

Embassy of India

The Hague

Press Release

March 13, 2019

India tells the OPCW that increase in allegations and incidents of use of chemical weapons in different parts of the world is a matter of grave concern

Addressing the 90th Session of the Executive Council (EC) of Organization for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on March 12, 2019, Permanent Representative of India, Ambassador Venu Rajamony pointed out that despite best efforts of the OPCW, there has been an increase in allegations and incidents of use of chemical weapons in different parts of the world.

Describing these as a matter of grave concern, Ambassador Venu Rajamony said the use of chemical weapons is in complete disregard of humanity and is reprehensible and contrary to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as accepted international legal norms. India fully shares the increasing concern over the possibility of use of chemical weapons and expresses its deepest sympathies to the victims of chemical weapon attacks and their families.

Ambassador Venu Rajamony said in his statement that it has been India's consistent position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstances, cannot be justified and the perpetrators of such abhorrent acts must be held accountable. Any allegations of use of chemical weapons must continue to be addressed in an effective and timely

manner and strictly in accordance with the Convention, utilizing all its provisions. All investigations in this regard should be impartial and objective and must strive to establish facts and reach evidence-based conclusions.

Reiterating India's deep concern on the reports of the so-called 'Islamic State' or ISIS/ISIL acquiring chemical weapons and their delivery systems, Ambassador Venu Rajamony requested the Technical Secretariat to closely monitor this threat and report to the EC on this emerging challenge.

Ambassador Venu Rajamony said that efforts in the OPCW should help to eliminate all possibilities of any future use of chemical weapons and uphold the global norm against use of chemical weapons. In the constantly evolving global security environment, there exist daunting challenges such as discovery of new toxic chemicals, advancements in deployment and dissemination techniques, easy access to raw materials and technical knowhow as well as increasing threat of use of chemical weapons by non-state actors. This calls for greater and continued vigilance as well as renewed efforts by both OPCW and the member states towards preventing the reemergence of chemical weapons and enhancing the adaptive capacity of the organization.

Ambassador Venu Rajamony concluded stating that as one of the original signatories of the Convention and an active member of the OPCW, India has always emphasized the importance of consensus and the need for all decisions to be taken by the states parties in consultation with one other. India has also stressed the importance of unity amongst states parties to further the goals of the Convention.

Full text of the Ambassador's statement at the 90th Session of the EC of the OPCW is given below.



**Statement by
Ambassador Venu Rajamony,
Permanent Representative of India to the OPCW
at the 90th Session of the Executive Council,
12 March 2019**

Madam Chairperson,
Mr. Director General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

I welcome you back as the Chairperson of the last regular session of the Executive Council of your term. I complement you on your able leadership during some challenging sessions as well as on the important achievements of the EC over this last year. I assure you of my delegation's continued cooperation during this session.

I would like to thank the Director General for his comprehensive statement and appreciate the continued efforts made by the team under his leadership, towards implementation of the provisions of the convention.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of NAM States Parties to the CWC and China.

Madam Chairperson,

India attaches great importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. 98% of the global population lives under the protection of the Convention which has now secured the commitment of 193 nations, thereby achieving near universality. We call upon the remaining States that are not Parties to the Convention to consider acceding to the Convention at the earliest.

Destruction of chemical weapons is the most important undertaking made by every State Party to the Convention. Under the vigilant eyes of this organisation, more than 96 per cent of chemical weapon stockpiles declared by possessor states have been eliminated. We hope that the remaining chemical weapons stockpiles will also be destroyed soon.

However, it is a matter of grave concern that despite our best efforts, there has been an increase in allegations and incidents of use of chemical weapons in different parts of the world. The use of chemical weapons is in complete disregard of humanity and is reprehensible and contrary to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as accepted international legal norms. My delegation fully shares the increasing concern over the possibility of use of chemical weapons and expresses its deepest sympathies to the victims of chemical weapon attacks and their families.

Madam Chairperson,

It has been India's consistent position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstances, cannot be justified and the perpetrators of such abhorrent acts must be held accountable. Any allegations of use of chemical weapons must continue to be addressed in an effective and timely manner and strictly in accordance with the Convention, utilizing all its provisions. All investigations in this regard should be impartial and objective and must strive to establish facts and reach evidence-based conclusions.

My delegation reiterates its deep concern on the reports of the so-called 'Islamic State' or ISIS/ISIL acquiring chemical weapons and their delivery systems. We request the Technical Secretariat to closely monitor this threat and report to the EC on this emerging challenge.

My delegation takes note of the continuing involvement of OPCW in the Syrian Arab Republic, including through the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Fact Finding Mission (FFM). We welcome the resumption of high-level consultations between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Technical Secretariat and look forward to the resolution of all outstanding issues in the Syrian chemical dossier in a spirit of trust and cooperation. |

We note the report of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) regarding the incident of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Douma on 7 April 2018. We are deeply concerned at the reported use of chemical weapons and reiterate our strong condemnation of the abhorrent use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Madam Chairperson,

Our efforts in the OPCW should help to eliminate all possibilities of any future use of chemical weapons and uphold the global norm against use of chemical weapons. In the constantly evolving global security environment, there exist daunting challenges such as discovery of new toxic chemicals, advancements in deployment and dissemination techniques, easy access to raw materials and technical knowhow as well as increasing threat of use of chemical weapons by non-state actors.

This calls for greater and continued vigilance as well as renewed efforts by both OPCW and the member states towards preventing the reemergence of chemical weapons and enhancing the adaptive capacity of the organization. An important step was taken in this regard recently, when proposals were submitted to add new toxic chemicals to the Annex on chemicals of the Convention. Notably, this is the first time that the changes have been proposed to the Schedules since the Convention entered into force 22 years back. We urge the sponsors of the proposals to continue their efforts to reach out to each other and work towards a compromise solution acceptable to all.

Madam Chairperson,

While we agree on the goal of attaining a world free of chemical weapons and the threat of their use, we continue to be divided on how to achieve these goals. This was evident at the end of last year when the Fourth Review Conference failed to reach a consensus on report. This was preceded by a contentious and divisive 23rd Conference of States Parties, which saw deepening divisions over the Programme and Budget for the OPCW for 2019, primarily arising from proposed allocation of funds for setting up an attribution mechanism.

The decision on attribution mechanism has adversely impacted upon the finely crafted balance in the Convention by endowing unprecedented powers to the Technical Secretariat headed by the Director General, in place of giving primacy and oversight to the Executive Council and the Conference of States Parties (CSP). The Attribution Mechanism, now called the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), must be accountable to State Parties and report to the EC/CSP and must function in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. India believes that there is merit in exploring ways to ensure that concerns on the Attribution Mechanism shared by a large number of states parties are addressed and the principles of the Convention are upheld.

As one of the original signatories of the Convention and an active member of the OPCW, India has always emphasized the importance of consensus and the need for all decisions to be taken by the states parties in consultation with one other. India has also stressed the importance of unity amongst states parties to further the goals of the Convention. It is regrettable that a matter unrelated to the Convention was brought up in the EC this morning. India reiterates that the only way forward on all matters concerning the CWC is through constructive engagement, dialogue, and unity of purpose. India remains willing and open for discussions with states parties to find ways and means to strengthen the Convention and its effective implementation, within the framework of the Convention.

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, I request that this Statement be circulated as an official document of this session and posted on the OPCW's public website.