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Statement to the Fifty-Third Session of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

Amb. Eric M. Javits, Head of the U.S Delegation

The Hague, Netherlands

June 24, 2008

Madame Chairperson, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

Today, in our first meeting of the new Executive Council, I would like to warmly welcome you, Ambassador Oksana Tomova, as our new Chairperson. I have every confidence that you will lead us deftly during the year ahead through not only our normal workload but in beginning to address all of the new recommendations from the Second Review Conference. I also welcome each of our new Vice Chairmen and all of the new and returning members of this Council, and I look forward to working closely with each and every one of you.

I would also like to express my profound appreciation to the leadership trio of the Review Conference for seeing us through a very challenging but productive event – Ambassador Waleed El Khereiiji, the Chairman of the Conference; Ambassador Benchaa Dani, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole; and Ambassador Lyn Parker, who chaired the Open Ended Working Group leading up to the Conference; as well as to Director-General Rogelio Pfirter and all of the Technical Secretariat staff for the excellent leadership, support, and assistance throughout the process. Nor would the Conference have been possible without the dedication and expertise of all of the members of the General Committee and the facilitators and delegates, who toiled through very long hours to bring the Conference to a successful conclusion. Heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in the Conference and contributed to its ultimate success – a success that should re-energise us and in which we can all take pride.

My government welcomes Guinea Bissau as the newest State to join the Chemical Weapons Convention, bringing our number to 184. We expect that Lebanon and Iraq will also complete their accession very soon, moving us ever closer to universal membership. As all States agreed again in the Review Conference, the goal of universality is essential for the Chemical Weapons Convention to achieve its goals and to enhance international peace and security.

The Second Review Conference marked an important milestone after almost eleven years of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It was quite an ordeal for those of us who participated, with seemingly endless papers and positions, some heated arguments, incredibly long days and a couple of sleepless nights. But what we produced in that two-week ordeal is a reaffirmation of the Convention, a strong renewal of the commitment by all States Parties to the purposes of the Convention and the implementation of all of its provisions. We set out some guidelines for the future of this Organisation, demonstrating that it is a living entity, continuing in its work, adjusting to changing circumstances, and thriving. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons will not reach its end when all the chemical weapons are destroyed, although that will be a remarkable historic event to celebrate. Any who hold the view that destruction of declared stockpiles will signal the end of the Chemical Weapons Convention are sorely mistaken. The OPCW will continue to have a critical role, long

after disarmament, in assuring that chemical weapons will never again be developed, produced or used. The States Parties affirmed this ongoing and permanent non-proliferation role for the Organisation in the Report of the Second Review Conference.

This Executive Council has the honour, yet also the challenge, of beginning to translate the words of the Review Conference into action. We should work hard to preserve and build on our hard-won consensus and continue our efforts in a spirit of collegiality and cooperation. In a sense, this Executive Council will serve as the proving ground of whether we can further strengthen this successful model of multilateralism. If we succeed, the OPCW will serve as an example for other treaties and other organizations. We can build on the strong foundation of this Organisation, using the Report of the Second Review Conference as a guide for our future work. Some of the areas which we could strengthen, following that blueprint, include improving our programmes of assistance to developing nations; taking practical steps to assist each other in effectively implementing our national obligations; improving the focus of Article VI inspection efforts; evolving the verification system in response to changes in the chemical industry; and cooperating in countering terrorist use of toxic chemicals.

The Second Review Conference expressed concern over the increased danger of the use of chemical weapons by terrorists, and invited States Parties to consult and cooperate both bilaterally and regionally on ways to prevent terrorist use of such weapons. It also noted the important work of the OPCW Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism. My government supports and encourages the Working Group on Terrorism to become a more active forum for exchanging experiences and discussing issues related to the terrorist threat of chemical weapons. At the recent regional workshop for National Authorities in Belgrade, a U.S. expert made a presentation on practical issues associated with chemical site security and outlined a U.S. programme that assists states in addressing such issues. We hope that such exchanges can become more common.

