States, particularly when the UN is mandated to ensure international security, through multi-lateral engagement. This engagement, to be complete in*

our time must ensure protection of the human race against the flagrant abuse of modern science in such forms as nuclear and chemical weapons.' Unquote

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation also would like to encourage and remind the Executive Council that when the time comes, that rather than monopolizing the position, it is only fair to rotate respective designations, thereby giving every country a chance.

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

Let us realize that what is at stake with the prevalence of Chemical Weapons is not limited to the environment, lives and livelihoods, but to the very sustenance of humanity. In the words of the UN Secretary General '*As long as they exist there is a risk they will be used*'. As ominous as it may appear, reality is far harsher than we could imagine. Failure to act today will not only jeopardize our tomorrow, it could even obliterate it.

It would be appreciated if this statement is circulated as an official document of the Conference.

Thank you.