

**Thirteenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities
of States Parties in Asia
Preceded by a Regional Meeting on Education and Outreach
Beijing, China
5 – 7 May 2015**

**Opening remarks by Ambassador Grace Asirwatham,
Deputy Director-General OPCW**

Distinguished Guests,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address this Regional Meeting on Education and Outreach ahead of the 13th Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Asia.

Let me from the outset thank the Government of China for its generous support for hosting this important event in Beijing.

1. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its Member States continue to make steady progress in chemical disarmament. Our shared goal of reaching a global zero on chemical weapons and ensuring their non-proliferation is within our reach.
2. States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) would need to continue stepping up their efforts to ensure that chemical weapons do not reemerge, toxic chemicals are not weaponized, chemistry is used for peaceful purposes, non-state actors do not get access to toxic chemicals or relevant technology and use them for destructive purposes.
3. These are indeed important and ambitious undertakings that will require a broader participation of all stakeholders and establishment of comprehensive partnerships.

4. In this regard, education and outreach are crucial in sustaining the achievements of the Convention and its relevance as a global norm against chemical weapons.
5. After 18 years of successful implementation of this unique multilateral treaty, it is now time to re-dedicate ourselves to ensuring its success in the future.
6. I wish to recall some of the recommendations adopted during the Third Review Conference held in April 2013, when States Parties underlined their determination to maintain the Convention's role as a bulwark against chemical weapons and to promote, to that end, OPCW's outreach, capacity building, education and public diplomacy activities.
7. A key recommendation of the Temporary Working Group (TWG) on Education and Outreach of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) recently was to make education and outreach a core activity of the OPCW, and to set up a separate advisory board which will work both with the Secretariat and States Parties.
8. This will be done to analyze situations in all regions, identify key partners, their needs and capacity level, as well as define required approaches.
9. The OPCW will have to develop a comprehensive concept with a view to putting in place a work plan in every region to achieve the outcome envisaged under this objective.
10. You may also recall that the Third Review Conference acknowledged the role of education, outreach and awareness-raising relevant to national implementation of the Convention. This also includes raising awareness among academic institutions and relevant scientific communities, enhancing their understanding of the CWC provisions and domestic laws and regulations relevant to the Convention.
11. It is in this context that Third Review Conference welcomed the establishment of the TWG on Education and Outreach. I am

pleased to acknowledge the presence here today of Dr Soon Ting Kueh of Malaysia who is a member of this Working Group and will be able to advise on the TWG's recommendations.

12. Our pilot project under this initiative was a meeting for the GRULAC region, hosted by the National Authority of Argentina in cooperation with the Technical Secretariat in last year.
13. Considering the asymmetrical status of geographical regions in relation to institutional arrangements, infrastructure, level of public awareness and knowledge about the CWC, an understanding has been reached that we should develop region-specific concepts on education and outreach.
14. This, however, will not prevent us from sharing the broader knowledge on concepts and approaches as well as best practices amongst the regions. It is an excellent example of cross-regional fertilization of ideas in what is indeed a global mission.
15. I welcome the participation by a representative of the National Authority of Argentina who will share the outcome of the meeting held in Argentina for the GRULAC region as well as insights from his own country's pioneering work on a comprehensive national education and outreach programmes.
16. While we propose new measures to create an informed community to work with the OPCW to realise the objectives of the Convention as well as create partnerships for concerted action to make the world chemical weapons-free, we need to ensure our States Parties have relevant and effective national implementation measures.
17. The OPCW Technical Secretariat will continue to engage in capacity building in all States Parties by training their representatives. However, if the relevant national legislation is not in place, the country may not be able to realise the object and purpose of the Convention.
18. States Parties should adopt in accordance with constitutional processes, the necessary measures to fully implement their

obligations under the Convention. This includes timely and comprehensive submission of declarations, effective facilitation of inspections – all these are crucial issues for our membership and our endeavor to build an enduring barrier against chemical weapons.

19. The need for domestic legalization of the Convention cannot be overstated. This is crucial for any routine or special activities. The Convention is implemented in a non-discriminatory manner. All States Parties have obligations and benefits. Therefore, all States Parties should provide the legal basis within their jurisdictions for fully implementing the treaty.

20. All objectives related to chemical disarmament, prevention of chemical weapons re-emergence, fact-finding, assistance and protection, international cooperation and assistance, economic and technological development and other issues, including activities of non-State actors, misuse of chemical science, will require domestic legislations to fulfil the object and purpose of the CWC as well as maintain the necessary regulations as prescribed by the Convention.

21. It is very important to note that countries represented here today belong to what is perhaps the most diverse and vibrant region in the world.

22. It is no secret that Asia is quickly emerging as a major economic hub. As a consequence of this, the Asian region is fast becoming a center for global chemical industry, as well as for cutting-edge research, technology and development.

