



**ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

Welcome Remarks

Symposium on Women in Chemistry

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**The OOMs room, the OPCW, The Netherlands
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Monsieur l'Ambassadeur de France,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here with you all and to open the 2023 Symposium on Women in Chemistry together with Ambassador Alabrune, Permanent Representative of the Republic of France who has generously provided the funding support for this event.

Un grand merci pour la générosité dont votre pays, la France, a toujours fait montre à l'endroit de l'OIAC.

As you are aware, the OPCW's Women in Chemistry initiative aims to strengthen the skills of female professionals in the field of chemistry and to highlight their contribution to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. There cannot be a more appropriate theme for this year's Symposium than "Empowering Women and Promoting Gender Diversity in the Peaceful Uses of Chemistry and Chemical Security".

Today, we find ourselves in an era where the rapid advancement of science and technology presents many challenges, as well as unprecedented opportunities for shaping a brighter future. In this context, women are rising to the forefront, breaking the traditional barriers and norms. They are not just participating but leading ground-breaking research, shedding new light on complex problems

and contributing to the evolution and deepening of our scientific understanding.

Women chemists are not confined to the realm of academia or research institutions but are also taking the helm of multinational chemical firms and corporations, significantly influencing the global chemical industry. Their leadership reflects a positive shift towards a more inclusive, balanced business world, and serves as an inspiration to aspiring women leaders in various sectors.

While women have made significant strides in the realm of science, it is undeniable that a substantial journey remains. According to UNESCO, women account for only one-third scientific researchers globally, holding much fewer senior positions than men at top universities. Furthermore, in cutting edge fields such as artificial intelligence, only one in five professionals is a woman. Despite a global shortage of skills in most of the technological fields driving the Fourth Industrial Revolution, women still account for only 28% of engineering graduates and 40% of graduates in computer science and informatics.

We therefore need to collectively recognize and confront the qualitative obstacles that dissuade women from venturing into the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) sectors. Our focus must pivot towards dismantling enduring gender-based

biases and stereotypes that often divert women and girls from pursuing scientific disciplines. Ensuring parity of opportunity for women to engage and excel in STEM careers is not just a matter of justice, it has far-reaching implications for economic stability and growth, narrowing the gender pay gap, and cultivating a rich, diverse, and highly skilled STEM workforce.

Today as we mark and applaud an important milestone in our journey towards a world free of chemical weapons, the conclusion of the decades of demilitarization process stands as a historic disarmament achievement and a testament to the strength of multilateralism.

It is a defining moment for the OPCW and indeed for every individual committed to global peace and security. This accomplishment is a tribute to the resolute efforts of dedicated men and women, not just here in The Hague, but across the globe.

However, this is not the end of our journey. The conclusion of the chemical demilitarization process requires us to amplify our focus on preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. We are at the start of a post-destruction era, which will bring new and unique challenges. To effectively navigate these, we must continue to harness the talents and capabilities of everyone - with a particular emphasis on further integrating women into these efforts.

At the OPCW, we advocate for everyone to have the opportunity to engage with, and excel in, the realm of chemical sciences.

This was why the Organisation launched the **Symposium on Women in Chemistry** initiative in 2016.

The Symposium highlights the contributions made by women in the field of peaceful chemistry and raises awareness of education and capacity development opportunities for women in this area.

Last year, within the framework of the Symposium, the OPCW together with UNICRI, initiated action-oriented research towards identification of best practices in recruiting, training, and promoting women in chemical safety and security. The findings of the research were subsequently presented in a compendium of practical recommendations for policymakers and practitioners in the field of chemistry to promote gender inclusivity in the chemical safety and security sector. You will have an opportunity to learn and discuss this compendium during the Symposium.

You will also be pleased to note that inclusivity and gender diversity were at the forefront of considerations in the recent deliberations among the States Parties during the Fifth Review Conference that concluded last month in the Hague. It was a critical area of focus, highlighting our shared commitment to promoting diversity in scientific pursuits. I further underscored our resolve towards these

objectives during my participation at a side event held in the margins of the Conference focusing on gender, diversity, and inclusivity in relation to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Chemistry, when leveraged for the greater good, plays an instrumental role in enhancing the quality of life for people across the globe, and is paramount to ensuring the safety and security of future generations. It is within this context that the active and substantive participation of women becomes an essential component of this global endeavour.

I am also pleased to note that this year's Symposium partly takes place at the newly inaugurated Centre for Chemistry and Technology. The Centre is a flagship endeavour for the OPCW to bolster its training, research, capacity-building, and operational capabilities. As such, the new ChemTech Centre will allow the OPCW to further expand its activities related to women studying and working in STEM.

It is indeed great to join you all today as we collectively pave the way towards a more inclusive scientific community, where every aspiring scientist, regardless of gender, is provided with the opportunity to contribute, lead and make a difference.

Let us make this Symposium a catalyst for change, sparking conversations, inspiring action, and ultimately championing women in the field of chemistry.

I thank you and wish this Symposium every success!
