



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION  
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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**“Going to Zero with Weapons of Mass Destruction:  
Lessons from the Chemical Weapons Convention”**

**ADDRESS BY**

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- 1. I am very pleased and honoured to be speaking to all of you today, in such a prestigious venue as the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. I wish to thank the Center for its invitation and in particular to thank its esteemed President and Director, Lee Hamilton. I am a great admirer of Congressman Hamilton’s wisdom and knowledge in international affairs, and of the bipartisan leadership he demonstrated in this area during his long and distinguished career in the US House of Representatives and as Chairman of the House Committee on International Affairs. I would also like to express my appreciation to Robert Litwak, director of the Division of International Security Studies; to Dr. Paul Walker, director of Security and Sustainability at Global Green USA; and to Joseph Pilat of the Los Alamos National Laboratory for sponsoring my appearance here today.**
- 2. Equally, I want to acknowledge the impressive achievements of two of Congressman Hamilton’s former colleagues, Senators Richard Lugar and Sam Nunn, in helping establish the US Cooperative Threat Reduction - the “Nunn-Lugar” Program. This program has for many years played a major role in helping to secure and destroy in Russia not only nuclear stockpiles but chemical weapons and biological pathogens as well. Just weeks ago I attended with Senator Lugar the opening of an immense new chemical weapons destruction facility in Shchuchye, Siberia, that was largely built with CTR’s support. I had then the opportunity to thank him publicly for his brave efforts in championing the CTR cause.**

3. **The opening of the Shchuchye facility attracted considerable media coverage for a chemical weapons event, including by both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, reflecting, I believe, growing public interest in the renewed momentum we are seeing in the sphere of WMD disarmament and non-proliferation. A key factor in this thrust is, surely, the welcome fact that the US and Russia are actively engaged in negotiations to further reduce their nuclear stockpiles after the START 1 treaty expires in December.**
4. **The ongoing momentum is evident, for example, in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which, after 10 years of deadlock, is moving forward again on a range of critical issues, with the strong backing of the Obama administration. Moreover, a provisional agenda has already been adopted by the Preparatory Committee for next year's Review Conference on the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, a very positive contrast to the situation in recent years. President Obama has called for [US](#) ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and with US support the Conference has agreed to a work-plan that includes long-awaited negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissile materials, which would constitute an important step toward multilateral nuclear disarmament.**
5. **All of these developments are occurring within the framework of President Obama's bold new commitment to the vision of a nuclear weapons-free world, which he has made the centrepiece of America's defence policy. I wholeheartedly support this vision, which Prime Ministers Putin and Brown appear to echo, for I am of the strong belief that the ultimate elimination of all existing**

**WMDs and the vigorous prevention of their proliferation are central to the very survival of humanity. Coincidentally, I have spent a good deal of my diplomatic career working in the actual promotion of arms control and disarmament: in the early nineties, in Argentina, I was actively involved in giving full transparency to the nuclear and missile programs and in setting up a very strict export control regime for sensitive materials and technologies; and, for the last seven year I have had the honour of leading the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Which brings me to the very subject of my presentation, namely - what are the lessons to be learned from the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) when considering the challenge of “going to zero” with weapons of mass destruction?**

- 6. Let me first of all offer an important caveat. I am fully aware of the unique complexities involved in each category of WMD. Whilst it has been possible to come to an agreement to eliminate all chemical weapons, the scenario is, obviously, still very complex, and increasingly so, in the nuclear and biological fields. To fully grasp the profound political and military implications of abolishing nuclear weapons, one writer has suggested imagining if the Great Powers in the 19th century had tried to abolish gunpowder. Therefore, I don't intend to present the Chemical Weapons Convention as a perfect or fully replicable model for abolishing all weapons of mass destruction. But I do believe that the experience of implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention offers some important lessons and insights for one day “going to zero” with WMDs.**

- 7. I would begin by highlighting the fact that the Convention is the first and only treaty ever designed to eliminate an entire class of WMDs, and that it took nearly a century to come to fruition. The effort began with The Hague Convention in 1899, which prohibited the use of “asphyxiating or deleterious gases” but fell apart during World War I when chlorine, phosgene and mustard gas were all deployed on a massive scale. A second attempt at a ban was made with the Geneva Protocol in 1925, which prohibited the use of both chemical and biological weapons but not their development, production and stockpiling. As a result, new and more deadly chemical weapons continued to be developed in the ensuing decades and were stockpiled in large quantities by the superpowers during the Cold War. And as we all well know, Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons on a large scale to kill and maim tens of thousands of Iranians and Iraqi Kurds during the 1980s.**
- 8. With the end of the Cold War, and on the heels of the Iran-Iraq conflict, the United States and the then Soviet Union finally came together to lead multilateral negotiations on a new treaty that would do away with these terrible weapons altogether. Very much as a result of the joint US-Russian drive, the Chemical Weapons Convention was concluded. It was opened for signature in January 1993 and entered into force in April 1997.**
- 9. Unlike its predecessors, the Convention is a comprehensive ban that prohibits the development, production, stockpiling or use of chemical weapons. Unlike the NPT, all States Parties to the**

