

## **Opening Remarks**

### **Deputy Director-General of the OPCW, H.E. Ambassador Odette Melono, Fifteenth Session of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach**

*The Hague, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023*

Distinguished Members of the Advisory Board and observers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the Fifteenth Session of the OPCW Advisory Board on Education and Outreach.

We are halfway through this significant year for the Organisation, and much has already occurred since we last met in February.

Last month, we celebrated the opening of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology in Pijnacker-Nootdorp, which took place in the presence of His Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands and other distinguished representatives from around the world. The OPCW's vision of a world free of chemical weapons is embodied in this new facility, crucial for the future work of the Organisation.

The ChemTech Centre will allow the OPCW to contribute to the prevention of re-emergence of chemical weapons by enhancing its research, operational, analytical, and capacity-building capabilities. It will serve as a platform to promote the responsible use of chemistry while assisting States Parties in fulfilling the purposes of the Convention.

The ChemTech Centre also represents an invaluable opportunity for the Organisation to maintain and promote its educational and outreach

activities which will help build a network of stakeholders from academia, chemical industry, research centres and laboratories all over the world.

Two years ago, you identified in the ABEO Strategic Plan the priority to develop a “bluebook” of relevant experts such as professors, inspectors, professionals from the chemical industry, and academic institutions, research centers and other entities that could support the ChemTech Centre programmes. I further encourage all of you to provide your contribution to the activities and programmes at the ChemTech Centre in this way and others.

Distinguished Members of the ABEO and observers,

The Fifth Review Conference was held in May with a high level of participation and engagement by States Parties, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations, along with meaningful contributions from both the ABEO and the Scientific Advisory Board.

Later today, Mr Marcin Wroblewski, Director of the Office of Strategy and Policy, will provide you with an update and his insights on the Review Conference process and the next steps.

During the Review Conference week, the side-event devoted to the ABEO’s work was well attended by States Parties and many stakeholders from academia, the chemical industry, and non-governmental organisations.

I sincerely thank the Board’s Chairperson Professor Magda Bauta Solés as well as Board member Dr Richard Guthrie for their insightful presentations and talks.

The subject of education and outreach was one of the main topics highlighted on many occasions in the general debate of the Review Conference.

States Parties expressed the importance they continue to attach to educational activities raising awareness about the CWC and the OPCW mission to prevent re-emergence of chemical weapons by engaging youth as well as, among others, policy-makers and educators in non-proliferation and disarmament.

I would like to especially mention the contribution of the former ABEO member Professor Jean-Pascal Zanders, who shared best practices on educational methodologies that can benefit the work of the OPCW during a side-event on the EU Targeted Initiative on Export Control and Dual Use Technologies.

As you know, the Fifth Review Conference will be followed by an important milestone in chemical demilitarisation: the completion of destruction of all declared chemical weapons will be a major achievement for the Organisation.

This historical landmark will happen in a context of rapid scientific and technological developments that have an impact on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

This is especially true when it comes to the prevention of re-emergence where scientific advances also opens new avenues for misuse of toxic chemicals, for instance by non-state actors.

These developments are being monitored closely by the OPCW and underscore that we must continue to evolve to address new and emerging challenges as our mission remains open-ended.

Distinguished members,

I would like to refer to some of issues before the board at this session. Please, allow me to sincerely thank Ms Rebecca Jovin, Chief of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Vienna, for having accepted the invitation to participate today to present the UNODA Education Strategy and exchange views with ABEO members.

Sharing knowledge and best-practices among international organisations, agencies and entities contributes to more effective policies with higher impact by achieving synergies in working together toward common goals.

At the last session, the Board agreed to prepare an inventory of international organisations where synergies can be achieved with respect to the ABEO's mandate. I look forward to reading this inventory.

Later this Session, the Board will have the opportunity to engage with Professor Maria Espona, an expert in educational strategies, who will share her experience in building a roadmap on educational methodologies.

Furthermore, collaboration of the Board with the International Cooperation and Assistance Division, especially in National Authorities meetings, will be discussed with Ms Kazumi Ikeda-Larhed, Director of the ICA Division.

It is with satisfaction that I welcome the resumption on 21 June of the briefing on ABEO activities to States Parties, which will be sponsored by the Permanent Representation of Germany to the OPCW.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Germany for supporting this practice which was discontinued during the COVID-19 pandemic.

States Parties need to be regularly informed about the ABEO's priorities to facilitate their deliberations and decision in the policy-making organs.

Distinguished Board members and observers,

At its Thirteenth session, during an exchange of views with the OPCW Knowledge Management Advisor, the Board considered the opportunities and challenges for developing a network of partnerships with academic and research institutions.

I encourage the Board to provide advice on this important area to assist the Organisation and foster engagement with as many academic institutions as possible in all regions.

The network will contribute to the expansion of knowledge about chemical weapons disarmament and bolster the OPCW's ability to carry out its continuous mission of preventing re-emergence.

Distinguished Board Members and observers,

I would like to conclude by commending the dedication and commitment of the Board to enhancing the Secretariat's educational resources and raising awareness of the OPCW and its mission.

I wish you a productive meeting and I look forward to reading the report of the Fifteenth Session.

Thank you.