



Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

The Hague, 15 November 2022

Statement by Mr Paul Huijts, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

This year, once again, with the COVID pandemic not yet at an end, we are unable to gather in person to pay our respects to the victims of chemical warfare. Nevertheless I am honoured to have this opportunity to share some thoughts with you on this Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare.

The destruction of the declared stockpiles of chemical weapons is expected to be completed soon. That is an achievement the Member States of the OPCW can and should be proud of. It is a clear sign that the Member States stand behind the principles and purpose of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the pledge they made when joining the Convention: to eradicate all chemical weapons from the planet.

At the same time, we can't be complacent and let our guard down. Four countries have not yet signed and/or ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention. Moreover, in recent years we have seen several incidents involving the use of chemical weapons, with numerous victims. New, extremely dangerous chemical weapons have emerged.

As these concerning developments make clear, the work of the OPCW is not done. On the contrary: despite the OPCW's many impressive achievements, new risks and threats continue to emerge every day and need to be addressed urgently. The new Centre for Chemistry and Technology, or ChemTechCentre, will greatly increase the ability of the Technical Secretariat to assist States Parties and monitor compliance with the Convention.

As States Parties to the OPCW we must continue to strengthen the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. It is our collective duty to ensure that chemical weapons are never used again, whether in combat or in attacks on individuals. On this day of remembrance, we commemorate the victims of chemical warfare and pay our respects to them. Their suffering should serve as a warning for all of humankind: that chemical weapons must be banished forever.