**Convention have equal rights and obligations and all those who possess chemical weapons must destroy their stockpiles according to legally binding Treaty timelines. And in contrast to the Biological Weapons Convention, which has no verification mechanism, the Chemical Weapons Convention created a multilateral Organization to ensure its implementation, the OPCW, through which all States Parties are subject to a non-discriminatory regime of multilateral inspections aimed at verifying compliance with its provisions.**

**10. The destruction of all existing chemical weapons is therefore a core and one could say urgent objective of the Convention, and the treaty establishes strict deadlines for its implementation - April 2012 being the latest for the countries that were parties to the Convention at the time of its entry into force in 1997. Thus, within 30 days of joining, every State Party that possesses chemical weapons must provide a detailed declaration of its stockpiles to the OPCW. The Technical Secretariat immediately verifies the declarations and then monitors 24/7 the safe and complete on-site destruction of the stockpiles until the process is complete and irreversible. The same is done for chemical weapons production facilities, which must either be completely destroyed or, after approval by the OPCW, converted to purposes not prohibited by the Convention.**

**11. A second and long-term core objective of the CWC is ensuring the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. In order to verify compliance with this central objective, the CWC establishes a stringent verification mechanism of round-the-year inspections**

**over plants producing toxic chemicals and precursors that could potentially be used in chemical weapons and that State Parties are obliged to declare in accordance with three Convention Schedules. In addition, other chemical production facilities, that don't produce Scheduled chemicals but whose production processes could lend themselves to making chemical weapons, are also declarable and subject to inspection. To date, more than 5,000 industrial facilities around the world have been declared and the OPCW Technical Secretariat has already carried out around 1500 inspections in over 80 countries.**

**12.I would like to stress also the critical importance of the two other main areas of our work - assistance and protection, and international cooperation - because I believe they effectively contribute to the Convention's universal appeal. All of our Member States share a concern for the safety and security of their citizens, and OPCW contributes to that with training, technical expertise and assistance against the use or threat of use, of chemical weapons. In case of need, OPCW is prepared to mobilise teams for detection and decontamination, and to support assistance operations. At the same time, our Member States want to enjoy the benefits of national development, and the OPCW promotes the peaceful uses of chemistry with the fullest possible exchange of chemicals, equipment and information. However, the OPCW is not a development agency, which means that all this is done within the strict confines and solely in pursuance of the Convention's central purpose of eliminating forever all chemical weapons.**

**13. These, then, are the four main components of the Convention and our work: destroying chemical weapons and their associated means of production; ensuring non-proliferation; providing assistance and protection against the possible use of chemical weapons; and promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry. The bundling of these four elements has made “going to zero” with chemical weapons an attractive proposition, as evidenced by the popularity and achievements of the Convention.**

**14. Indeed, after just 12 years of existence, the OPCW already counts 188 States Parties, thus encompassing over 98% of the world’s population and chemical industry - the fastest rate of accession for any arms treaty in history. In this relatively short time, 43% of all chemical weapons declared to the OPCW by seven possessor States have already been verifiably destroyed, and that figure is on track to increase substantially as we approach 2012. Three of the possessor States – Albania, India and a State Party that requests not to be identified – have already completed destruction of their entire stockpiles. In addition, all of the associated facilities that produced chemical weapons were de-activated early on, and all but a handful have since been either destroyed or converted to peaceful uses.**

**15. Russia, the largest possessor State with almost 40,000 metric tons of declared chemical weapons agent, has eliminated nearly a third of its stockpiles. This process will accelerate with the recent opening of the destruction facility in Shchuchye and the planned completion of two others, in Kizner and another Pochep which is scheduled to enter operation by early 2010. Russia has repeatedly**



