

Addresses to the Commemoration Ceremony to Mark the First Observance of the Remembrance Day for All Victims of Chemical Warfare, OPCW Headquarters, 27 April 2006

Excerpts from the Address by the Chairman of the Conference of the States Parties, H.E. Ambassador José Antonio Arróspide Del Busto, Permanent Representative of Peru to the OPCW, Presiding Officer for the First Observance

The use of chemical weapons has brought regrettable losses and injuries in thousands of cases in a number of countries bringing destruction, horror, panic and non-describable suffering. The fact that we meet in the Ieper Room, named after the First World War battle-field where chemical weapons were first unleashed in modern times, is a permanent reminder of our commitment to the total eliminations of these weapons.

This “Day of Remembrance” is intended as a great tribute to the numerous victims, disappeared and survivors, of the use of chemical weapons. It is an expression of the determination of many men and women of good will to make this planet a better place for the present and future generations.

Today also marks the ninth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, and therefore also marks the ninth anniversary of this Organization.

This is also an opportunity to assess the challenges ahead for the OPCW. The important results achieved in the universality of the Convention with now 178 States Parties, need to be coupled with substantial progress in the destruction activities and strengthening of international cooperation programs. A solid Organization and effective implementation of the Convention may greatly counteract the threat of use and actual use of chemical weapons in the future.

Finally, allow me to express that our prayers and thoughts are with all the victims of chemical weapons, and their

families, and let’s reinvigorate our firm commitment to eliminate chemical weapons for once and forever.

United Nations Secretary-General’s Message on the Remembrance Day for Victims of Chemical Warfare

More than 90 years have passed since modern day chemical weapons were first used, during the 1915 Battle of Ypres in World War I. The British war poet Wilfred Owen described the horror of seeing a fellow soldier “guttering, choking, drowning”, as if “under a green sea” of chlorine gas.

Since then, chemical weapons have continued to be developed and deployed against both soldiers and civilians, with the arsenal reaching its zenith during the Cold War. It wasn’t until 29 April 1997, after long and difficult negotiations that the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force. By banning these weapons, the Convention heralded the beginning of the work to destroy the stockpiles that had been amassed. That is the milestone we mark today, as we pay tribute to the victims of chemical warfare for whom the universality of this Convention, when it comes, will come too late.

The very first resolution of the United Nations General Assembly called for the elimination not only of nuclear weapons, but of “all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.” In the same spirit, the Chemical Weapons Convention was the first treaty to ban an entire category of such weapons. Through the work of the States Parties to the Convention, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the instrument has played a vital part in international efforts to “exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons”.

But much remains to be done, while new challenges have arisen. Participation in the Chemical Weapons Convention is growing, but it remains incomplete. I call on those States that have not yet ratified or acceded

to the Convention to do so without delay. Meanwhile, all of us must redouble our efforts to work for full implementation of the Convention, but also to ensure that chemical weapons are kept out of the hands of non State actors. That task will require stepped up vigilance and improved coordination among Governments, international organizations and the private sector. On this Remembrance Day, let us honour the victims of chemical warfare by pledging to consign these dreadful weapons to the pages of history.

Excerpts from the Address by the Prime Minister of the Netherlands H.E. Dr. Jan Peter Balkenende

It is of the greatest importance to remember those who were killed in chemical weapons attacks and those who are still suffering as a result of those attacks.

In remembering, we pay tribute to them, and we rediscover the importance of our fight for a world of peace and security. And so the Director-General's initiative to make the twenty-ninth of April a Day of Remembrance has my heartfelt support. In two days' time, we will begin a new tradition that I hope will be with us for many years to come.

It was during the First World War that humanity first witnessed the terrible consequences of large-scale use of chemical weapons. The gas attacks took a tragic toll: 1.3 million were injured and 90,000 were killed. The pictures and stories from those days are appalling. They shocked the world then, and they make just as deep an impression today. Largely in response to the horrors of that war, states concluded the Geneva Protocol of 1925. This sent a clear signal: the use of chemical weapons is contrary to international humanitarian law.

Unfortunately, the Geneva Protocol did not end chemical warfare. It did not prevent countries from building up sizeable stockpiles. And it did not prevent the use of chemical weapons.

