



**OPCW**

**Conference of the States Parties**

Second Review Conference  
7 – 18 April 2008

RC-2/NAT.8  
7 April 2008  
ENGLISH only

## **THE NETHERLANDS**

### **STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE NETHERLANDS, MR MAXIME VERHAGEN, TO THE SECOND SPECIAL SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (SECOND REVIEW CONFERENCE)**

Mr Director-General,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to address you today at the opening of the Second Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Netherlands is proud to host the OPCW, whose mission is to implement the CWC's provisions. The OPCW is one of the main organisations that contribute to The Hague's international reputation as a City of Peace, Justice and Security. It is important for the OPCW to feel at home in The Hague, and we will work with the OPCW towards that goal.

Last year, we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the CWC's entry into force. There were several celebratory events throughout the year, including a high-level meeting in New York in September organised by Poland and the Netherlands and attended by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. On that occasion, I presented the CWC and the OPCW as prime examples of 'effective multilateralism'.

Today I repeat and reaffirm those words. The CWC is indeed the jewel in the crown of treaty-based, multilateral disarmament.

The Convention is unique: it bans a complete class of weapons and requires the declaration and complete destruction of all stockpiles. An independent international organisation, the OPCW, has been created to implement it. The OPCW verifies the destruction of chemical weapons and performs random inspections, thus building confidence among the State Parties. Comparing these achievements to the advances that we still need to make in the fields of biological and nuclear weapons, we can surely count our blessings here today. When I addressed the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva about a month ago, I made a forceful plea for strengthening the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime. I called upon all states to make this a common priority and to unite to make it happen. Fortunately, such a plea is not necessary in this forum. The CWC and the OPCW are already strong instruments, which have proven their effectiveness over the past ten years.



This, however, does not imply that we can all lean back and relax for the rest of this review conference. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once said that each success only buys an admission ticket to a more difficult problem. There is much truth in his words: success is often short-lived. It is never advisable to rest on one's laurels, especially in the dynamic world we live in. There is still much work to be done, and I believe that this review conference is an excellent opportunity to take stock of where we stand and where we would like to be in five or ten years. Such a long-term view is important, I feel, to ensure that the effective multilateralism the OPCW practises here in The Hague also remains relevant multilateralism in the future. International organisations should be relevant to today's problems and to today's people. To do so, they need to anticipate future developments.

I see a number of challenges ahead. Let's look first at the environment in which we operate. Two weeks ago, I spoke at a seminar here in The Hague on the future of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. I talked about the international context of globalisation, which has brought the world many benefits, but which also has a downside. It is as easy to disseminate harmful ideas and technologies around the world as it is to spread the benefits of trade and scientific progress. In that context, I referred to the great risk posed by the further proliferation of nuclear weapons and related technologies.

Today, I would like to raise the same issue, this time with regard to chemical weapons. As globalisation progresses and science and technology rapidly advance, the volume of chemicals traded between countries will inevitably increase. This increases the potential for diversion and abuse. Is the OPCW equipped to deal with this? How can we monitor these developments? How can the OPCW cover the most relevant of the so-called Other Chemical Production Facilities – with numbers that run into the thousands – while not losing sight of schedule 1, 2 and 3 plants? How well-placed is the OPCW to effectively combat proliferation of chemical weapons, not only by states but also among non-state actors such as terrorist groups?

These questions may not have been quite as relevant ten years ago, but they are relevant today. The OPCW should therefore prepare itself to meet these new challenges head on. In line with UN Security Council resolution 1540, it should intensify its non-proliferation activities, including efforts to strengthen national export control regimes. This, in my view, should become one of the main focuses of the organisation's work. This will at the same time be consistent with economic and technological cooperation, as stated in article XI of the Convention. There is a shared interest here: assistance to capacity building in areas such as export control, border control and safeguarding installations will contribute directly to our non-proliferation objectives. At the same time, State Parties that are developing their chemical industries will be in a better position to do so in line with the Convention.

It will remain a continuous challenge to stay abreast of new technological and industrial developments and to keep the CWC up-to-date, effective and relevant. With support of the State Parties, I am confident that the OPCW will be able to hold its own.

While we need to look ahead and prepare for the future, we should not overlook shorter term objectives. Universal adherence to the CWC is one such objective. With 183 state parties, we are close, but we need to make an extra effort. As outlined in the European Union's Common Position for this Review Conference, we should devise tailor-made strategies to achieve universality, with a special focus on countries in the Middle East. I, like many

others, will very much welcome the expected accession of Iraq and Lebanon. I call upon all other countries in the region that have not yet done so to accede to the Convention as well.

Accession to the Convention is important, but it will be largely insignificant as long as national implementation is not ensured. Many State Parties have still not passed the required national legislation. The OPCW should intensify its efforts in this respect; the Netherlands and the EU stand ready to assist. As the EU Presidency has explained in its intervention, the EU is supporting the OPCW through a Joint Action. In fact we are ready to intensify our ongoing efforts. The Netherlands has allocated 100,000 euros to support three different projects: one, a technical assistance visit to West Africa; two, a sub-regional training course for customs authorities in the SADC region, to familiarise customs officials with CWC implementation; and last but not least, internships in the Netherlands for three African candidates under the OPCW programme to strengthen capacity in Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The destruction of existing chemical weapons before 29 April 2012 is high on our agenda, and rightly so. Almost forty per cent of the world's declared stockpiles have been destroyed, and in 2007 Albania was the first country to claim a complete and verified destruction of its stocks. But while a great deal has been accomplished, the pace of our progress towards complete destruction is still too slow, and the 2012 deadline is drawing closer. I therefore call upon the possessor states – especially the United States and the Russian Federation, who have the largest stocks – to make sure that they will in fact meet the deadline. The Netherlands has provided financial assistance – a total of 11.3 million euros over a period of ten years – to speed up destruction in the Russian Federation.

If regrettably, possessor states do not meet the 2012 deadline, we will need to agree on future steps. In this respect, Mr. Director-General, the Netherlands supports your proposal to hold a special conference of the States Parties shortly before the deadline.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One of the world's best ice hockey players, the Canadian Wayne Gretzky, once said that a good hockey player plays where the puck is; but a great hockey player plays where the puck is going to be. The ambition of this review conference should be to turn the OPCW from a good player into a great player. Understanding the future and preparing for it are key. I wish you a most productive conference.

Thank you.

- - - 0 - - -