**declared its intention to meet the 2012 Treaty deadline. For its part the United States, which was the first country to start disposing of its chemical weapons and declared the second largest stockpile – about 28,600 metric tons - has destroyed more than 60% of them, including almost all of the most dangerous ones. In early June, I accompanied a delegation of the OPCW Executive Council on a visit to two of the US destruction facilities - one in Pueblo, Colorado and the other in Umatilla, Oregon. The visit took place at the invitation of the US and provided ample evidence of the firm and resolute commitment of the US to eliminating completely and irreversibly its chemical stockpile, as established in the Convention, in a safe and effective manner. Much as I am aware that, as per today's estimates, the US will not be able to destroy more than 90% of its stockpile by April of 2012, I look forward to its unremitting continued efforts to meet the Treaty deadline, taking advantage of any opportunities to further accelerate the CW destruction program.**

**16. In addition, I readily recognise the substantial financial and technical resources allocated by the US to the implementation of the Convention as well as the exemplary safety record of the program in place. In fact, Article IV paragraph 10 of the Convention mandates that in destroying their chemical weapons, possessor States shall privilege safety and the protection of the environment. Safely disposing of chemical weapons is a challenge of staggering complexity. The global stockpiles include large quantities of VX, a small vial of which - if properly disbursed - would kill everyone in this auditorium. Some of these agents were stored in bulk containers, but the majority was contained in**

**nearly 9 million rockets, artillery shells, landmines and other weapons. So all of these weapons must be individually destroyed, and that is a costly, hazardous and time-consuming job. As chemical weapons cannot be transported, facilities must be constructed on-site at every storage depot to destroy them. Moreover, their destruction and disposal raises understandable concerns at state and local community levels.**

**17. All this has a substantial logical impact not just on the pace of destruction but also on the costs involved. To date, the global destruction effort has cost tens of billions of dollars, and billions more will be needed to finish the work. But I am very proud to say that the highest standards of health and safety have been maintained by all of the OPCW possessor States and serious accidents have been avoided. This record demonstrates a determination not only to comply with their obligations under the Convention, but to do so in the most conscientious way possible.**

**18. As regards the non-proliferation provisions of the Convention, I have already mentioned the substantial numbers of declared plants and the inspections carried out by the OPCW in the first 12 years of its existence. I would like now to highlight another unique feature of the Chemical Weapons Convention – it is the first arms control treaty that relies upon industry for its full implementation. Indeed, chemical industry was invited to participate in the final stages of the negotiations leading to the conclusion of the treaty and today is recognised as a major stakeholder. From the outset, it has worked with the OPCW Technical Secretariat to design a credible verification system and to help train our inspectors. The**

**chemical industry also implements its own governance measures to ensure that its products and technologies are not diverted for hostile purposes. I pay tribute in particular to the American Chemistry Council, which has been so very helpful all along.**

**19. As regards our work in the area of assistance and protection, the possibility that terrorists may use chemical weapons has generated growing interest in the OPCW's ability to coordinate the delivery of emergency assistance in the event of an attack, or the threat of such an attack. Though the OPCW is not an anti-terrorism agency, the comprehensive prohibition against chemical weapons that falls within its jurisdiction has an important contribution to make in this area. Our role is clearly recognised in UN Security Council Resolution 1540, and in the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that was reconfirmed by the General Assembly last September. This very Thursday, I will be in New York in order to address the Committee created by UNSC 1373. The occasion will serve to highlight our determination to continue contributing to the international efforts to prevent terrorists from acceding to WMDs.**

**20. As you can see, we can show some remarkable achievements in the implementation of the CWC. Such accomplishments are certainly unique in the sphere of WMDs. Let me now outline the main challenges laying ahead of us.**

**21. The fact that 43% of the declared stockpiles have been destroyed in the first 12 years of the Convention's existence is certainly a laudable achievement. But this leaves less than three years for the**

**possessor States to destroy the remaining 57% of their stockpiles before the final deadline of April 2012 set by the Convention. The challenge is particularly severe in the case of the Russian Federation and the United States, given the large amounts of chemical weapons still to be destroyed and the very limited time available under the Treaty for them to do so. This is a matter that will focus a lot of attention at the OPCW in the next few years and that will require appropriate alertness and careful diplomatic management on the part of both countries**

**22. As a natural evolutionary process, once the destruction of existing chemical weapons has been completed the majority of the OPCW's verification activities will be focused on non-proliferation. This core objective is crucial to the ultimate success of the OPCW and will require the unrelenting maintenance of a high degree of political commitment to the Treaty on the part of all its member States. This will ensure that the verification regime continues to be implemented in full and adequately embraces all statutory industrial categories, including those production facilities dealing with non-Scheduled agents whose characteristics facilitate their quick re-conversion for prohibited purposes. The challenge becomes more urgent as terrorists could seek to produce or acquire chemical weapons. They must not be allowed access to these toxic compounds or the means to produce them. Inspections are a crucial mechanism for building confidence that all States Parties are complying with their obligations, deterring illegal activities, and blocking access to prohibited materials by terrorists.**