And so we have seen the terrible impact of these weapons again. Not once, but time after time. In China, North Yemen, Iran, Iraq and Japan. Each time, the images provoked new horror.

In 1997, spurred into action by this litany of human suffering, the international community took a historic step forward. It created the most comprehensive treaty on weapons of mass destruction to this day: the Chemical Weapons Convention.

For the Netherlands, this convention is the jewel in the crown of treaty-based disarmament. It contains all the elements we consider essential. The CWC not only bans an entire class of weapons and requires the complete destruction of all existing stockpiles. But it also establishes an organisation, the OPCW, to verify this

destruction, perform random inspections of industrial sites and carry out challenge inspections. The OPCW performs these duties credibly and effectively.

In short, the Convention and the OPCW embody what we in the Netherlands like to call effective multilateralism.

Unfortunately, when we turn to two other classes of weapons of mass destruction – biological and nuclear weapons – the situation is sobering. We still have a great deal of work to do. And I am not optimistic about fulfilling our ambitions in the short term. It will be a long, hard process. We will have to work towards our goals, one slow, careful step at a time. We must show that the approach we advocate can work in practice.

We need successes. And the Chemical Weapons Convention is one of them. The success of the Convention and the OPCW have an importance that goes even beyond their mission to rid the world of chemical weapons. It is essential for us to ensure and demonstrate that the OPCW will continue to take effective action. And let us all build on its success, so that it may serve as a shining example in other fields.

I believe we can be proud of how much we have accomplished in less than ten years' time.

Today, a hundred and seventy-eight countries are party to the Convention. Full universality is no longer a distant dream.

Many thousands of tons of chemical warfare agents have been destroyed, along with millions and millions of chemical munitions. The OPCW has conducted thousands of inspections. These are great results.

Of course, we face tough realities, and it has become clear that the destruction of chemical weapons is more complicated, more costly and more time-consuming than we knew. It will be a challenge to get the job done within the time frame set by the Convention. Yet there is no doubt in my mind that, with determination and hard work, we can see to it that all chemical weapons are destroyed.

The OPCW has grown to be a trusted international organisation in the short period of its existence. It spends its money wisely and is a genuine asset to its member states. I commend you, Mr Director-General, and your dedicated staff for your high standard of service.

International trade is the lifeblood of the Netherlands. Our country has a special interest in a stable, peaceful, dependable international environment. Socially, economically and politically. The sound development of international law and the institutions that support it is of strategic importance to the Netherlands. (...)

The Netherlands is truly proud to be the host country for the OPCW and twenty-nine other international organisations. It is our responsibility to create optimal

living and working conditions for international organisations and their staff based in the Netherlands. I am aware that a number of issues have arisen in the past. I understand that many satisfactory solutions have already been found. Rest assured that the Dutch government has every intention of resolving the remaining issues in good faith. Our interest in doing so is clear. Therefore, we want to provide generous and fair conditions for these international institutions in our country. We are committed to being just as constructive in our capacity as a host nation as we are in our role as a member state.

Until international stability and security are based entirely on the rule of law rather than the rule of the gun, there is one thing above all that we must do to commemorate all those who have perished or suffered in armed conflicts. That is to gradually expand the international legal framework and make it more effective. We must never forget what terrible suffering chemical weapons have caused to millions of people. To honour that memory, we must redouble our efforts and make sure that it will never happen again.

Excerpts from the Address by the Director-General of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, H.E. Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter

This Remembrance Day for all victims of Chemical Weapons is a momentous occasion.

It coincides with the date in 1997 that marked the culmination of long years of efforts on the part of the international community to craft a universal and non-discriminatory treaty that would ban, once and for all, an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

It is not by accident that we are meeting in The Hague, or that the Head of Government of our host country, the Netherlands, His Excellency Jan Peter Balkenende, is honouring us with his presence on this important occasion. The Netherlands has long promoted chemical disarmament and The Hague is of course, the legal capital of the world as well as our home. Moreover, it was in this very city 107 years ago that a group of diplomats convened to draft and conclude a seminal treaty whose objective was to put an end to the use of poisonous gases. The Hague Convention of 1899 thus represented the first step on the long and arduous path that eventually led to the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

