

Intervention by Ambassador James Lambert to the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

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Speech

March 4, 2014 - The Hague, Netherlands

Check Against Delivery

I would first like to thank the Director-General [Ahmet Üzümcü, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)] for his opening statement, as well as Ms. Kaag [Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons program] for her welcome update. I would also be remiss in not recognizing the tremendous work and effort that members of the OPCW and the UN have done as part of the joint mission. We recognize the unique and challenging circumstances that all team members face as they carry out this important work.

Since the 74th session of the Executive Council [of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons] last fall, we have seen the OPCW receive the Nobel Peace Prize. And the memory of that occasion serves to inspire us when we look at the daunting workload that the institution must now address.

Let us not mince words: Syria has failed to meet key deadlines that the government itself agreed to for the destruction of chemical weapons. Canada recognizes that Syria has submitted a transportation plan—which should already be under way—that would see all chemicals removed from Syria by the end of April [2014]. We also note that again, conveniently, prior to an Executive Council meeting, Syria has proceeded with further shipments of chemicals. However, the statement of final goals cannot be seen as a substitute for action, nor can these episodic shipments ward off concerns that Syria is not fully committed. Canada's patience is wearing thin.

In order to meet the June 30 deadline, which was agreed to by the Syrian authorities, substantial movements must be significantly accelerated. Although some benchmarks have been met, and some progress has been made, we expect more. The December 31, 2013, deadline for removal is long past, and we are barely 7 percent toward the goal of removing Priority 1 chemicals. The February 5, 2014, deadline for the removal of remaining chemicals has passed unmet. The March 1, 2014, deadline for destruction of isopropanol has also passed and, at 93-percent completion, remains incomplete. The latest Syrian plan to remove chemicals through Latakia is far slower than it need be. We urge Syria to take the best professional advice given by the [OPCW] operational planning group to improve that plan and accelerate its schedule for removal. The June 30, 2014, deadline is imminent, and this plan leaves insufficient time for the accomplishment of our agreed-upon goal. This is not a new deadline or a movable one. Syrian plans cannot put in peril a goal that we know remains achievable as it was agreed on by all of us here on the Executive Council and in New York by the Security Council on September 27, 2013.

The international community has invested significant financial and in-kind contributions to help Syria complete this important endeavour. Canada has pledged \$10 million to the OPCW's destruction trust fund, as well as an additional \$5 million to be provided to the U.S. Department of Defence to support the destruction of priority chemicals on board MV *Cape Ray*. For Syria to keep ships waiting, in what is an impressive naval fleet that states parties have organized to see this mission through, produces increased and unexpected costs. Syria should not squander this generous support. It must deliver the chemical agents lest the money, like the patience, runs out. Syria needs to carry out uninterrupted, substantial and sufficiently accelerated shipments of chemicals—particularly Priority 1 chemicals—to Latakia for removal from its territory.

I would also like to draw attention to the issue of Syria's chemical weapons production facilities. To comply with its obligations, Syria must physically destroy these facilities, not merely inactivate them. The deadline for their destruction was set by this assembly as March 15. Canada expects Syria to live up to this obligation. There is much Syria can and must do in the immediate future to move the destruction process forward. For that reason, we look forward to approving a decision on Syria's destruction plan in line with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We very much appreciate the monthly reports of the Director-General and would urge more frequent reports on the progress of the Joint Mission and all parties, which could be used as a basis for more informed exchanges at our weekly briefings on the Joint Mission's activities. As members of the Executive Council, we pledge to continue monitoring closely the compliance of Syria with our previously agreed decisions, with UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and with the United States-Russia framework agreement, which sets the basis for everything we have done since September 2013.

While the removal and destruction of chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities remains the most important task for this organization in the near future, it is important not to lose sight of the day-to-day business of the OPCW. Industry

verification and resolution of outstanding industry issues remain works-in-progress for the [Executive] Council and are essential to the organization's pursuit of non-proliferation.

The release of the 2013 version of the *Declarations Handbook*, which provides guidance to national authorities in preparing declarations, is a major accomplishment for which the Technical Secretariat deserves to be congratulated. Equally important is the release of EDNA 3.0 [the Electronic Declaration Tool for National Authorities, version three], which includes a Schedule 1 module that is being used by an increasing number of national authorities in processing their declarations. This year, Canada has filled its Schedule 1 submission using the new module, and we were pleased by how well this new tool works.

On the issue of the Secure Information Exchange, we hope it will soon be finalized to allow for secure electronic transmission of declarations and other documents, which would finally move us away from the current antiquated system and reduce delays in submissions of declarations.

We are pleased to see that under the able facilitation of Ambassador Mikulak [Robert Mikulak, U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons], good progress is being made in discussing industry issues of practical interest to many member states. One issue that we consider bringing to the attention of the industry cluster is the question of the meanings of the terms "research," "medical" or "pharmaceutical" purposes of production, consumption and transfer in the context of Part VI of the *Verification Annex*. There is a lack of clarity which can lead to an uneven application of the Convention. We will be asking the Technical Secretariat to prepare a paper that would provide background analysis of the practice since entry into force.

We hope for fruitful discussions at this meeting of the Executive Council and look forward to positive decisions that will assist in work moving forward.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Executive Council.

Thank you.

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