

Statement by the Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union at the 9th Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (The Hague, 29 November to 3 December 2004)

1. I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The Candidate Countries Bulgaria, Croatia\*, Romania and Turkey, the EFTA country Iceland, and the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process Bosnia Herzegovina, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia align themselves with this statement.
2. Mr. Chairman, the EU warmly congratulates you on your election as the chairperson for this Conference during the next twelve months. It is a particular privilege to see a representative of one of the EU member states elected to this high office. I wish to assure you of our full support and co-operation in the discharge of your important responsibilities.

Mr Chairman,

3. At this point in time, almost 8 years after the entry into force of the Convention, it can be justifiably argued that the CWC has become a cornerstone in the international efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, and prevent the proliferation of such weapons. The total number of States Parties is still growing at a high rate, an accomplishment that underlines the important and broadly shared norm that the Convention establishes. Furthermore, progress has been made in the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles as well as in the destruction and conversion of former production facilities of CW.
4. Nevertheless, a number of important issues remain to be addressed by the States Parties to the Convention. Some are on the agenda of this Conference, others will require attention in the coming years. In many cases, the Review Conference has identified the issues that need to be addressed and the action that needs to be taken. Later in my

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\* Croatia continues to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process

statement, I would like to highlight a few of these issues, to which the EU attaches high importance.

5. First of all, however, I would like to reconfirm that the now twenty-five member states of the EU are proudly committed to the object and purpose of the CWC and to the OPCW. Only last week, for the first time in the history of the OPCW, the EU accepted to provide direct support to the organisation in addition to assistance provided by EU Member States. The EU finalised a Joint Action with the OPCW, that allows for financial support totalling EUR 1,841,000 to OPCW programmes in the area of universality, national implementation as well as international co-operation in the field of chemical activities. The Joint Action will become operational in 2005.
6. The EU supports and promotes the universal adherence to and the implementation of the objectives laid down in this Treaty. In strong support of this goal the EU has carried out demarches to most states not party to the CWC, and we welcome those states that have recently become a State Party to the CWC, including some of our near neighbours.

Mr. Chairman,

7. In our EU Strategy we have identified a number of concrete actions to promote and reinforce the multilateral disarmament and non proliferation regimes, such as the CWC. The EU is now in the course of implementing this strategy, by enhancing its support to verification regimes, by offering assistance to States Parties in implementing the CWC, and recently by launching an initiative to promote the challenge inspection mechanism of the CWC. I will come back to this initiative later.
8. The EU considers the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their means of delivery as a growing threat to international peace and security. In December 2003, EU Heads of Government adopted the European Union's Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. This document identifies the most pressing proliferation concerns for each type of Weapons of Mass Destruction, including chemical weapons and outlines a strategy for addressing these concerns. It also elaborates on the notion

that international terrorism is a strategic threat facing Europe and that the most frightening scenario is one in which terrorist groups acquire Weapons of Mass Destruction.

9. Taking into account the relevant UNSC resolutions, most notably UNSC resolution 1540, the EU believes that the OPCW can, in its own sphere of competence, make a useful contribution to the fight against international terrorism.
10. The CWC will play an important role in countering the threat of terrorists acquiring WMD, through full implementation of the Convention by States Parties and universal adherence to it. The EU will therefore continue to stress the importance of this treaty in its relations with third countries. The EU therefore welcomes the ongoing consultations on terrorism.

Mr. Chairman,

11. I now come to some particular issues on our agenda that the EU would like to highlight.
12. The EU urges all possessor states to be fully transparent on their destruction activities, both ongoing and planned. Therefore the EU attaches great importance to timely destruction of chemical weapons by the possessor states within the deadlines laid down in the Convention and in accordance with the Convention's requirements for irreversibility. This issue is of concern to all States Parties to the Convention, especially those which are supporting destruction of Chemical Weapons in other States Parties.
13. The European Union, both collectively and individually through its member states, has made available considerable financial and other resources for destruction activities in the Russian Federation. The EU stands ready to continue assisting the Russian Federation in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. The EU also encourages continued information exchange on the conduct of projects in the Russian Federation.
14. The EU welcomes Albania's decision to submit its initial declaration of chemical weapons and encourages its

presentation of a detailed plan for destruction and verification by March 2005. The EU is considering in a positive spirit a request that Albania has recently made for EU assistance to its destruction activities. Such assistance would be provided in co-ordination with other States Parties involved.