It is furthermore quite fitting that we should be joined at this ceremony by a Delegation of the Australian Parliament. As we all know Australia played a signifi-

cant role in the efforts that culminated in the Chemical Weapons Convention

In the last century, chemical weapons were used both by a number of countries, and by terrorist groups. We are all too aware of the events in the spring of 1915 at Ypres, Belgium and of the very large number of victims of Chemical Weapons during the First World War. Towards the end of the XX century, Chemical Weapons were used by the Iraqi regime of the time in its war with Iran and, in 1988, against innocent civilians in Halabja, with horrifying results. Only ten years ago, on another spring morning, commuters in the Tokyo subway were suddenly confronted with a similar terror when they were attacked with sarin gas, thus initiating the era of chemical terrorism.

The signing of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the establishment of the OPCW, which now includes 178 Member States, make it clear that the international community has learned the right lessons from the dreadful experiences of the past and has chosen to completely eliminate this means of mass destruction.

The aim of the Chemical Weapons Convention and of the OPCW is not only to ensure that those who possess chemical weapons destroy them safely and irreversibly, but also that those planning to misuse chemistry to produce new ones will not succeed. It is a Convention aimed at dealing both with the inheritance of the past and the needs of the future for the purpose of international peace and security.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has the support of the overwhelming majority of Member States of the United Nations, and is the only instrument that outlaws, in a verifiable and non-discriminatory way, an entire category of weapons.

The Convention now covers over ninety percent of the global population and ninety-five percent of the relevant chemical industries, whose involvement in the adoption and implementation of the Convention has been crucial to our achievements and deserves to be recognised. This crucial treaty that we all support and implement together grants States Parties the best possible protection against the use or threat of use of chemical weapons by others.

Yet there is no room for complacency, for there remain many challenges. The destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles is proceeding apace, but it is far from complete, and the Treaty needs to be fully imple-

mented by all Member States. Similarly, there are now 178 States Parties to the Treaty but the goal of universality eludes us still. If we are to succeed in our goal of ridding the world of chemical weapons once and for all, all countries must join the Convention, including in particular all those in the Middle East as well as the in the North of the Korean Peninsula.

The nature and effect of chemical weapons make unprotected civilians their main target. The materials necessary to produce simple chemical weapons are widely available, and the technology and financial hurdles to be overcome are considerably less problematic than those posed by the illicit manufacturing and use of primitive biological or nuclear weapons. The challenge posed by chemical terrorism is ever greater.

As we remember and pay tribute to the victims of chemical weapons, we can rightly assert that chemical weapons are forever proscribed and there is no claim to legitimacy for holding or using them anywhere. Their illegality under international law is clear; and equally evident is their inhuman, vicious and immoral nature.

Observing this Remembrance Day means more than just paying due tribute to and recalling the suffering and death of the thousands of victims of chemical warfare. It also provides an opportunity to recognise effective multilateralism at work, to renew our determination to prevent any further use of chemical weapons, and to see to it that chemistry is used exclusively for the benefit of people the world over.

In that spirit, let us also recommit ourselves to advancing international peace and security, both now and for future generations. The involvement of young artists in this ceremony¹ serves to highlight that indispensable forward looking dimension. We have a responsibility to build a better world for our descendants;

- a genuine commitment to the goal of peace,
- an active dedication to avoiding the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction,
- and ensuring an effective ban on chemical weapons, are three concrete ways of contributing to such a goal.

Excerpts from the Address on Behalf of the Executive Council by its Chairman H.E. Ambassador Alfonso M. Dastis, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Spain to the OPCW

Let me first convey my deepest appreciation, in the name of the Executive Council of the OPCW, to His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Netherlands for having expressed once again, through his words and his very presence here today, the permanent commitment of our Host State towards the Organisation. Your attendance at this important ceremony does encourage our work in a remarkable manner and we ought to thank you warmly for that.

I am honoured to speak at this first Remembrance Day for all victims of chemical warfare as chairman of the Executive Council of the OPCW.

Over this year, I have witnessed from a privileged position hours of devoted work based on honest dialogue and loyal negotiation. What I have had the chance to see during these months was, in other words, something that we often aim for but, unfortunately, do not always achieve in international society: a genuine process of consensus building; a continuous and fruitful multilateral dialogue towards a shared goal.