Madame Chairperson,

We should begin at once to tackle, and complete, the work represented on our Executive Council agenda this week. The Council in the past several years has exhibited a regrettable tendency to defer much of its work from one session to the next. This practice may avoid conflict, but there is no substitute for doing the difficult work of finding common ground for consensus. We would like to see the Council walk away from this expedient behaviour and improve its efficiency and its productivity. We should complete as much of every Council's agenda as possible and look for pro-active measures to help advance the unfinished business between Council Sessions. This might involve additional issues to be addressed in consultations, or more meetings for current facilitations. Fundamentally, it means a greater commitment from all of us toward achieving progress, supporting the dedicated work of the facilitators, and actually resolving the contentious issues.

This week we are working on agreement on a number of destruction-related documents, including several facility agreements and verification plans. The United States has submitted revisions to our Newport documents; we hope these documents will be approved at this session. We also hope for approval of the changes to the previously-approved documents for the Pine Bluff binary destruction facility, whose operations were completed last year. We further hope to see agreement this week on other destruction documents that have been under consideration by the Council, and if, by chance, these cannot be concluded this week, we are confident that they will all be ready for approval at the next Executive Council in October. But we urge if at all possible that they be approved at this Council. The explanations provided by the Director-General in his statements to the Council have been important in shaping our thinking in this regard.

Our view continues to be that to achieve complete destruction of chemical weapons under Article IV of the Chemical Weapons Convention:

- chemical agents must be destroyed or neutralised;
- any resulting scheduled chemicals must likewise be destroyed;
- munitions must be rendered unsuitable for further use; and
- these actions must be verified by the Technical Secretariat.

Based on the documents under consideration, and the clarifications provided by the Director-General, we expect that all these steps will be taken at all the Chemical Weapons Destruction Facilities for which this Council is considering verification plans or facility agreements.

As we reported during Monday's session of the destruction informals, the United States has now destroyed 53.7% of its stockpile. We take great pride in

this achievement as we continue to destroy the rest of the stockpile as quickly and safely as possible.

We welcome the invitation from the Russian Federation to representatives of the Executive Council to visit their destruction facility at Shchuch'ye in September. The United States is pleased to be sending a representative on this visit, as the Russian government did on last year's visit to our facility in Anniston, Alabama. This series of visits is an important contribution toward confidence building and demonstrating the commitment of the possessor States to the complete destruction of our stockpiles.

One of the lingering industry issues that we should resolve this week is that of transfer discrepancies. We very much appreciate the work of the facilitation led by Ms Kiwako Tanaka of Japan and Ms Rebekka Wullimann of Switzerland and earnestly hope and strongly urge us all to allow it to reach a successful conclusion with this Council Session. We also appreciate Ambassador Dani's work with the Technical Secretariat to revitalise the work of the Industry Cluster, particularly in light of the recommendations of the Second Review Conference.

Yesterday, we participated in the overview presentation of the new Draft Programme and Budget for 2009. We are pleased that the Technical Secretariat has been able to produce a zero nominal growth budget for yet another year, without cuts in any major programmes, and allowing for an increase in inspections. We look forward to a full and reasoned discussion of the budget and programme planning, especially of those areas where there may be widely disparate views. We hope, once again, to be able to come to consensus on the budget at our next Executive Council meeting in October, to replicate the success we began in last year's budget consultations. I am very pleased that our able colleague, Mr Martin Strub of Switzerland, has agreed to facilitate the budget discussions this year. He brings broad expertise to this important task and we wish him every success.

There remains a long list of annual reports to consider on our agenda this week. We believe the Council should clear as many of these reports as possible, discussing issues where necessary, and not simply deferring them by default to the next session. And if action is not taken or a request to defer is made, we are all entitled to the reason being stated with specificity, and States Parties should insist on that specificity.

For Article XI, we appreciate the ongoing facilitation ably led by Mr Li Hong of China and look forward to renewed discussions to build consensus around achievable and practical improvement of our international assistance programs. For Article X, we recognise the fine work of Ms Jitka Brodská of the Czech Republic and welcome her successor, Mr Victor Smirnovskiy of the Russian Federation, as the new facilitator. We are also pleased that Mr Said Moussi of Algeria has volunteered to lead the facilitation on Article VII, and that Mr Lee Litman of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has agreed to facilitate discussions on universality. These are critically important roles and we welcome all of these talented delegates and wish them successful and productive deliberations.

For the week ahead, as always, I pledge my personal commitment and that of my delegation to work closely with you, Chairperson Tomova, and the other members of the Council to make this a productive and successful session.

Thank you, Madame Chairperson. I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Fifty-Third Session of the Executive Council.

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