

# CWC Review Conference Report

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## The Third Day: General debate and the Open Forum

The Second five-yearly Review Conference for the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) continued on Wednesday. The morning saw the completed the 'general debate', with a number of further states parties making open statements. The afternoon was taken up with the 'Open Forum' – a chance for representatives from NGOs and industry to present their perspectives to delegations.

### **Closing of the General Debate**

A further 15 statements were made in the final session of the general debate. Statements were given by India, Columbia, Nigeria, Albania, Libya, Thailand, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Zambia, Uganda, Belarus, Morocco, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Argentina. India noted that 97 per cent of its chemical weapons stockpile had now been destroyed. Albania thanked those who had assisted it in destroying its entire, albeit small, stockpile. The statement of the Hong Kong SAR described the operation of the CWC within the unique 'one country, two systems' arrangements in China.

A total of fifty plenary statements were given during the general debate, although it should be noted that some states took the floor twice – for example, South Africa spoke on behalf of the African group and later made a national statement. More of the statements have been added to the OPCW website <<<http://www.opcw.org/rc2/>>>.

At the conclusion of the general debate, there seems to be a positive atmosphere in the Review Conference. However, a note of caution has to be raised here. There can be a overly positive sense at this stage of such a meeting. The opening statements tend to raise issues rather than suggest precisely what kind of response should be given to them. Issues normally relate to areas where there are challenges or potential disagreements, and so it can take time for the processes of persuasion and bargaining to reach the consensus needed to respond to them in the final declaration.

Apart from the formal closing session, all of the meetings of Review Conference are now scheduled to be held behind closed doors.

### **NGO Open Forum**

There was no meeting of the Review Conference during the afternoon as the sitting was suspended to allow the Open Forum to take place. The Forum took place in the Ieper Room of the OPCW building which is next door to the World Forum Conference Centre where the Review Conference is being held. The meeting was well attended and the proceedings could also be viewed from the Delegates Lounge via video screens.

OPCW Director-General, Rogelio Pfrirer, opened the Forum, with a very brief address. Ambassador Lyn Parker (UK), Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group for the preparation of the Second Review Conference, spoke on the work of the group, comparing it to the preparations for a mountaineering expedition – a successful expedition spends much time in getting ready for the challenges ahead. The working group got to base camp, the Review Conference must now climb the mountain. Amb. Parker seemed confident that the expedition is well prepared.

The activities of the Forum were carried out along three themes. The first was 'Creating a more secure world through the Chemical Weapons Convention' under which presentations were given on: 'Prospects for CWC Universality' by Daniel Feakes (Harvard Sussex Program), 'Chemical Weapons Destruction: Progress and Challenges' by Paul Walker (Global Green USA) 'CWC and industry: 10 Years On and Beyond' by Neil Harvey (International Council of Chemical Associations), 'National Implementation' by Angela Woodward (VERTIC), and 'Assistance and Protection: One of the Main Pillars of the Chemical Weapons Convention' by Jiri Matoušek (Masaryk University & International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility).

The second theme was 'Peaceful chemistry' which included presentations on: 'Outreach and Codes of Conduct' Alastair Hay, (University of Leeds & IUPAC) and 'Economic and Technological Development' by Abdouraman Bary (Burkina Faso).

The final theme was 'The impact of science and technology on the CWC verification regime' which included: 'Toxic Chemicals and Law Enforcement' by Mark Wheelis (Scientists Working Group on Biological and Chemical Weapons, Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation) and 'Other Chemical Production Facilities Inspections' by Robert Mathews (Faculty of Law, University of Melbourne).

The Forum was chaired by Ralf Trapp and available presentations will be put on the NGO resources website <<<http://cwc2008.org>>> in due course.

#### *NGO lunch*

The Director-General hosted a lunch for representatives of NGOs and the chemical industry, preceding the Open Forum. Other senior OPCW officials were also present.

#### *NGO interaction with the Review Conference*

There has been much discussion within and between NGOs about what opportunities there are for interaction with delegates and officials during the Review Conference. Comparisons are inevitably drawn with the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and its meetings in Geneva. Practice in the BWC context has evolved considerably in recent years and the 2007 meetings included new NGO 'roundtable' innovations. At the BWC meetings, whether the Review Conference or the annual Meetings of Experts/States Parties, there is a chance for NGOs to address the delegates in the same meeting room that the plenary sessions take place in, and this has significance for some NGOs.

The Open Forum was a chance for NGOs to address delegates in the same style as happens at the NGO side events in Geneva. Indeed, the Open Forum had more attendees than is usually possible in the Geneva lunchtime meetings. The Director-General's lunch provided a useful opportunity for interaction of a sort that is available in Geneva through the NGO dinners with the Chairman/President; however, there is always the challenge that this sort of interaction is most productive when there is a relatively small number of participants.

Notwithstanding all of the above, there is still much that could be done to make the CWC/OPCW more 'NGO-friendly'.

#### **Japanese side event**

During lunchtime, the Japanese delegation hosted a side event which included a presentation entitled 'Japanese ACW in China - Overview and Recent Progress' by Masanori Nishi, Director-General, Abandoned Chemical Weapons Office, Japanese Cabinet Office.

*This is the fourth report from the Second Review Conference for the Chemical Weapons Convention which is being held from 7 to 18 April 2008 in The Hague. These reports are designed to help people who are not in The Hague to follow the proceedings and are prepared by Richard Guthrie with financial support from the Ploughshares Fund <<<http://www.ploughshares.org>>>.*

*Copies of these reports (and details of how to subscribe to them by e-mail) are available on the CBW Events website at <<<http://www.cbw-events.org.uk/cwc-rep.html>>> and via the NGO resources page at <<<http://cwc2008.org>>>. Richard Guthrie can be contacted during the Review Conference on +31 620 901 205 or <<[richard@cbw-events.org.uk](mailto:richard@cbw-events.org.uk)>>.*