

**PIR CENTER
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons
and Materials of Mass Destruction
Moscow, April 23-24, 2004**

**DRAFT STATEMENT BY
Arend J. Meerburg,
The Netherlands**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to speak at this International Conference on the G8 Global Partnership. I assume that I have been asked to speak here since I am regularly chairing informal donor-coordination meetings on chemical weapons destruction in the Russian Federation. These meetings take place in The Hague in our Foreign Ministry, in close cooperation with the Russian Munitions Agency.

For quite some time, thus long before the G8 Global Partnership was born about two years ago, a challenging task presented itself to the world community. At the end of the eighties and in the early nineties, the Convention prohibiting all chemical weapons was negotiated and signed. The Convention entered into force in 1997. An essential element of that international treaty is, of course, the destruction of all existing chemical weapons in the world, and a time line was set for that total destruction: 10 years after entry into force (meaning 2007), or at most 15 years if absolutely necessary (i.e. 2012).

Two States possess huge quantities of these weapons, the United States and the Russian Federation, and a few other parties to the CW Convention have smaller amounts. Not all countries, to my regret, have ratified the Convention, thus there maybe chemical weapons in the world which we do not know about. The USA started quite some time ago to build destruction facilities near its CW storage places, even before the Convention entered into force. Nevertheless, the US has difficulty now in making the 10 years deadline. The total destruction costs for the US are about 30 billion dollars, a staggering amount of money indeed.

Russia had a much slower start to destroy this legacy from the Soviet-Union, these 40.000 tons of chemical weapons, one reason being a lack of money but probably also underestimating the task before it. It was clear when Russia signed and ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention that it needed considerable financial, and also some technical, assistance to get the job done. It also took a number of years for Russia to design an overall destruction scheme, to get the different ministries, agencies and local authorities involved, settle matters with potential donor countries etc.. In particular the last years things are moving in the right direction, the RMA being fully involved. In this connection, we would like to hear more during this Conference about the new set-up of the different Ministries and Agencies in Russia, and what kind of consequences this may have for our cooperation in the future in the field of CW-destruction.

Let me make one thing clear. The Government of the Russian Federation is fully responsible for the destruction of its CW, and in my view it takes that responsibility. The last years considerable amounts of money have been spent by Russia on the destruction programme, including on building the social infrastructure (housing for the workers, medical facilities, schools). Foreign donors are not inclined to spent money on those, still essential, matters. Not sexy, apparantly. Donors assist, however, in the building of the destruction facility itself, or of the technical infrastructure needed for the operation of the facility, such as the provision of electricity, gas- and water-pipes, railroads etc.. Some of these projects may be also of substantial value to the local population.

So, what's happening. The first mustard gas and lewisite destruction facility, in Gorny, started its activities last year. The building of a larger plant to destroy lewisite in Kambarka is progressing. Germany is the main foreign donor of these two plants, but others - like the European Union, Switzerland and The Netherlands - are also involved.

A huge operation takes place in Shchuch'ye. The construction has started of a facility to destroy nerve agents, the most dangerous chemical weapons. The United States has funded the design of the facility and is now releasing, after long delays, resources for the construction which is in full swing. Russia started also the building of a second destruction line at the same site. We talk here about hundreds of millions of dollars. First lesson learned, however: in the American system of funding with complex decision making by Congress and Presidential waivers, you never know for sure whether you will have the money for next year or not.

The US funds the destruction facility itself, other donors assist in building the technical infrastructure, like the UK, Italy, Canada, Norway and others. It seems that the UK and Canada will stay involved on a substantial scale at this site, but more sponsors are urgently needed for small and large projects.

At four other places in Russia, huge stocks of nerve agents are present. Recent plans are to build at three of those four places detoxification facilities. The remaining reaction masses, which are still toxic but cannot be used directly as chemical weapons, will then probably go to the Shchuch'ye facility for final destruction. The

nerve agent munitions in the fourth place, Kizner, would be transported to Shchuch'ye as they are and be destroyed there. These are all difficult and expensive tasks and billions are needed. At one of the places, Pochev, Italy will be heavily involved.

Where is the money coming from? I underline here that, without the boost of the G8 Global Partnership, the situation would have looked extremely bleak now. Substantial funding in the hundreds of millions range only came from the USA, be it with long delays. Germany, Italy and the UK were donors in the tens of millions range. Then there were the donors in the millions range: Canada, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Norway, the European Union and the NGO NTI, and some smaller ones: Sweden, Poland, the Czech Republic. Altogether not enough to build Kambarka and Shchuch'ye, and certainly not enough to build the next three facilities and the transport-system from Kizner. Do not forget: all the chemical weapons have to be destroyed in 2012.

With the G8 Global Partnership, where the G8 committed themselves at the highest political level, the outlook is certainly better. While US funding stays at its high level and is now bearing fruit, the group of donor countries in the hundreds of millions range is extended with Germany, Italy, the UK, Canada and I assume France, all G8 members. The EU has pledged to join these ranks if allowed under the future medium-term budget which is now being scrutinized within the pretty complex EU decision making process. It is too early to predict the outcome of that game, EU members being weary about substantial increases in the European budget.

Even with all these positive developments, it may be clear that the funding for the complete CW-destruction programme is certainly not ensured as yet. In my personal opinion, the already considerable Russian resources for this programme need to be increased substantially in the coming years. And, if it sounds reasonable that industrial non G8-countries would take their share, they should do much more. We are not talking about peanuts: if the industrial non G8-countries would do as much as the G8, they should provide a billion or so for the Global Partnership. (As far as I know, only Norway is doing its share, mainly in the important nuclear field.) Some serious lobbying to the highest levels is asked for, in my humble opinion.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are different ways for donors to be involved in CW destruction. Together with Russian experts and companies, one could be deeply involved in a project utilizing consultants from the donor country, their companies, and maybe their equipment and technology. At the other extreme, a smaller donor could give the money to the Russian authorities to acquire the – mainly Russian - equipment needed, of course with the necessary safeguards. A simple structure, and probably the best value for money: nearly no overhead costs for expensive expats while utilizing often cheaper Russian technology and equipment already certified under Russian law, and also allowing the Russian authorities to take full responsibility. A smaller donor may also channel its money through another donor with a larger project to avoid having to negotiate about its own conditions, set-up its own overhead-system etc.. In short, there are many ways to be a donor, but my general advice is: keep it simple, not only for yourself but also for the responsible Russian authorities which have to cope with many different demands from the various donors.

These are the kinds of things which we discuss during our informal donor coordination meetings. Maybe not very much real coordination is taking place, but the forum is of importance to exchange information and views. From the Russian side, we always get the latest information on the building and operation of the various destruction facilities. We were also recently informed about the way decisions are taken by the Russian authorities on the destruction programme, including how the numerous Ministries, agencies and local authorities are involved.

During the present Conference, we hope to learn more about the way in which the views of the local population can be taken into account. In any country this is important, and we all know what can happen when authorities discard these views. Green Cross plays a positive role to get local people involved, and we certainly should weigh their advice how to work better in the field. A question is however: how deeply should donors be involved in discussions with the local population and authorities? I would like to hear your views on this matter.

I am looking forward to a constructive conference on the important issues before us.