

Putin Praises Russia's Destruction of Last Chemical Arms, Accuses U.S. of Failing to Fulfill Obligations



Moscow, September 28 (RHC)-- Russian President Vladimir Putin has praised his country's destruction of its last supplies of chemical weapons, accusing the U.S. of failing to fulfill its own obligations in this regard. Putin on Wednesday hailed the destruction of the chemical stockpile, which was carried out before the initial deadline, as "a historic event," stressing it was "a huge step towards making the modern world more balanced and safe."

"Russia strictly complies with its international obligations, including those related to non-proliferation and reductions of weapons of mass destruction," he said in televised remarks broadcast by the Rossiya 24 TV channel. Putin also criticized the United States for not following Russia's suit, saying Washington had put off doing so three times citing a lack of financial resources, which the Russian leader said "looked a little bit strange."

The U.S. "unfortunately is not carrying out its obligations when it comes to the timeframe of destroying chemical weapons; they pushed back the liquidation timeframe already three times," he said. Putin pointed to Russia's example in delivering on its promise to destroy its chemical arsenal should encourage other nations to do the same. "We expect the United States to carry out all of its obligations it has taken upon itself as part of international agreements just like other countries do," he added.

On Wednesday, the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) hailed as a "major milestone" Russia's destruction of its last toxic arms. "The completion of the verified destruction of Russia's chemical weapons program is a major milestone in the achievement of the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention," said OPCW Director General Ahmet Uzumcu. He also praised Russian officials for "their professionalism and dedication," adding that experts from the organization had "verified the destruction."

The OPCW said the last of the Russian arsenal was destroyed at the Kizner chemical weapons destruction facility in the Udmurt Republic. Six other destruction facilities had completed their work and were closed between 2005 and 2015.

Russia and the U.S. amassed huge stocks of chemical weapons during the Cold War. The two countries agreed to destroy their chemical arsenals by April 2012 after joining the Chemical Weapons Convention, which bans the production, development, possession, sharing or use of chemical weapons, in 1997. The two countries, however, said later they needed more time to destroy their chemical arsenals.

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