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Statement by the U.S. Delegation to the Executive Council, Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Sixty- Eighth Session

Remarks

Robert P. Mikulak

U.S. Representative to the OPCW Executive Council

The Hague, Netherlands

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Mr. Chairman,

As we begin the Sixty-Eighth Session of the Executive Council, I would like to thank you, Ambassador Goosen, for your outstanding leadership of the Council over the past year. Under your guidance, this Council has achieved numerous accomplishments. Difficult issues that were under negotiation for several years have been resolved. During your final Session as Chairperson, you can continue to count on the full support of the U.S. delegation in your efforts to lead the Council once again to successful outcomes.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Director-General, Distinguished Delegates,

This Session is notable particularly because it is taking place immediately after the final extended deadline for the destruction of chemical weapons. The United States has destroyed 90 percent of our stockpile. We are working hard to complete destruction of the remaining 10 percent as soon as practicable. Recently, we submitted to the Council our detailed plan for doing so. We look forward to briefing the Council on our plan later during this session.

Let me reassure everyone that the U.S. commitment to complete chemical weapons destruction remains unwavering. We will faithfully implement this treaty obligation, as well as the additional measures contained in the decision reached at the 16th Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We will continue our destruction program with full transparency so that others may judge for themselves how we are doing.

Mr. Chairman,

The recent revelations about chemical weapons hidden by the Qadhafi regime are an unprecedented situation in the fifteen year history of the Convention. The United States welcomes the responsible actions of the new Libyan Government in declaring these hidden chemical weapons, and we also welcome the Council's March 27th decision addressing this serious situation.

We appreciate Libya's intention, as set out in that decision, "to address any matters that need to be clarified with regard to its declaration." We believe more information is needed to address where the hidden chemical weapons, and the chemical agent they contain, were produced. At this session, we look forward to learning more from Libya about these weapons, and from the Technical Secretariat about the results of the inspection conducted on April 18.

Another important task for this session is the establishment of an open-ended working group to prepare for the Third Review Conference. First, however, we must identify a capable Chairperson. This person will be key to ensuring that we are well prepared for a productive, forward-looking Review Conference that will set the course for implementation of the Convention during the following five-year period.

Mr. Chairman,

Last, but certainly not least among issues to be discussed this session are the working practices of the Council. I would like to recall the constructive informal meeting you hosted on 13 April on this subject. The U.S. delegation shares the concerns that led the distinguished Brazilian Ambassador to propose such consultations. Participants showed a spirit of constructive engagement. Although many different viewpoints were expressed, I believe that the many delegates present shared the view that improvements are necessary and that further consultations should be held. We believe that this session should encourage a continuation of this informal process.

Mr. Chairman,

I would now like to put forth U.S. views on several other topics of importance to CWC States Parties that are not on the agenda for this session. The Technical Secretariat is now preparing the OPCW's draft program and budget for 2013. Our hope is that the program and budget will take into account the extraordinary financial stress that faces the governments of many Member States. In fact, in many countries austerity measures are being put in place, including pay freezes or even pay cuts for government employees. Since the number of inspectors has declined substantially, we expect to see a decrease in the number of support staff as well. Under these circumstances, it will be especially important to streamline the structure and procedures of the Secretariat, drawing on those elements from the external consultant's report that are non-controversial. Furthermore, although some programs have steadily increased in the past, this cannot be sustained in 2013.

In sum, we expect to see a reduction in the 2013 OPCW Draft Programme and Budget when it is released by the Director-General later this year.

The United States believes that Articles VII, X, and XI all make critical contributions to enhancing international security. With respect to Article VII, we are seriously concerned that the requirements for national implementation measures, including legislation to criminalize prohibited activities, have not been met by some members of the Council. We understand that States Parties have many competing priorities, but a number of States Parties still have not enacted CWC implementing legislation fifteen years after entry into force.

We also believe that Articles VII, X, and XI are mutually reinforcing and that there should be a facilitator's report on each of them at every session of the Council. If regional Centers of Excellence are to be established, they should be developed

jointly to support all three articles, not just one. Any such centers should also be closely tied to existing Centers of Excellence to ensure long term financial viability.

Turning to industry issues, Mr. Chairman, the number of industry inspections has been agreed upon through 2014. That decision now allows us to focus on ways to ensure that these inspections are conducted at the most relevant sites, and in the most effective and efficient manner possible. We believe that this can be accomplished within the Executive Council decision on policy guidelines for determining the number of Article VI inspections. The methodology for the selection of the most relevant sites for inspection should be considered a priority within the industry cluster in the coming twelve months.

In conclusion, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Sixty-eighth Session of the Council. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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