



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

**138th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
“Proliferation of weapons and meeting international commitments”**

**Statement by the Director-General of the OPCW
Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü**

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REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Inter-Parliamentary Union President, Ms Gabriela Cuevas Barron,
Distinguished parliamentarians,
Ladies and gentlemen,

To begin with, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for inviting me to participate in this discussion at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which is the treaty that the OPCW is mandated to implement, is a comprehensive international agreement that completely outlaws an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

The Convention prohibits, without discrimination, the development, production, stockpiling, transfer, retention and use of chemical weapons, under conditions of strict international verification.

Under the oversight of the OPCW, 96 percent of the global stockpiles of chemical weapons have already been eliminated.

An entire class of weapons of mass destruction is now at the threshold of being completely eradicated. This would be an unprecedented achievement in the history of disarmament.

This means that our future efforts will focus mainly on measures to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. The Convention creates obligations in the context of non-proliferation that broadly translate into two main areas: industry verification and data reporting on the one hand, and promulgation and enforcement of national legislation on the other.

Given the introductory nature of my remarks, I will focus mainly on the importance of national implementation and briefly on the important role of parliamentarians in the context of legislation but also as shapers of opinion in support of upholding and enforcing agreed norms.

With the singular purpose of ensuring a world free of chemical weapons, the OPCW carries out a wide range of activities and programmes which support national implementation. These include a Programme for Africa.

The effectiveness of legislative and other regulatory measures and of the internal structures to administer them is critical to the enforcement of the Convention and the ability to prevent non-State actors from gaining access to materials that could aid in the development of chemical weapons.

The work of the OPCW complements directly the efforts of the United Nations to promote the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which aims to prevent non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

Compliance at the national level with the obligations of the Convention provides an effective means of preventing proliferation.

The OPCW Secretariat has actively focussed on offering practical on-site assistance, tailored to the needs of the States Parties that have requested it.

These activities have produced concrete results.

Of our 192 States Parties, 189 or 98% have established or designated a National Authority. This is a crucial channel of communication between the OPCW and its States Parties.

Criminalising activities that the Convention prohibits and establishing measures that would enforce those rules constitute the most effective deterrence against proliferation. Consequently, implementing legislation is critical and a key focus for the OPCW. And there is much to be done in this area.

153 States Parties have enacted national implementing legislation. Out of this figure, 122 have legislative and/or administrative measures to implement the provisions of the Convention that are the most pertinent to its object and purpose. These we call initial measures. The remaining 70 States Parties have either legislation that covers some of the initial measures or have yet to adopt legislation at all. Many of these 70 have reported that their legislation is under review or awaiting approval by the relevant government authorities.

Let me briefly highlight the main issues and challenges encountered in our efforts to promote effective national implementation globally.

Drafting, accepting, and approving national legislation is often a painstaking process and impacted by competing legislative priorities. It requires the governments to take action, to

prepare a draft bill, submit it to the consideration of the Parliament. There is also a need for champions to make it a priority.

For example, only three out of the 56 States Parties that have indicated that they are in the process of adopting legislation have tabled draft legislation before their legislatures. Furthermore, fourteen States Parties have yet to report to the Technical Secretariat on the status of their legislative processes. The OPCW continues to reach out to member countries to encourage them to participate in the legislative support activities to enable them to develop comprehensive draft CWC-related laws. While these countries might consider other priorities as taking precedence, strong regulatory and enforcement action on their part will ensure that their territories cannot be used for prohibited activities which may harm their own interests or as potential trafficking routes.

On its part, the OPCW spares no effort in providing legislative support to our States Parties. I will enumerate some of the programmes that we have in this regard.

The Internship Programme for Legal Drafters and National Authority Representatives provides support to States Parties in drafting implementing legislation.

The programme aims at enhancing the technical skills of the participants to enable them to complete a draft of national implementing legislation.

Upon request, the Technical Secretariat also reviews the texts of drafts legislation, as well as newly-enacted or existing legislation, to advise whether they are in line with the requirements of the Convention.

Regional Stakeholders Forums were also organised aimed at assisting States Parties that have yet to adopt implementing legislation. The Forums have proved to be good platforms for helping participating States Parties to advance the status of their draft laws, in addition to providing participants with an opportunity to share experiences and to promote networking and cooperation. A key outcome has been the development of indicative national road maps towards the adoption of implementing legislation.

The Secretariat also implements an Influential Visitors Programme, which is aimed at sensitising key decision-makers in States Parties in the final stages of adopting legislation.

The fundamental objective of disarmament and non-proliferation treaties is to prevent weapons of mass destruction from ever being used. Their elimination is of paramount importance. At the same time, preventing their re-emergence is equally vital. And, reacting with unity against any breach of agreed norms is indispensable for sustaining the quest for global peace.

Despite the remarkable progress we have made in eliminating chemical weapons, we know from recent experience that the menacing threat of their use has not disappeared.

Our continuing work in Syria is an example of the kinds of challenges that we face.

In August of 2013, the world witnessed the shocking spectacle of scores of bodies of children lined up together—victims of a chemical attack brutally unleashed on Ghouta—a densely populated suburb of Damascus.

Those attacks set in motion a series of events that culminated in accession of the Syrian Arab Republic to the CWC. Following this, an unprecedented international effort led to the removal and destruction of Syria's declared chemical weapons.

However, since 2014, numerous instances of chemical weapons use have been documented by a Fact-Finding Mission of the OPCW and confirmed by a Joint Investigative Mechanism that was established by the United Nations Security Council in August 2015.

Despite our progress across the board, it does not in itself guarantee that breaches will not occur as it happened recently in the United Kingdom. We have to continually and consciously work to make the norm against chemical weapons truly universal, strong and enduring.

The motto of our Organisation is 'working together for a world free from chemical weapons'. A significant factor obstructing this vision is non-adherence by a handful of States that remain outside the Convention.

I continue to use every opportunity to stress the importance of Egypt, Israel, North Korea and South Sudan joining the Convention at the earliest possible opportunity.

With the exception of South Sudan, which is actively considering its membership, others have expressed reservations based on what they consider regional security considerations. Quite the contrary, their acceptance of the Convention can only help promote a climate of trust and will benefit regional and global security.

A truly universal Convention will impart even greater authority to measures against threats that affect all nations.

We cannot afford the old habit of searching for peace after the trauma of war and trying to build something new all over again. We have the means and the mechanisms that have proved their worth and effectiveness. We have built institutions and processes for dialogue and cooperation. We must strengthen and use them to the fullest.

This is not a responsibility of diplomats alone. In our complex world, people of goodwill everywhere must play their part individually and through their representative bodies in civil society. In this scheme parliamentarians occupy an extremely important position.

Your active participation in our collective endeavours in the area of international peace and security is critical. I invite the distinguished parliamentarians to take the necessary measures, in their respective countries, for a full and effective implementation of the Convention. This can only be achieved through a comprehensive legislation.

Twenty years after its entry into force, and nearly universal with its 192 States Parties the Chemical Weapons Convention deserves to be tackled with priority. In view of the complexity of the security environment, in particular the growing terrorist threat, it is primarily in the interest of our member countries to ensure the effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Thank you
