



**EIGHTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES
PARTIES TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

Declaration by the Head of the Delegation of Italy

Ambassador Mario Brando Pensa

On behalf of the European Union

The Hague, October 20, 2003

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam Chairperson

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Acceding Countries Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the Associated Countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey together with Iceland and Norway align themselves with this statement.
2. Allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the Conference of States Parties. I am confident that you will guide us through the Conference work in an excellent way. I wish to assure you our full support and cooperation in the discharge of your important responsibilities.

Madam Chairperson

3. Let me first mention the Declaration on non Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction adopted by the EU Heads of State and Government at the Thessaloniki European Council on 20 June 2003 which stresses that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a growing threat to international peace and security. To counter this threat the European Council decided that the collective EU effort would focus, *inter alia*, on universalizing the key disarmament and non-proliferation treaties, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention and strengthening them, and would pay particular attention to the need to reinforce compliance with the multilateral treaty regimes.

The European Union approach emphasizes the role of verification, in particular of the challenge inspection mechanism, as a means of deterring non-compliance with the Convention and increasing transparency, confidence and international security.

Madam Chairperson

4. The European Union and its member States believe that the Organization's current work to develop action plans to promote universal adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention and ensure the full and effective implementation of its provisions is central to our objective of strengthening the CWC.

5. After Thessaloniki, the EU is seeking agreement on a common position on the universalisation and reinforcement of multilateral agreements in the field of non proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and means of delivery.

Building on past efforts, the EU and its member States will reinforce their diplomatic engagement to encourage all States not Parties to accede to or ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention without delay. Further work is required, in particular, in those regions that have the largest number of non Member States, including States whose non-adherence is a cause for serious concern.

We welcome the progress made by the OPCW in the development of an action plan. Ideally this plan should be adopted by the time of this Conference. The objective should be to achieve universal adherence, without exceptions and without delays. We urge the Executive Council to adopt the decision and we encourage all parties concerned to implement it promptly and to sustain the effort until the objective has been achieved.

Madam Chairperson

6. The Chemical Weapons Convention is a unique disarmament and non-proliferation instrument whose integrity and strict application must be fully guaranteed. Effective national implementation is essential for the effective operation of the Convention.

The EU welcomes the Executive Council's recommendation on the plan of action for the implementation by all States Parties of their Article VII obligations and looks forward to agreeing the recommendation at this Conference.

The EU welcomes the commitment of States Parties to establish a series of steps, and target dates for them, leading to the enactment of necessary legislation, including penal legislation, and/or administrative measures to fulfil their obligations no later than the 10th Session of the Conference.

We also welcome the agreement to review the situation regarding the national implementation of the Convention at our 10th Session and to consider and decide on any necessary measures, if appropriate, to ensure compliance by all States Parties.

The European Union and its Member States will monitor the implementation of the action plan closely and Member States stand ready to provide advice and assistance to States Parties in the fulfilment of their obligations.

Madam Chairperson,

7. The European Union's common approach to countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction underlines the central importance of the challenge inspection mechanism. In our view there is a need to raise delegations' awareness of the procedural issues surrounding challenge inspections and to ensure that the Technical Secretariat is well prepared to mount a challenge inspection. The European Union is ready to consider proposals to improve the OPCW's preparedness to deal with challenge inspections.

Madam Chairperson,

8. Timely destruction of Chemical Weapons remains the major objective. The EU therefore deeply regrets that delays have arisen and urges possessor States Parties to make every effort to meet the destruction deadlines and to fulfil their obligations under the Convention.

9. We are aware of the difficulties that some possessor States Parties are facing in meeting their obligations. We expect them to work closely with the Organization and all Member States on their requests for extension of those deadlines, in such a way not to harm neither the objectives of the Convention nor the disarmament process. We reaffirm the importance of close monitoring of the possessor States Parties' progress towards meeting any revised deadlines.

Madam Chairperson

10. The regime of verification under Article VI of the Convention constitutes an important contribution towards transparency, confidence building and non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. In that context the EU believes that an early solution of outstanding unresolved issues such as the selection procedures for DOC/PSF inspections, the declaration threshold for low concentrations of schedule 2A and 2A*, and the understanding on declarations of productions of chemicals in captive use would contribute to the strengthening of the verification regime in the chemical industry.

In addition, the EU recalls that the Review Conference stressed the importance of an early resolution of a number of long-standing issues and guidelines, in particular those related to schedule 1; the EU believes that a resolution of these issues is important for the article VI verification regime.

11. The EU attaches, inter alia, great importance to the transfer provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and in that context calls upon the States Parties who have not yet done so to fully implement their obligations under the Convention relating to the transfer of chemicals. In particular the EU recalls the obligation of States Parties to require from a non-State Party that receives schedule 3 chemicals a governmental end-use certificate.

The EU also requests the Technical Secretariat to take steps to improve the methods by which it seeks to clarify discrepancies in imports and exports of scheduled chemicals. We also call upon States Parties to co-operate with the Technical Secretariat in its efforts to clarify discrepancies to the extent possible, in particular those regarding transfers of chemicals and amounts of chemicals that pose a high risk to the object and purpose to the Convention.

Madam Chairperson,

12. To implement its action plan established last June, the EU has decided to focus its efforts on a number of measures, which include enhancing the EU's political and financial support for agencies in charge of verification.

The European Union through its Member States is the leading contributor to the budget of the OPCW. We therefore attach the greatest importance to cost-effectiveness in the OPCW. We hope that a compromise on the draft budget for 2004, based on that principle, can be reached at an early stage in our discussions this week.

13. With regard to payments of verification activities under Article IV and V of the Convention, the EU expresses its concern about the payment performance of possessor States. Despite the measures agreed upon at the last Conference of States Parties the situation remains unsatisfactory. The EU calls upon the relevant States Parties to fulfil their payment obligation in a timely fashion. The EU would not accept a delay which potentially harms the full delivery of OPCW programs.

14. Finally, the EU is willing to examine favorably any proposal, by the Director General to use, to the extent necessary, the cash surplus of 2001 to finance additional turnover in 2003 as a consequence of the relevant decision of the Conference of States Parties at its 2nd special session.

Madam Chairperson,

15. The European Union is committed to strengthening the OPCW and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We are glad to see that the agenda of this session builds upon the successful outcome of the first Review Conference of the CWC and is focussed firmly on subjects relevant to this objective, such as promoting universal adherence to the Convention and ensuring its full and effective implementation, including the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles.

As we discuss some difficult issues, it is vital that we remain focussed on such subjects, look forward rather than backwards and keep the interests of the OPCW uppermost.

We give you our full support for a successful conclusion to this session.