15. The European Union welcomed Libya's historic decision last year to give up its Weapons of Mass Destruction and its subsequent accession to the CWC. We hope that all other States not Party in the Mediterranean region and elsewhere will follow Libya's example by acceding to the Convention, thus achieving the universality of the CWC. The European Union also commends the work of the OPCW to verify the dismantlement of Libya's chemical weapons programme under CWC regulations.

16. In this context, the EU supports adoption of the technical change to the Convention, as recommended by the Executive Council. The EU supports Libya's proposal to convert its former chemical weapons production facility at Rabta to peaceful purposes. This initiative also has a laudable humanitarian objective.

17. The EU is concerned by the low rate of implementation of obligations under the Convention by a considerable number of States Parties. These obligations include national measures under Art. VII. Much still needs to be achieved before the fast approaching deadline to adopt national measures under article VII. At its next regular meeting, our Conference must consider and decide on appropriate measures to ensure compliance by all States Parties with article VII. Pending that decision, the EU and its Member States fully support the OPCW Action Plan on National Implementation by providing assistance to other States Parties in meeting their article VII obligations, and through the EU Joint Action for 2005.

Mr Chairman,

18. The EU believes that verification and in particular the mechanism of challenge inspections, is an essential means of deterring non-compliance with the convention and increasing transparency, confidence and international security.

19. In our view there is a need to raise delegation's awareness of the procedural and practical issues surrounding challenge inspections and to ensure that the Technical Secretariat is well prepared to mount a challenge inspection, if so requested. Therefore, the EU recently took the initiative to act upon the mandate given by the First Review Conference and, following up on an EU seminar organised by Austria, proposed to promote operational preparedness for a Challenge Inspection. Open ended consultations are scheduled to start shortly.

20. Assistance and protection against chemical weapons has assumed added importance in the face of the terrorist threat. The EU therefore welcomes the proposed format for the provision of information on national protective programmes to the OPCW, and looks forward to its adoption by the Conference.

21. In case of use of chemical weapons, an effective and timely response is crucial. Therefore the EU attaches great importance to exercises on assistance and protection. The concepts and the experience gained up to now should be consolidated and improved. Moreover the availability of declared means of assistance of States Parties should be tested.

Mr. Chairman,

22. The EU Member States collectively contribute well over one third of the OPCW budget in terms of assessed contributions. In addition, many EU Member States make voluntary contributions to the organisation and to destruction activities in some possessor states. As one of the largest contributors to the OPCW, the EU therefore attaches great importance to sound, cost efficient budgeting in a Results-Based format. Key assumptions on which budget estimates are based need to be realistic and transparent. Thus, we believe it is essential for the OPCW to develop well-founded, and transparent methodologies for calculating staff salaries, the vacancy factor and the impact of inflation and exchange rates on costs. This will enhance the quality of future budgets and facilitate their adoption.

Mr. Chairman,

23. Even with an approved budget, this organisation will not be able to fully implement its programme of work if assessed contributions are not paid in a timely manner by all States Parties and the cost of verification under articles IV and V of the Convention is not reimbursed within the agreed timelines. The EU is concerned by reports that a significant number of States Parties are still not paying their assessed contributions in a timely fashion, and that reimbursement by possessor states of the cost of verification is often delayed. The EU appeals to all the States Parties concerned to improve their rate of payment in order to ensure the uninterrupted operations of all approved programmes. In accordance with OPCW rules, States Parties risk losing their voting rights if they do not pay their contributions for two years.

Mr. Chairman,

24. The EU is committed to work with you, and all other States Parties to further strengthen the Convention and the norm established by it. May I once again express the EU's confidence in your able leadership and pledge our support to the successful completion of our work this week.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.