This Organisation has spontaneously adopted consensus as its working method par excellence, and that unwritten choice, after some years, is something of which I believe we can be fairly proud. The praiseworthy goal of building a world free of chemical weapons has kept us united around a table; it is fair to acknowledge that nations belonging to very distant regions and bearing different cultural backgrounds and often opposed political points of view, have been able not only to give birth to a successful Convention but to guarantee, through this Organisation, its strength and permanent contribution to peace and security.

Despite the lack of some very important nations which we would like to see soon on board, the very wide membership of the OPCW provides it with a high level of legitimacy. This remarkable and increasing number of partners, together with the state of implementation of the Convention, are the record of our efforts, the fruit of such dialogue.

I do think that this culture of multilateralism and dialogue is an outstanding contribution that this organisation may offer to the international society. When the

¹ Gemma Llorens, a cello student at the Royal Conservatorium of The Hague, performed *El cant dels ocells* (*The Song of the Birds*), a composition by Pau Casals in commemoration of the victims.

goal is noble and the rules fair and transparent, the nations of good will are ready to work together: and here is our healthy ten-year-old project to bear witness.

The achievements of the Executive Council would have been simply impossible but for the tireless contribution of the highly professional men and women who make up the staff of the Technical Secretariat, so ably led by the Director-General, Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter. Our hopes and projects are indeed in their able hands. To all of them, I would like to pay tribute today in the name of the Executive Council.

We still have a long way to go. The goals achieved so far should only be an invitation for us to keep working for the implementation of the Convention; the Review Conference which is in the offing will be an excellent moment to assess our performance and to try to still improve it in the future. We will be guided in that effort by the memories of the past and by the determination not to have to mourn any future victims of chemical weapons.

**Excerpts from the Address by
H.E. Ambassador Alfonso M. Dastis,
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom
Of Spain to the OPCW on Behalf of the
Western European and other States Group**

The WEOG group has proved to be deeply committed to the Convention for the destruction of chemical weapons even before its coming into being. The members of this group believe in multilateralism and have expressed, from the beginning of the negotiations of the Convention, their enthusiastic support to the idea of a world free from chemical weapons. Such attitude could only be reinforced once the organisation has been created.

Countries in WEOG have welcomed with satisfaction the idea of a commemoration day. Ceremonies are extremely useful landmarks, valuable breaks which are instrumental in reminding us, in the middle of our daily tasks, why we are here: it is certainly worth interrupting, on a yearly basis, the work that we carry out between these walls, to remember explicitly our goal, our *raison d'être* as a community. Today we can proudly say that no Member State has used this kind of lethal weapons since the entry into force of the Convention. After the horrifying experiences the world has undergone during the past century, that is indeed something to be celebrated. This is precisely the objective of our efforts.

Member States belonging to WEOG are aware of the progress made so far in fulfilling the objectives of the Convention. Nevertheless, we are ready and willing to keep working towards its full and effective implementation. Destruction is a major goal, and we certainly welcome and support the efforts that possessor states are making in order to fulfil their obligations in that respect. Other aspects of the Convention are relevant as well: its full effectiveness demands the adoption by member states of internal measures aiming to guarantee its correct implementation at a national level. To that important objective, WEOG member states have devoted remarkable efforts and resources over the last years.

WEOG Member States have always been and certainly are at present aware of the existence of new challenges to which our Organisation has to give an answer. The new threats to peace and security, namely the possibility of terrorist attacks, are in itself a sound reason to give renewed value to our Convention. In that context, universality and full implementation of the Convention become unavoidable to guarantee the highest level of protection. Countries in WEOG have taken good note of the work done by the Director General to elucidate our response to these new challenges.

In concluding let me once again renew, in the name of my group, our commitment to the Convention and to its objectives. In the future, the OPCW will continue to find in us a tireless group of friends of the Organisation ready to meet the new challenges using the best of our abilities.

**Excerpts from the Address by
H.E. Ambassador Abuelgasim Idris,
Permanent Representative of The Sudan,
Coordinator of the African Group**

It gives me great pleasure to join you today on behalf of the 46 African States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to celebrate the inaugural observance of remembrance for all victims of Chemical Warfare. African States Parties associate themselves with other States in the strong commitment to the full and effective implementation of the CWC, including the destruction of Chemical Weapons and the elimination of all types of Weapons of Mass Destruction. WMD pose a serious threat to international peace and security.

