

Statement on behalf of the ABEO

Fifth Review Conference

Prof. Madga Bauta Soles, ABEO Chairperson 2023

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Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address the Fifth Review Conference on behalf of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO).

The 30th anniversary of the signing of the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons that we are commemorating this year, marks one more anniversary of the long and complex process that preceded the moment in which the necessary political will and the maturity of a negotiating process enabled consensus on an international treaty unprecedented in scope in the fields of non-proliferation, disarmament, arms control and international cooperation.

With the signature of the Convention, another even more challenging path of work and learning began: that of making the universality of the Convention a reality and successfully implementing its provisions.

Three decades later, developments in science and technology associated with chemistry in a unique international context pose new multi-faceted challenges to the CWC.

Aware of these circumstances, in 2015 the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach was established with a mandate to advise the Director-General and States Parties on these matters and thus contributing to prevent CWs re-emergence.

Through education, advice and recommendations by the Board seek to promote the understanding of the different processes that impact CWC implementation, while assisting the OPCW and National Authorities in connecting with academia, chemical industry and other audiences.

The activities of the ABEO have been reflected in its annual reports. Before COVID-19 broke out, the Board identified as a priority e-Learning and blended learning methodologies.

On that context, the ABEO stands ready to provide its advice and contacts with academic networks, with a view to benefit the activities to be held at the ChemTech Centre and to build partnerships.

The adoption of a Strategic Plan by the Board in 2021 outlines strategies and key messages to reach different target audiences more effectively and aligns the OPCW goals with the priorities of work for the Board.

During its last session, the Board identified additional areas of focus, including:

- a) The development of further e-Learning modules in different languages, in order to ensure that audiences worldwide are aware of the OPCW's mission. The Board will also contribute to the dissemination of these modules. For the same purpose, the Board considered the importance of developing potential partnerships with universities worldwide in the peer review of content. ABEO underlined the need for interdisciplinary cooperation and proposed the development of an international network of universities and think tanks with the aim of organizing regular summer schools in cooperation with the OPCW.
- b) Another issue considered by the Board was the possibility to provide assistance to individual National Authorities upon their request and, as well as in the past, through participation in Annual and Regional Meetings of National Authorities. A concrete recommendation by the Board was also face-to-face meetings of various academic institutions through National Authorities. In this regard, the ABEO counts on further collaboration with the ICA Division.
- c) The continued interaction with the chemical industry, academia, professional associations, relevant to CWC implementation. Including IUPAC and CEFIC in ABEO's meetings continues to be of essence.
- d) The Board is preparing an inventory of international organizations to develop synergies with OPCW. This was deemed necessary in order to reduce the risk of re-emergence of chemical weapons as well as to facilitate the implementation of relevant provisions of the CWC. The collaboration with other international organizations was deemed as an efficient and effective way to address current and future global security challenges and threats, given their scale and interconnectedness. These international organizations include, inter alia, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, proof of essence to OPCW's outreach efforts in the respective fields of action.

Mr Chairman,

The Board remains committed to contributing meaningfully to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and to do so, remains open to inputs and contributions by States Parties.

Thank you.