



EMBASSY OF SWEDEN

Swedish Statement
Nineteenth Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention
Ms. Ann Linde, State Secretary for Home Affairs
Monday 1 December 2014

Madame Chair,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies,
Honourable delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first of all welcome you, Ms. Mrđen Korać, to the chair of this Conference. I am sure that under your guidance we will reach a successful outcome.

Sweden is fully aligned with the statement delivered by Ambassador Jacek Bylica on behalf of the European Union. On a national basis, I would like to make a few additional remarks.

Madame Chair,

This meeting takes place at a time of tension in several regions of the world, including our own. The destruction of all declared chemical weapons in Syria, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2118 and related decisions of the OPCW, remains the only positive development over the past year in a continuing humanitarian disaster that claims human lives on a daily basis. Sweden congratulates the Director-General and his staff and all those States Parties that contributed to successful conduct of the joint UN/OPCW mission.

Sweden promotes a disarmament policy that puts human beings in the centre, with equal and full participation of both women and men. In this light, Sweden deplores the abhorrent and unacceptable sarin attacks last year, as evidenced by the UN investigation led by Dr. Åke Sellström, and particularly the large-scale attack at Al-Ghouta. These attacks amounted to serious crimes under humanitarian law. More recently, Sweden is seriously concerned with the OPCW's observation of systematic use of chlorine gas as a chemical weapon, and joins in the UN Secretary-General's call for the responsible parties to be brought to justice. It is particularly tragic to witness the use of chlorine gas in warfare almost 100 years after the very same chemical was first employed at Ypres in the First World War.

Madame Chair,

Sweden was disappointed to learn that the Russian Federation will not fulfil its stated timeline to complete the destruction of chemical weapons by the end of next year. The new timeline announced in October indicates an additional delay of five years until the end of 2020. Sweden calls on the Russian Federation, and also the United States, to expedite destruction work. As regards the situation in Iraq and Libya, Sweden hopes that it will be possible to find technical approaches that will allow for the remaining destruction work to be carried out in the near future.

Madame Chair,

Being State Secretary for Home Affairs, I am responsible for civil contingencies and measures against terrorism. I am therefore pleased to report that Sweden continues to be one of the leading supporters of the effective implementation of Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention, through the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency. Recent events in Iraq illustrate the dangers posed by toxic chemicals in the hands of terrorists. Universal adherence and national implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention is an important bulwark against such dangers, as is the strengthening of chemical weapons response capacity in States Parties. Sweden also welcomes the decision to make chemical safety and security a priority in the context of Article XI.

Madame Chair,

Sweden is looking forward to the decision to be taken at this Conference about the rehiring of experienced inspectors. Along with our co-sponsors Bulgaria, Norway and South Africa, Sweden sees this as an important initiative for the future of the OPCW, in line with recommendations of the Third Review Conference. Recent events in Syria illustrate the importance of the OPCW being prepared to deal with contingencies involving chemical weapons, and experienced inspectors will play an important role in terms of capacity-building, training, exercises and knowledge transfer. The decision will strengthen the credibility of the OPCW, and ultimately its capacity - as and when called upon by the States Parties - to contribute to maintenance of international peace and security.

Thank you Madame Chair.