

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Duinweg 24, The Hague

Statement

By

H.E. Dr. G. Ali Khoshro

Deputy Foreign Minister of Legal and International Affairs

To

**The First Review Conference of
the States Parties of
the Chemical Weapons Convention**

April 30th 2003

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Mr. Chairman
Mr. Director-General
Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, let me, on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran; take this opportunity to congratulate the people of the Netherlands, the Host Country, on the occasion of her majesty's the Queen birthday. My congratulation also to you, Ambassador Nouredin Djoudi, on your election as the chairman of the 1st Review Conference of the States Parties. I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Rogelio Pfirter, and his staff for their tireless efforts in steering the Technical Secretariat, and wishing them continued success in their endeavors. My thanks also go to Ambassador Fernando of Sri Lanka and Ambassador Daverede of Argentina for their great contribution to the work of the organization during last year.

Mr. Chairman,

The 1st Review Conference of States Parties, as mandated by the CWC, is a unique occasion for the objective review of the progress made in the implementation of the Convention and of opportunities for improvement by the organization and States Parties. For This Convention to preserve its non-discriminatory nature and to achieve its object and purposes, it is essential that in this significant venue, the States Parties revitalize their commitments and political will towards full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all its provisions.

The Review Conference is convened to undertake review of the operation of the CWC during the past half decade, thereby, ensuring both a retrospective evaluation of the Convention since 1997, and consideration of the future problems facing the full implementation. As a result, the Review Conference should come up with formation of recommendations, as it deems necessary. It is our earnest hope that this Review Conference command a consensus based, comprehensive and balanced final outcome.

In the past 6 years, the OPCW has made relatively great strides towards achieving the cause of the Convention, by providing the States Parties with a collaborative process in which the implementation of the Convention have been, by and large, seen not as a result of the power politics, but as a collective enterprise promoting our collective security. This is exemplary of the efficacy of multilateralism in promoting international peace and security. In the venue of the First Convention's Review Conference, which we are reviewing its operation for the first time, we shall reassure ourselves of continued genuine multilateralism in the future life of the Convention. Given the fact that, rift in positions has subjected multilateral diplomacy in other disarmament fora into failure, it would remain crucial to preserve multilateralism in the OPCW.

The OPCW should be seen as the sole responsible and competent international body to verify the compliance of states parties with their obligations under the convention. Thus States shall not undermine this authority by resorting to unilateral actions. The states parties that have concerns regarding non-compliance with the obligations under the convention should follow the matter through the mechanism envisaged in the convention and be abided by the results of the process.

Mr. Chairman,

The commitment of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Chemical Weapons Convention goes far beyond of a merely legal undertaking. It stems from horrifying recent national experience during an imposed war that has formed our historical bitter memory, and conforms our policy vis-à-vis weapons of mass destruction in all its forms, and chemical weapons in particular. We attach great importance to the CWC and spare no effort to promote global respect for it and compliance with all its provisions.

13 years after cease-fire between the two countries, hardly a week still goes by without Iranian people losing one of their loved one to chemical weapons after long years of agonizing pained suffering. Iran sustained 100,000 known victims to the use of different types of chemical agents (nerve agents, blistering agents and mixed agents), 35,000 of them are considered serious, due to suffering from long effects of chemical weapons deployed by Iraq (especially mustard gas). Ten percent of the victims whose cases are serious will have a definite, gradual and agonizing death awaiting them. Unfortunately and sadly, 25,000 victims who had been treated and released by 1993, and thought to have fully recovered, have reported back to hospitals and medical

centers with serious respiratory and other complaints in the last twelve months. Our experience with chemical weapons has been and will continue to remain very costly to the Islamic republic of Iran in many respects. Therefore, the Islamic republic of Iran has good reasons beyond a mere legal ground to do its utmost in accomplishing the goals of the Convention and implementation activities of the OPCW.

The most tragic chemical weapon attack by Saddam's regime against Iranian civilian population had happened in Sardasht, a city in north western of Iran. Through the 8 year imposed war, chemical agents continued to reach Iraq from the U.S and some other industrial countries with no attempt to inhibit such access when it really mattered. At that time, Iraq got away with impunity, even though several reports by UN fact-finding teams had proven Saddam's violations of the 1925 Geneva Protocol.

The Islamic republic of Iran, in addition to accomplishment of its undertakings towards the Convention, has generously shared its invaluable experience in the field of medical treatment of victims of chemical weapons with the OPCW and other States. In association with OPCW, we have organized four international medical courses in each physicians from 33 member states participated. We have also shared experience, in this field, in some other occasions with other States Parties, like Croatia exercise in the year 2002. I am also glad to report the 5th International Medical Course is due to be held in Tehran in May 2003.

Mr. Chairman,

In our view, one of the urgent issues that should be addressed by the Review conference is the issue of universal adherence to the Convention. Islamic Republic of Iran, as the last victim of chemical weapons, attaches grate importance to the issue of universality. We firmly believe that the lack of truly universal adherence, especially after 5 years operation of the CWC, is not simple shortcoming to be ignored. In the Middle East, In particular, certain Countries of this sensitive region have declined to join, in reaction to the Israeli intransigence to undermine the security concerns of the international community as regards its clandestine WMD programs. This situation continues to pose significant threat to the universality of the CWC. The international community should therefore spare no effort in augmenting its pressure on Israel to subject its well-known capabilities to the international undertaking.

Mr. Chairman,

Another very high priority issue to address in this forum is the issue of full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of Article XI of the CWC. The situation that developing States Parties still are facing is yet much more precarious as before. The basic concept of the Convention from the outset has been to balance the extensive verification with free trade of chemicals, equipments and related technology for activities not prohibited. In fact the conclusion of the Convention became possible at the final stage only when commitments were made within the text of the Convention as well as through formal statement of the Australia group that restrictions on the transfer of equipment, technology and related technology not prohibited by the Convention would not be maintained among the States Parties.

No progress has so far been made on this issue, despite the grate efforts of the developing States parties for full implementation of their obligations, and the concessions they have made during the entire work of the Preparatory Commission as well as during the five years of the operation of the Convention. This issue needs urgent attention in order to be resolved in a satisfactory manner for the Convention to have any chance for eventual success preventing any future disputes. In a sincere and optimistic movement, in order to facilitate the reaching common approach, we have proposed that multilateral mechanism under the auspices of the OPCW within the domain of the Convention to be established to replace Australia Group interim arrangements. This is a proposal that should meet the support of every State Party within that group who sincerely seeks to find a reasonable compromise.

Mr. Chairman,

The full and effective implementation of the CWC is still a top priority and our essential common responsibility. There are still great challenges before us which should be confronted with determination.

The object and purposes of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) will be in jeopardy if:

- 1) The non-discriminatory nature of the Convention to achieve its object and purpose would not be properly preserved;
- 2) The principle of equal rights and responsibilities is compromised so as that some are considered more equal than others;
- 3) Establishment of double standards instead of underlying principle of equal treatment of all States Parties;

4) Weakening the organization's authority by interpreting implementation of the Convention in terms of solely national implementation;

5) To mistrust States Parties and put into question their good faith to comply fully with their obligations through advancing unilateral political claims;

6) Continued non- accession of some with well-known chemical weapons capability to the Convention; and finally,

7) Resorting to reservations by some that are explicitly contrary to the letter and spirit of the Convention and subject the convention's requirements to domestic legal constrains.

I hope that this Review Conference could effectively contribute to our overall efforts to ensure the full implementation of the convention and remove obstacles of such a goal.

I thank you.