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CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION : STATEMENT BY
THE SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MR R F BOTHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIGNING OF
THE CONVENTION IN PARIS, 14 JANUARY 1993

South Africa takes pride today in becoming an original signatory to the Chemical Weapons
Conven- I
tion.

This is the first multilateral disarmament agreement with an effective and comprehensive
verification

mechanism that prohibits the production, acquisition, stockpiling, transfer or use of che
mical

weapons. It also requires the destruction of existing chemical weapons. The carefully dev
ised

verification measures, including challenge inspections and routine verifications in the c
hemical

industry, are as promising as they are unprecedented.

South Africa has already acceded to the NPT and has concluded a Safeguards Agreement with
the

International Atomic Energy Agency. We are also party to the Biological Weapons Conventio
n. In

addition South Africa is prepared to adhere to the Missile Technology Control Regime and,
with the

approval of other countries, to become a member. The world therefore knows that South Afr
ica fully

accepts its global and regional responsibilities and is committed to non- proliferation a
nd disarm-

ment. By signing the Chemical Weapons Convention we have now taken that commitment an
important step further.

The South African government will present draft legislation to Parliament on the Non-Prol
iferation

of Weapons of Mass Destruction. This is intended as enabling legislation to meet the obje
ctives of

the Convention.

We welcome the enthusiastic support which this Convention has received from our fellow Af
rican

countries. We see this as an important step in strengthening cooperation throughout our c
ontinent

and our region in freeing Africa from the threat of nuclear as well as chemical weapons.
Indeed, South

Africa will strongly support initiatives aimed at making Africa the first continent to be
declared free

of all weapons of mass destruction.

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At some point in the future, those who follow us may hopefully look back on today as a turning point: a when mankind finally began to strike a new balance between the requirements of national sovereignty on the one hand, and global responsibility on the other: when the nations of the world, the majority, joined hands and minds to end the nightmare of mass annihilation which we created. The wonders of technology also brought forth monsters to threaten our very existence on this planet, but today, we at last took a multilateral step to end and control a particularly heinous category of weapons of mass destruction.

Among God's creations, it seems, no species except our own, Homo Sapiens, has engaged as we have in the systematic extermination of members of our own species, for that is what war is, and what weapons are used for. For generation after generation we as a species have gone into battle and occupied ourselves with the wholesale killing of our own kind. Seldom has there been a dearth of funds for the manufacture of tools of war.

Is it too early to hope that we are on the threshold of a new chapter in human history? The historic significance of this multilateral event would be enhanced if it could lead to the channeling of funds and ingenuity into helping the lesser developed world to prosper, a matter which is receiving the serious attention of the South African Government in respect of the application of our own resources.

In Africa, tens of millions of our people face mass extermination through poverty, starvation and disease. We have a historic opportunity, therefore, to turn away from weapons of mass destruction, and focus our energies on creating weapons for mass survival and progress. In meeting this challenge South Africa will play its part in such a great and worthy challenge.

Issued by the Permanent Mission of South Africa to the United Nations.

New York

15 January 1993

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