**23. It is equally imperative that our verification knowledge and technical equipment keep up with the continuous advancements in science and technology; for example, to detect new chemicals and the impact they can have on the Convention. We must also be able to respond to the growing interaction between chemistry and biology, and to cope with the way micro-reactors and nanotechnology can affect our work in the future.**

**24. But verification alone is not enough. National implementation is an equally essential element in achieving the non-proliferation goals of the Convention. All States Parties must establish and reinforce administrative and legislative measures so that key provisions of the Convention are in place, including systematic declarations, industry monitoring, controls on transfers of chemicals, and regulatory measures to identify and track toxic chemicals. The OPCW will therefore continue to assist States Parties in establishing National Authorities to coordinate implementation of the Convention, and with adopting legislation to criminalise activities that violate its object and purpose.**

**25. One key remaining challenge to the ultimate success of the Chemical Weapons Convention is achieving universal adherence. Only seven UN Member States remain outside the Convention today – Angola, Egypt, Israel, Myanmar, North Korea, Syria and Somalia. But the absence of any State from the Convention—whether large or small, rich or poor, but particularly one that might have an active chemical programme and/or stockpiles—undermines the goal of achieving a total ban on these weapons.**

**26. On my part, I strongly believe there is no justification, moral or strategic, for retaining the chemical weapons option. Chemical weapons have decreasing strategic significance today and are basically instruments of indiscriminate terror against civilians. Quite appropriately therefore, the Second Review Conference on the Chemical Weapons Convention in April of last year strongly urged the remaining States not Party to ratify or accede to the Convention as a matter of urgency and without preconditions. We must relentlessly continue to raise this issue with those countries. I have been keenly committed to this goal from day one of my tenure, and will remain so until the end of it.**

**27. Let me now summarize the main elements of our experience with the Chemical Weapons Convention that I believe are worthy of study in considering broader efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.**

**28. The first is the Convention's principle of non-discrimination between possessor and non-possessor States. All OPCW members share the same rights and obligations, and all are equally accountable for complying with the provisions of the Convention. This principle has engendered both a broad sense of ownership among OPCW members and a shared commitment to achieving the Convention's goals, and is of fundamental importance in multilateral disarmament efforts.**

**29. The second element is the comprehensive nature of the treaty. As the history of The Hague Convention and Geneva Protocols regrettably demonstrated, so long as chemical weapons were**

**allowed to exist they would be used, and other countries would seek such capabilities. The Chemical Weapons Convention aims to eliminate that threat by comprehensively banning these weapons of mass destruction and preventing new ones from emerging. This remains a work in progress and the final outcome is by no means assured, but the possession and use of chemical weapons has been de-legitimized by an overwhelming majority of States.**

**30. A third element is our collaborative relationship with industry, which is essential to both the effective implementation of the Convention and to the further evolution of our verification system as it relates to industry.**

**31. A fourth element is the OPCW's ethos of mutual assistance, whereby Member States pledge to provide assistance to other members should chemical weapons ever be used, or threatened to be used, against them. This capacity has attracted increasing interest from Member States in their efforts to reduce the threat of WMD terrorism and is an essential selling point for bringing new members into the Convention.**

**32. I should also mention our tradition of consensus-based policy-making, which requires that competing interests among Member States be reconciled to reach agreement on all policy issues. This can be difficult and time-consuming, but it has returned great dividends in sustaining the trust of Member States and their commitment to implementing decisions by the policy-making organs. As a result, the work of the OPCW has vindicated multilateralism as a viable way for effectively addressing**

questions related to WMD and for enhancing international peace and security.

**33. I suggest that nothing prevents us from walking, *mutatis mutandi*, a similar path in the two other categories, nuclear and biological weapons. Thanks to the leadership shown by the American administration, with the support of other countries, such as the UK, we now see that this is not impossible. Whilst the process shall not be an easy one, there are things that can be done already now to pave the way for a world free from WMD.**

**34. One such step is the continued strengthening of the international organizations with competence in the field. While these organisations will never substitute national decisions and the vision of world leaders, by providing all countries with a level playing field they offer unequalled chances for promoting the effective and strict implementation of international non-proliferation norms and of legitimately disqualifying under the law those Governments that fail to comply and cheat. That is why it is so very important to ensure that the international organizations concerned, be it the OPCW, the IAEA or the CTBTO, are structurally reinforced, well managed and duly supported - including by those countries that under the UN Charter have a special responsibility in the preservation of world peace and security.**

**Thank you, and I will be happy to take your questions.**

**END**