We welcomed the Director General's initiative to bring such important issue to the 10th Session of the Conference of States Parties in November 2005, and the subsequent decision on the establishment of a day

of remembrance for all victims of Chemical Warfare. We're pleased to have this decision materialized today. This is a day of remembrance, but also a day for more have action. Possessor states have the duty to hasten destruction of their stocks, and to meet the deadlines set by the Convention. The international community is called upon to never allow the use of WMD including chemical Weapons, again. We owe it to our fellow human beings and to succeeding generations to never expose them to horrors met by those who in the past experienced the agony and pain of such weapons.

The name of Ieper is deeply engraved in the African memory. Let me recall that the first victims of the first time use of Chemical Weapons during World War I, specifically in 1915, on the battle ground which gave which gave its name to this room, included Africans.

In July 2002, the then newly-formed African Union adopted a decision on the Universality and Implementation of the Convention at its inaugural summit meeting in Durban, South Africa. Through that decision the Assembly of the African Union encouraged the call to achieve universality of the CWC in Africa, and welcomed its effective implementation in the Continent. The Summit also called for the African Region to be a Chemical Weapons free-zone. When the CWC entered into force in April 1997, there were a handful of States Parties from Africa. Now the number has risen to 46, a true reflection of the commitment of Africa to the objectives of the CWC, being the most important disarmament treaty to ensure the ban of an entire class of WMD.

Chemical Weapons kill indiscriminately. Many lives have been lost as a result of man cruelty against his fellow man in the past. Those who survived Chemical Warfare lived with permanent disfigurements and disabilities, and has lost their God-given quality of life forever. We therefore believe that we all need to undertake not to, under any circumstances, develop, produce, acquire, stockpile Chemical Weapons, or transfer Chemical Weapons to any one, or use or threaten to use Chemical Weapons, or to assist or encourage, in anyway, anyone, to engage in any Chemical Weapons-related activity. By so doing we'll make our world a better place for future generations to live in.

**Excerpts from the Address by H.E.
Ambassador Carlos Mora, Permanent
Representative of the Eastern Republic of
Uruguay, on Behalf of the Latin American
and Caribbean Group**

I have the honour on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean group to address you in this commemora-

tion ceremony and to mark the association of our region both with the remembrance of the past sufferings and horrors caused by the use of chemical warfare and with the efforts for them never to happen again.

The Latin American and Caribbean region has always been at the forefront of the international efforts of disarmament from weapons of mass destruction. In that regard the treaty of Tlatelolco of 1967, which prohibited nuclear arms in Latin America and the Mendoza compromise of 1991, which provided for the unilateral prohibition of chemical and biological arms in a large portion of Latin-American territory are important milestones. For us, the chemical weapons convention represents one of the main pillars of the international security framework.

The convention is demonstrating its capacity to free the world from one of the most lethal types of weapons and is offering opportunities for further development of cooperation in the field of peaceful use of chemical technologies. We see the chemicals weapons convention as an efficient instrument to contain the threat of chemical weapons proliferation. We must continue the fight against terrorism in the field of non-proliferation. We attribute great significance to the united nations security council resolution 1540 on non-proliferation which contains a clear answer of the international community to one of the most dangerous global threats related to the possibility of weapons of mass destruction and means of their delivery ending up in the hands of terrorists.

The resolution lays down basic principles and mechanism for coordinated counteraction to the weapons of mass destruction black markets. Our common task is to contribute in full to the implementation of this resolution at the national level. Notwithstanding the achievements attained so far in the disarmament efforts with regard to chemical weapons which are encouraging, this is not a time for complacency.

The memories of the victims of chemical warfare which today we commemorate must invigorate our will to fulfil the main aim of the chemical weapons convention namely the total and verifiable elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction within a fixed time frame.

In that endeavour we offer our utmost support while we continue to work towards the fulfillment of our obligations under the chemical weapons convention.

