

TESTIMONY OF KENNETH DAMIAN WARD
REPRESENTATIVE/AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE TO THE ORGANIZATION
FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS
UNITED STATES SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

October 28, 2015

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

It is an honor to appear before you today as President Barack Obama's nominee to be the United States Representative to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) with the rank of Ambassador. I greatly appreciate the trust and confidence that President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry have shown in nominating me for this position.

After decades of negotiation, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) was signed in 1993 and the Convention entered into force in 1997. Since then, the international organization charged with implementing the Convention – the OPCW – has established itself as an effective and respected international body. OPCW inspectors have overseen and verified the destruction of chemical weapons in Russia, the United States, Albania, Libya, Syria and other States Parties. Inspectors have conducted thousands of routine inspections in national military facilities and commercial enterprises around the world to ensure that States Parties are abiding by their CWC obligations. In the fall of 2013, these efforts towards achieving a world free of chemical weapons were acknowledged by the Nobel Committee and the OPCW was awarded the Peace Prize.

Despite the historic accomplishments of the Convention and the OPCW, chemical weapons continue to be a threat to international peace and security. The ongoing strife in Syria is a stark and tragic reminder that such weapons are not relics of World War One or the Cold War. On August 21, 2013, the Syrian government unleashed a barrage of rockets filled with the nerve agent sarin against an opposition-controlled suburb of Damascus killing an estimated 1,400 civilians -- many of them children. Three weeks later under international pressure Syria

joined the Chemical Weapons Convention. Of great concern, there remains compelling evidence that the Syria continues to use chemical weapons against its own people. The Fact-Finding Mission of the OPCW – an entity created to establish the facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in Syria – has concluded with a high degree of confidence that chlorine was used in April and May 2014 against opposition-controlled villages in northwest Syria. The Fact-Finding Mission is now investigating additional allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria. In early August, the UN Security Council established the Joint Investigative Mechanism for the purpose of identifying those individuals, entities, groups or governments responsible for these chemical weapons attacks.

Of additional concern, an OPCW technical team has raised a host of issues calling into question whether the Syria has declared all of its stocks of chemical weapons and associated munitions. The United States shares these concerns. We have assessed that Syria has not declared all the elements of its chemical weapons program and may continue to retain some of its stocks of traditional chemical agents and munitions.

In sum, Syria continue to violate the most fundamental obligations of the CWC against possession and use of chemical weapons. If confirmed by the Senate, I will make every effort to ensure that the people of Syria no longer face the threat of chemical weapons at the hands of their government.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My career in government spans over thirty years with twenty of those years dedicated to strengthening our security against the threat of chemical and biological weapons. Since the beginning of 2011, I have headed the State Department's Office of Chemical and Biological Weapons Affairs. In this capacity, I have been directly involved in the international initiative to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons program and have played a central role in efforts to verify the accuracy of Syria's CWC declaration and investigate allegations of CW use. Previously, during the 2004-2007 trilateral operation to dismantle Libya's WMD programs, I served as the deputy negotiator, working to achieve the removal or destruction of nuclear, missile, and chemical materials and equipment.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

The ongoing chemical weapons crisis in Syria—as well as the allegations of the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors in both Syria and Iraq—is a potent reminder of the essential role of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW in promoting international peace and security. In years to come, the world will continue to look to the OPCW as the repository of technical expertise on chemical weapons and eliminating the threat they pose. The effectiveness the Technical Secretariat has demonstrated in recent years has been founded on the efforts of a highly skilled and experienced cadre of inspectors. It is essential that the OPCW continue to command the expertise and resources it needs to perform this vital role. It will face many challenges in the years to come to achieve the promise of a world free of chemical weapons. We must achieve universal membership; we must counter the ongoing threat of chemical weapons terrorism; we must prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Indeed, we must ensure that the OPCW retains the political will to confront and surmount each of these challenges. If confirmed by the Senate, I will work to ensure that the OPCW achieves these goals and remains an effective force for promoting international peace, security, and a world free of the scourge of chemical weapons.

Thank you. I welcome the opportunity to answer any questions from the members of the Committee.