23. The region also hosts all of the most pressing challenges that we face in preventing the re-emergence and use of chemical weapons.

24. With the likelihood of state-to-state chemical conflict having receded, the threat from non-State actors is very real – and growing.

25. We maintained that the use of chemical weapons was a remote

possibility. However, the tragic events of August 2013 and the confirmed use of chemical weapons in Syria as well as continued allegations of use of chlorine against civilians in Syria and Iraq have proven us wrong.

26. It is high time for all countries across the globe to commit to the chemical weapons ban. In doing so, the OPCW will continue to enhance its capacity, and that of its Member States, to address contemporary threats and challenges.

27. One such area that requires additional measures and preparedness is the threat posed by non-State actors.

28. During the last session of the Executive Council in March, the Technical Secretariat introduced a discussion paper on the accountability of non-State actors. The paper describes the relevant provisions of the Convention, as well as a number of other national and international mechanisms that may be relevant to a discussion by the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, regarding the Convention and the accountability of non-State actors.

29. This may serve as a basis to facilitate the continued discussion of the measures that States Parties may take in order to ensure the accountability of non-State actors.

30. In this regard, our work on assistance and protection will remain vital, but it is equally important that we enhance and better coordinate measures on chemical safety and security. More attention will have to be devoted to monitoring the global chemical industry and trade in chemicals worldwide to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

31. This will involve assisting governments, national authorities and industry in establishing and implementing required safety and security standards.

32. This will also involve ensuring more effective import and export controls, as well as exchanging more information faster.

On the latter, increasing participation in the Secure Information Exchange System is already playing a significant role.

33. And more activities, such as those carried out under a new cooperation framework which will shortly be finalized between the OPCW and the International Council of Chemical Associations ICCA will serve to better contextualize our mission in the commercial sector.
34. In addition, through industry-outreach activities, the OPCW seeks to meet the needs of our Member States in the field of chemical safety and security management; an emerging and vital area in the peaceful use of chemicals for sustainable industrial development.
35. These programmes further create a platform to generate a solid partnership among key stakeholders to further strengthen the activities related to safety and security among States Parties.
36. Furthermore, these activities enable national capacity building through awareness-raising among our Member States by emphasising the importance and significance of creating a safety and security culture.
37. To assist us in cultivating a proactive engagement with chemical industry representatives we would need to facilitate the development of more effective standards and professional codes and guidelines.
38. An initiative to develop a text of ethical guidelines for chemical professionals related to the Convention, endorsed by the Conference of the States Parties at its Nineteenth Session, was considered at a workshop held at the OPCW in March this year. A number of highly respected international scientists and experts from both academic and industrial backgrounds have contributed and will continue to contribute to this initiative.
39. The OPCW supports practitioners of chemical sciences taking an active role in developing ethical guidelines. We look forward to

seeing how this initiative will evolve, as well as how it can be aligned with other initiatives on ethics and responsible science.

This, I hope, will also be an important theme at this year's Asian Chemical Congress in Dhaka in November.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

40. Looking ahead, we certainly can identify a number of priorities and areas of cooperation that would shape the Organisation and set the dialogue with key stakeholders. Earlier this year, the OPCW issued a paper which outlines a strategic framework seeking to build on implementation of the Convention achieved hitherto, and to enhance the Organisation's responsiveness to new challenges over the next decade.

41. It is not intended to be a blueprint, but rather, a broad guide for anticipating challenges to ensure that the Organisation remains relevant and fit for purpose at a time of transition. I would encourage States Parties to pursue ideas included in this document through existing mechanisms.

42. Let us also not forget existing challenges and priorities. As you know, six countries, some of them in Asia, still have not subscribed to the CWC. In an encouraging development, Myanmar's parliament ratified the CWC in January. We have also been informed that Angola's Parliament recently approved CWC accession. We look forward to welcoming these countries as States Party to the Convention in the very near future, and hope that this development will encourage others to follow suit.

43. Yet, the effectiveness of the CWC and its longevity may not only be achieved exclusively through universalization. It is also the effective implementation of its provisions at the national level that should continue to make it an effective and indispensable mechanism.

44. It is in our interest to ensure that the Chemical Weapons

Convention remains an example of successful multilateralism for which the credit goes to all our States Parties.

45. This notion was reaffirmed on 21 April in Ieper, Belgium where our States Parties gathered in a commemorative ceremony to mark the first large-scale use of chemical weapons during World War I. The historic Ieper Declaration, which States Parties issued on this event, has also underlined the resolve of the international community to ensure that such tragedies never happen again.

46. Guided by this vision of a world free from chemical weapons, it is my hope that we will continue our important work in upholding the principles of the CWC well into the future.

I wish you every success in today's deliberations and thank you for your attention.