**Excerpts from the Address by Mr
Plamen Ivanov, Alternate Permanent
Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria
to the OPCW on Behalf of the Eastern
Europe Group**

On this memorable date we pay our tribute to the victims and hundreds of thousands of people that have suffered indescribably by the dreadful chemical weapons but we also look to the future, hoping for days without chemical weapons and filled with more peaceful cooperation and understanding.

The devastating impact chemical weapons have had in the past, and the potential for the use of modern – even more deadly – chemical agents not only by States at war but in other violent conflicts and by non-State actors, provide an imperative for the international effort to uphold the ban on such weapons and to work for their complete, global elimination.

The OPCW and all States Parties are particularly concerned that the use of chemical weapons by terrorists would have drastic and devastating consequences, and could result in many thousands of casualties. In 1995, when the terrorists in Japan released their sarin in the Tokyo subway, killing 12 people and making about around 5,000 ill, the OPCW did not yet exist. If the Organization existed, Japan could have requested and received its assistance. After the OPCW was established in 1997, the Organization was able to make sure that the building and the equipment used by the terrorists to produce those chemical weapons were completely destroyed.

Chemical disarmament, and the OPCW's efforts to ensure that chemicals produced for peaceful purposes are not misused, provides some guarantee that terrorists will not be able to acquire or make their own chemical weapons. The CWC gives the world a legal basis for the fight against the use of chemical weapons. The enforcement by all countries of the Convention's requirement to make the production, transfer and use of chemical weapons illegal for anyone would mean that terrorists could be put on trial for violating the Convention.

Furthermore, the OPCW is a worldwide authority on chemical weapons, and with its expertise, knowledge, and advanced equipment has much to contribute to global efforts to combat terrorism.

Taking into consideration the weakness of the States in facing the new global challenges, it should be clear to

us now, that the responsibility of all us in the construction of a safer world, is an inescapable fact. None of us can refuse to assume duties and obligations regarding the present challenges.

For this reason, we should consider the constant improvement of the implementation of the Convention as a special dimension of our activities. A set of political, legal and administrative measures, allowing us to unite our efforts internationally and through cooperation will allow us to progressively close the gaps that are used by illegal nets and terrorism, to reduce the vulnerabilities of our societies against the latent use of arms of mass destruction and for a greater control over the production, distribution and use of chemical substances.

But the scourge of chemical weapons will be lifted only when all States join and fully implement the Convention. We extend our call to all countries in the world to accede. Only when all territory of the world is covered by the Convention the effective and credible verification and non-proliferation regime will be applied around the world in a comprehensive manner. By achieving the universal, full and effective application of the Convention, all member states will have passed on a crucial legacy of enhanced peace and security for future generations, as well as honoring the memory of the victims of chemical weapons.

Our future is not only guaranteeing full destruction and verification, but it also lies in helping each other protecting each other and assisting each other. Turning eyes to the future we wish to see a world free of chemical weapons, and also a world of trust and respect, peaceful exchange, cooperation and assistance. Our commitment to the millions of deaths and casualties of chemical weapons is inevitably a commitment to a full implementation of the Convention.

While the Convention seeks to reach a total destruction and ban on chemical weapons, it also provides for longstanding international cooperation and assistance and protection, which have their enduring and promising future. International Cooperation among States Parties is in the pursuit of chemistry for peaceful purposes. Programs will continue to provide for from sponsoring chemical research to guaranteeing legal assistance; from developing and improving laboratory capacity to specialized internships and training in Convention implementation and safe chemical management; from supports the exchange of scientific

and technical information among Member States to funding of a variety of research projects in developing countries.

Some Member States have the capacity to protect their populations against chemical weapons, while others do not. All Member States have pledged to provide assistance and protection to fellow Member States, which are threatened with the use of chemical weapons or have indeed suffered a chemical attack.

Allow me at the end of my address to extend our gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for its invaluable support for this Organization including for the cooperation of the Municipality of The Hague for erecting a monument for the victims of chemical weapons from all wars and conflicts and establishing an annual observance ceremony for them to embody our message for the future generations.

Excerpts of the Address by Mr Malik Azhar Ellahi, Alternate Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OPCW on Behalf of the Asian Group

It is a privilege to speak on behalf of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention from Asia- a region that is home to 3/5th of the global population.

