

Opening Remarks to the Press Conference by
OPCW Director-General

It is a great honour for me to welcome the Secretary-General to the Headquarters of the OPCW.

As you know the Secretary-General is here to attend the Third Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The United Nations was founded to promote global peace and security. The work of the OPCW makes a major contribution to that goal. I deeply appreciate the support of the Secretary-General to our work, which is evident from his presence here at a particularly important juncture in the history of the OPCW.

188 countries today subscribe to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Only eight remain outside. The Secretary-General and I both attach the highest importance to securing the universality of this treaty. We have jointly addressed letters to the leaders of those countries inviting them to join the Convention.

As the Secretary-General has just mentioned, he has decided to conduct an investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria. In accordance with our standing agreements, the resources of the OPCW have been placed at his disposal. States Parties to the CWC have supported this UN investigation. Chemical weapons in the context of Syria is a matter of serious concern. Any use of chemical weapons is reprehensible and unacceptable.

The situation in Syria also highlights why it is important to achieve universality of the Convention.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is one of the most outstanding achievements in disarmament. It is the only international treaty that establishes a total prohibition on an entire class of weapons of mass destruction under international verification.

The year 2015 will mark a hundred years since chemical weapons emerged as weapons of mass destruction during the First World War. The international community has come a long way since then.

Our Organisation has already verified the destruction of 80 percent of the chemical weapons declared to the OPCW, and work continues to eliminate the rest.

Coming at a time when a major part of our mandate is already fulfilled, the Third Review Conference is expected to focus on the future. We have a number of challenges ahead and States Parties have an opportunity to craft a strategic vision for the future.

A permanent and global prohibition means that we will need to continue to work hard to ensure the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. In other words, to strive to prevent their re-emergence.

We will also strengthen our programmes to promote international cooperation and broaden our interaction with civil society. This, in short, is an opportunity to reaffirm the value of the hard-earned norm against chemical weapons and to make it a permanent barrier.

We will now take your questions.