



PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
333 EAST 38TH STREET 9TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10016
Tel: (212) 213-5583 Fax: (212) 692-2498
E-mail: pmun@southafrica-newyork.net

**STATEMENT
BY**

**MS. SIMBONGILE MANCOTYWA-KUMSHA
COUNSELLOR, SOUTH AFRICAN MISSION IN GENEVA**

**DURING THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON OTHER
WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**

**UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK
18 OCTOBER 2016**

Check against delivery

**STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE THEMATIC DEBATE ON
OTHER WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**

18 October 2016

Chairperson,

Given the devastating humanitarian consequences associated with the use of weapons of mass destruction, no cause could ever justify the use of such weapons by any actor under any circumstances. For my delegation, the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction remains one of our key priorities. This includes achieving the universality and full and non-discriminatory implementation of all the provisions of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), as well as transparent, irreversible and verifiable progress towards nuclear disarmament.

South Africa recognizes the role of the CWC in enhancing regional and international peace and security as set out in the Convention. In this regard, we welcome the significant progress achieved in the destruction of chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) across the globe. 93% of more than 70 000 metric tonnes of deadly chemical warfare agents have been destroyed. South Africa commends the work of the international community in supporting the OPCW to achieve a world free of chemical weapons. Notwithstanding the progress made, much work still remains. Many old and abandoned chemical weapons continue to present hazards for people and the environment, as well as technical challenges for their elimination. We are further concerned that parallel to the stated achievements, new and emerging security challenges threaten to undermine the disarmament gains that the OPCW has made. We are especially concerned by reports of alleged use of chemical weapons, including by non-state actors.

We welcome the progress made by major possessor States Parties to destroy their remaining chemical weapons (CW) stockpiles, abandoned chemical

weapons and old chemical weapons. In the case of chemical weapons stockpiles we take note that all possessor States Parties including the Russian Federation and the USA are on track to meet the planned completion ~~dates to destroy their remaining CW stockpiles. We also welcome the~~ announcement by the OPCW regarding the removal of precursor chemicals from Libya. We furthermore welcome the progress made towards the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme, including the destruction of its chemical weapons and the significant progress made towards the destruction of its chemical weapons production facilities in fulfillment of its obligations under the Convention and the relevant Executive Council decisions. We note with concern the conclusions of the latest report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and look forward to receiving its next report. We expect that the JIM will conduct its mission in a professional, objective and impartial manner.

Whilst positively disposed to the current debate on the future priorities and role of the OPCW beyond 2025, the role of non-state actors in relation to the CWC, the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG - T), as well as discussions around the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons, we believe that in the short term, the objectives and primary focus of the OPCW must remain on complete disarmament and the elimination of all declared chemical weapons under strict and effective international control in accordance with the Convention. In this context, we welcome the establishment of an Open-Ended Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW (OEWG-FP) as an informal mechanism for receiving, discussing, prioritizing, elaborating, and integrating ideas and proposals from States Parties and the Secretariat on the future priorities of the OPCW on any aspect of the Convention or developments relevant to it. South Africa is honoured to be part of the team tasked with the responsibility to develop methods and a programme of work, in consultation with State Parties.

Chairperson,

South Africa remains committed to strengthening the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) and its implementation, to ensure that our common goal of preventing the threat posed by biological weapons is achieved. ~~My delegation remains concerned about the threat posed by~~ naturally occurring organisms, as well as by those that could be deliberately manufactured and manipulated for use as weapons of mass destruction.

Besides the obvious security benefits of the BWC, the Convention also contains important co-operation and assistance provisions that could strengthen the international community's ability to combat the debilitating impact of disease on the health of people and on the socio-economic development of countries. South Africa believes that greater international coordination and assistance is required to alleviate the burden of threat posed by biological weapons. Initiatives such as the exchange in biological sciences and technology, the promotion of capacity building in the fields of disease surveillance, detection and diagnosis, as well as the containment of infectious diseases, among many others, could be further explored.

With the upcoming 2016 Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), South Africa will work constructively towards an outcome that would strengthen the Convention and its balanced implementation, including through an enhanced intersessional process and an appropriately resourced Implementation Support Unit. In this regard, South Africa actively contributed to the discussions on Article VII by its submission of a Working Paper on procedures for assistance under this Article, which also suggested possible guidelines for requesting assistance. In addition, South Africa also submitted working papers on 'The future planning of the Implementation Support Unit' and 'The Functional Structures for the BTWC' to contribute to a substantive outcome to the Review Conference.

Chairperson,

In conclusion, the universalisation of the BWC and the CWC is crucial for the effective eradication of all biological and chemical weapons. We therefore call

upon those countries not yet party to these Conventions to join without further delay.

I thank you.