We warmly welcome His Excellency, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands who has graced this solemn ceremony by his kind presence. We thank him for his important statement.

Today we are gathered to honour the memory of those who suffered death and injury by chemical weapons. To remember that their sacrifices impelled global action to completely prohibit this abhorrent means of warfare. To recall, in this context, the value of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the services of the OPCW in the cause of peace.

The Prime Minister's presence on this important occasion also underscores the support of his country for the OPCW. We also express our appreciation for the efforts of his Government and his delegation ably led by Ambassador Maarten Lak to strengthen the role of the beautiful city of The Hague, as the seat of the Organisation.

This City gave its name to an organised expression of the human stirring for compassion and humane con-

duct in armed conflict symbolized in The Hague Peace Conferences. A hundred years before the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, our modern age had made a concerted attempt to codify into international law what the great religious and ethical traditions had long forbidden, namely, cruelty and inflicting unnecessary and excessive suffering in times of armed conflict.

Those historic meetings were unfortunately followed by a long and tragic era of warfare in which science made available the means of destruction on a mass scale and with ruthless efficiency. Amongst the agents of death that were created and used were chemical weapons. They became known by their ghastly effects. Choking agents, blister agents, nerve agents; weapons that fatally burn without fire, drown without water.

Humanity's otherwise admirable path to progress and prosperity became littered with the debris of its failings. Heart rending horror inflicted by chemical weapons emphatically illustrated that the development of ethical and legal norms had not kept pace with technological advances.

The international community needed to go beyond the regulation of armed conflict. The only means to ensure that our technical civilization would not one day become the cause of its own destruction was, and remains, the complete elimination of such horrendous weapons and unremitting efforts for the promotion of international peace and security for all nations.

Chemical weapons have been the cause of countless gruesome deaths on the battlefield and in innocent civilian populations. Survivors of chemical attack lived to envy the dead. Images of this repeated carnage are etched forever in our minds.

Remembrance Day will serve to keep them alive in our collective conscience.

Remembrance Day provides perspective to the work of the OPCW, an Organisation whose singular purpose is to implement the will of the international community to permanently eliminate chemical weapons from the face of the earth.

We express our deep gratitude to the Director General for instituting this commemoration. Under his able leadership, the Secretariat of the OPCW performs a task that has no parallel- effecting a comprehensive

prohibition of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction and ensuring their non-proliferation, irreversibly and without selectivity or discrimination.

Today in remembering the suffering of those who perished or suffered great agony on account of chemical weapons, we reaffirm our resolve to bolster this Organisation. We will continue to work in a spirit of purposeful cooperation, consensus and harmony to serve a noble cause that unites all our governments.

As we rededicate ourselves to the goals and objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we hear echoes of the words of a poet-soldier uttered as he witnessed the death of a comrade in arms:

*Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning,
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.*

What better homage to the memory of all those victims than a clear affirmation of our resolve to not let that happen ever again.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Bozorgmehr Ziaran, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the OPCW

In the name of Allah,

Our gathering here today is brimming with a sense of grief, joy, accomplishment and determination.

It has taken us a lot to get to this very point.

Thousands of people had to fall victim to the chemical weapons. Many individuals and grass root organizations had to raise their voices and campaign to forge an international consensus on the need for a ban on such weapons. Many should negotiate for long to conclude the Chemical Weapons Convention. And, many more ought to toil round the clock to prepare for its implementation.

We grieve for those who lost their lives and stand by those who still suffer from chronic illnesses resulting from the use of these barbaric weapons. Joyful of the achievements so far, we have a great determination to make the world safer a place through destruction of the existing chemical weapon stockpiles and promotion of the universality of the Convention.

Being target of an unprecedented, large-scale and indiscriminate use of chemical weapons by Saddam Hussein's regime during its invasion of Iran, we salute all those who helped realize this accomplishment.

The survivors of chemical weapons are in need of special care and services. Therefore, we submit the idea to mobilize an international support network for these people.

The CWC sets an example for the international cooperation in the field of disarmament. It is a non-discriminatory convention. And, it strives to destroy all the stockpiles within an agreed time-table.

We sincerely hope that the international community would build on its positive achievements and work for the elimination of other categories of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.