

Statement by
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Leader of the Indian Delegation to the
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1-5 December 2014

Madam Chairperson,
Mr. Director General,
Distinguished Delegates:

On behalf of my delegation, Madam Chairperson, I extend to you our felicitations and warmly welcome you as the Chair of the 19th Session of the Conference of the States Parties. We are confident that under your leadership the deliberations of this Conference will be successful and concrete.

Along with you, Madam Chairperson, I should also like to congratulate the other newly elected office bearers.

May I also convey my delegation's deep appreciation to the outgoing Chairperson, the distinguished Ambassador of Iraq for his outstanding work as the Chairperson of the Eighteenth Conference of the States Parties.

I should like to take this opportunity to commend the role of the Director General and the Technical Secretariat for the efforts they have made in the implementation of the Convention and for advancing the common goal of a world free of chemical weapons. We welcome the establishment of the annual OPCW-The Hague Award by the Director General.

My delegation endorses and associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the NAM CWC States Parties and China.

Madam Chairperson,

India views the Chemical Weapons Convention as a unique and non-discriminatory disarmament instrument which serves as a model for elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. As an original signatory to the Convention, India attaches the utmost importance to its success and its full and effective implementation. India has consistently supported the complete destruction and elimination of chemical weapons worldwide. We are of the firm view that the international legal norm against the use of chemical weapons anywhere and by anyone must not be breached. Pending the destruction of all chemical weapons, it is vitally important to ensure safe and secure custody of chemical stockpiles and prevent their falling into the hands of terrorists and non-State actors.

The coming year, Madam Chairperson, will mark 100 years of first use of Chemical Weapons during the World War I. Since 1915, we have come a long way as peoples, as nations, in our repudiation of chemical warfare. With 190 countries signing the Chemical Weapons Convention, the making, possession or use of chemical weapons have become acts of almost

universal abomination. This “global proselytization”, in a manner of speaking, could not have happened but for the Chemical Weapons Convention. India supports universality of the Convention. Only six countries are today not States Parties to this Convention. We encourage them to consider ratifying or acceding to the Convention at the earliest.

While much has been achieved in the rather short span of 18 years since the coming into force of this Convention, there is no room for complacency. The world is not yet free from reports of use of chemical weapons; destruction of existing chemical weapons stockpiles remains an unfinished task; emergence of non-State actors has added a new and worrisome dimension to this issue.

Madam Chairperson,

Since the Conference last met, commendable work has been done in the matter of destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons and stockpiles. This task is now almost complete and destruction of only some residual chemicals remains. We are hopeful that this too will be completed soon. We also hope very much that destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons production facilities will be completed within the agreed timelines. What is most gratifying is that the very difficult task of destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons within a very tight schedule has been carried out mostly in an atmosphere of cooperation and by consensus. My delegation believes that it is important that this spirit should prevail as the remaining tasks are completed.

Madam Chairperson,

We have taken note of the ongoing activities of the Declaration Assessment Team in Syria. Our expectation is that Syria will continue to cooperate fully with the Declaration Assessment Team. In so far as the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) is concerned, we look forward to its next report. I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate our strong condemnation of the abhorrent use of chemical weapons in Syrian territory and the importance we attach to holding those responsible for it accountable.

Madam Chairperson,

My delegation believes that the issue of National Implementation is an important one. We are happy that the Technical Secretariat is actively encouraging and assisting States Parties to implement Article VII more effectively. We believe that while setting up of a National Authority is important, per se it is not enough. The National Authorities need to have legal authority and a capacity to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention and to enforce its provisions. As a State Party in the forefront of national implementation, India is happy to share its knowledge and experience in implementing Article VII of the Convention and to reiterate its commitment to work with other States Parties and Technical Secretariat towards this end.

India is happy to continue its ongoing cooperation with various activities of the OPCW. In the course of the last year, India held the “Twelfth Regional Meeting of National Authorities in Asia” in New Delhi in July 2014. The “Regional Basic Course on Assistance & Protection Against Chemical Weapons” was held in August 2014, also in New Delhi. The workshop was organized in association with different arms of the Government of India. I am happy to say that a workshop is proposed to be held in January 2015 in Gujarat on “Best Practices: Medium &

Small Scale Chemical Industry Disaster Management and Promotion of Safety and Security Regulatory Standards". This is being organized in association with the Gujarat National Law University.

Madam Chairperson,

India fully supports activities under Article XI of the Convention and encourages international cooperation for peaceful uses of chemistry. The "Education and Awareness" program initiated by the OPCW which, inter alia, aims to instill in young minds ethical values while pursuing scientific and economic progress, is a step in the right direction. Flow of chemical technology, trade of chemicals and exchange of chemists across national borders ought to be intensified and the provisions of the Chemical Weapon Convention should not be used for hampering these trans-national movements. This is the spirit of Article XI of the CWC and India welcomes the renewed thrust the OPCW is giving to this matter.

We would like to extend our support for the Technical Secretariat's plans to implement a new Enterprise-Resource-Planning (ERP) system and to approve the establishment of a special fund to meet the financial requirements of implementing the new ERP system as agreed during the EC-77 session. The only precaution that needs to be taken is to ensure that the new system should not compromise data security and confidentiality.

In the end, Madam Chairperson, I should like to address a rather more broad point. We live in a dynamic world and my delegation well understands the need for flexibility and adaptation for an organization like the OPCW. However, we also feel that the OPCW needs to preserve the immutability of its basic structure. This is necessary for it to maintain its credibility and acceptability. Extraordinary steps may, indeed, be taken under extraordinary circumstances. But they cannot and should not become the norm. Transient problems need to be treated in a transient manner. This is a principle we should apply while contemplating responses to new and dynamic situations.

I would request, Madam Chairperson, that this Statement be issued as an official document of the Conference.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.
