

COMMEMORATION CEREMONY TO MARK
THE DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR ALL
VICTIMS OF CHEMICAL WARFARE 2012
Speaking Notes for H.E. MR Paul Arkwright
Chairman of the Conference of States Parties
26 April 2012

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I declare open this commemoration ceremony devoted to the Day of Remembrance for all the victims of chemical weapons. We are gathered in memory of those who perished or suffered grievously on account of one of the most inhumane weapons ever produced: weapons that we are striving to eliminate – completely.

It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Chairperson of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, to welcome Mr Ed Kronenburg, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Mr Jozias van Aartsen, Mayor of The Hague who have joined us today.

We value their presence as a testimony to the continuous commitment of our host country and the municipality of The Hague towards promoting the goals enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention and helping fulfil the mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

I also extend a warm welcome to the high-level representatives of important international organisations which have their headquarters in The Hague.

On this important occasion I would like to draw your attention to a message issued yesterday by The UN Secretary General to mark this day of remembrance. His message said, and I quote

“The Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare is an occasion to mourn those who have suffered from these inhumane arms and to renew our

resolve to eradicate them from our world. When we remind the world of the agony inflicted by chemical weapons, we present the most compelling case for permanently outlawing them and establishing and verifying, through the Chemical Weapons Convention, a comprehensive and legally-binding ban.

“This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Today, with 188 States parties representing 98 per cent of the world’s population, the Convention is standing strong. I call on the eight States remaining outside the Convention to join at the earliest possible date. There is no excuse for delays in ridding our planet of these instruments of suffering and death.

“Through strong provisions, the Convention provides an effective international regime to verify the destruction of all chemical weapons stockpiles and to prevent their re-emergence. This will reduce the threat of chemical weapons terrorism and strengthen the work of the United Nations to prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction by terrorists.

“The extended deadline for States parties to complete the destruction of chemical weapons is 29 April. Almost three quarters of all declared stockpiles have been destroyed. I welcome efforts by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to ensure that all chemical weapons are destroyed as soon as possible. OPCW is also continuously monitoring the chemical industry in an effort to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. So far, the Organisation has conducted 2200 inspections in 82 countries.

“As we welcome the Convention’s achievements, we never let the memory of the victims fade. This Day is a time to remember them in the most meaningful way possible: by pledging to ensure that future generations never endure the scourge that these human beings suffered.”

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for marking this important day. I value this annual occasion to remember why we are committed to this Convention and to remind ourselves of what is at the heart of our work. Usually we gather in this room

to debate the issue of the day and seek agreements that often cover technical or procedural matters. This day-to-day work is necessary to implement the Convention. But we should never forget the reality of the past; the suffering of countless victims from different countries and different wars. Nor should we let slip from our sight our collective determination to ensure that there are no such victims in the future.

The Convention represents a noble ambition: a global ban of a whole category of weapons of mass destruction. This agreement was, and remains, a real achievement. It has brought nations together in pursuit of common aims for a more peaceful and secure world for all its citizens.

Thanks to the spirit of cooperation and consensus in which we work, the OPCW is widely recognised as a model for multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation. There are many challenges ahead of us. But I have no doubt that we will achieve success again – because we must not fail if we are to ensure that there are no more victims of chemical weapons.

But today, through our presence here, let us reaffirm our commitment to the aims of the Convention. Let us rededicate our work to the goal of a world free of chemical weapons, in memory of all their past victims.

- Thank you for your attention.
- Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is now my honour to invite the Director-General of the OPCW, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, to address us from the lectern.
- *(Statement by the Director-General)*
- I thank the Director-General for his important statement and I request him to convey our appreciation to the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their commitment and dedication to achieving the objectives of the Organisation.

- Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I now have the honour to invite Mr Ed Kronenburg, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to address us from the lectern.

- *(Statement by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs)*

- I thank Mr Kronenburg for his important statement. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the representatives of the authorities of our host country, the Netherlands, for their presence here today.

- Our Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I now have the honour to invite Mr Jozias van Aartsen, the Mayor of The Hague, to address us from the lectern.

- *(Statement by the Mayor)*

- Thank you, Mayor Van Aartsen, for your important statement. On behalf of all who are present, I thank the Municipality of The Hague for its continuous support for the OPCW.

- Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered to pay tribute to all victims of chemical weapons or chemical warfare. Words can fall short in giving full expression to the solemnity of the occasion. Music has no such failing. It is my pleasure to invite The Trio Dupere from the Conservatorium of The Hague to come forward to offer the musical tribute to all those victims who we remember today.

- *(Trio Dupere performs from the floor)*

- Thank you for this moving musical tribute. Once again, I thank all of you for your participation, especially, those who have shared their thoughts with us on this occasion. I wish this Organisation much continued success in its efforts to eradicate chemical weapons from the face of the earth. May there be no more victims, and no more suffering caused by such weapons.

- Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I now invite you all to proceed to the memorial site, where the commemorative ceremony will continue. This will be followed by the reception in the delegates lounge hosted by the Director-General.

Thank you.

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