

**Presentation of Ambassador BARZANI
OPCW DG CANDIDATURE
EC 13 JULY 2017**

Your Excellency Mr President, Sheikh Bilal
Your Excellency Director General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü
Dear Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some people may find it ironic that I stand before you today. I come from a country that its former regime massively imported, produced and utilized chemical weapons to commit war crimes and launch genocide campaigns. I witnessed first-hand the destruction and human devastation related to these acts. War is never pretty, but the use of chemical warfare agents is probably the worst of its manifestations. As an Iraqi, the horror I feel about using toxic chemicals against civilian populations is particularly shocking. My commitment to preventing such barbarity is not only professional but also personal.

Thankfully, Iraq, the country that designated me as their candidate for the position of Director General of OPCW, has long since stopped making or using chemical weapons. Since 2003, after years of totalitarian regime and sanctions by the International community as a result of its atrocities committed against its own people and neighboring countries, we have reintegrated into the world community. Today, the new free and federal Iraq is on the right side of history, fighting an evil and violent terrorist organization that has occupied and terrorized our country and other countries all over the world. I take this opportunity to thank the brave Iraqi soldiers who have re-taken Mosul, and with the exceptional coalition of nations that have supported this effort.

My country is a founding member of the United Nations, but never assumed high ranking international positions. In this sense, I feel my candidature could be considered significant as it marks the reintegration of Iraq among the community of Nations. As we all know, the international concerns about chemical weapons began to be translated into action with the conferences of 1989 and 1993 in Paris where the Convention was signed. These concerns, with a great extent, were influenced by the chemical bombardment of the city of Halabja, and the immediate and horrifying death of 5000 civilians. These tragic events provided great momentum for both the Convention and later for the establishment of OPCW which took place in 1997.

This is why the election of a qualified diplomat coming from this region is a symbolic act, to commemorate the victims and support the war on terror. However, it is much more than the symbolic nature that convinced me to present my candidature. In fact, in the last decades, and, unfortunately more recently, the Middle East has witnessed the majority of chemical attacks, especially in Iraq and Syria. A person who is acquainted with region's geography, traditions, languages, dialects and complex political systems would have a

unique perspective that could help to deal better with this issue and lead a team tasked with preventing and investigating the use of chemical weapons.

Our core mission, of course, is to investigate accurately, inspect diligently, provide competent assistance, uncover facts and submit thoughtful conclusions to the U.N. Security Council which deals with the political aspects. Our sound technical, scientific and neutral analysis and actions will serve to keep the OPCW united, relevant and useful for all of us and the world community.

In pursuing our mission, The Convention should be considered as the unique reference for the actions of the organization. We must also remember that our modus operandi is consensual. I will devote all my efforts to preserve the continuity of a 20-year success-story of the OPCW. Its independence and the good “entente” among its members will be maintained to find the best way to adapt it to the future challenges we face.

Beyond this, I will have as a principal goal for the next four years two key pillars:

- • First, the Universality of the Convention.
- • Second, more visibility for the organization and its mission, increased cooperation and expertise.

Concerning the Universality goal, from day one, I would attempt to engage with the four “Remaining States” to convince their political authorities to join the Convention. Regarding South-Sudan, the task should be relatively easy. Israel signed the convention and ratification remains the only challenge. Egypt and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea will also be encouraged by the new direction to join the rest of the world and become a Member State. In addition, I will advocate all the State-Parties to adopt a common strategy to the threat posed by the non-state actors and terrorists groups that have grown exponentially in recent times.

Secondly, I would like to emphasize our need to utilize the new Media and Social Networking to give more visibility and publicity to the OPCW and its noble mission. The States Parties will be encouraged to integrate the Convention and the organization goals in their education systems to prevent future use of chemical weapons and make the future generation aware of this risk. We will continue to diversify the successful disarmament work, and address the issue of chemical weapons declared old and abandoned. We will consult the Advisory Board and States Parties for a strategy of bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of new technologies for peaceful use of chemistry and continue to provide expertise and propose creative initiatives.

We must remember that our organization is technical rather than political. We should emphasize this and develop collaboration with foundations, multinational companies and sponsors in order to find new sources of support and financing.

I will encourage the EC to discuss the creation of a yearly Prize to be attributed to a person for significant achievements in our field. If the EC endorses the proposal, we will nominate “goodwill” ambassadors from the entertainment and sports industries to promote and advocate our cause. Public relations, contact with NGO’s, lobbying and creating broader support will be very useful for the visibility of the OPCW.

The independence and professionalism of all employees of the organization must continue, and the priorities of our future actions should be established with the approval of the Executive Council. The five regional groups will be encouraged to present lists of candidates to the DDG among them the new DG should make his choice. We will expand our efforts to bring more talented women into the organization.

Another proposal that I intend to discuss with the host country and the city of The Hague is a museum for “Chemistry - between war and peace”. This will add an interesting dimension to our facility and attract visitors of all ages to learn more about our mission. This greater visibility through public relations and outreach will give us the opportunity to collect more funds and create partnerships with the private sector to better achieve our goals while preserving the stability of the budget.

Our end mission and message should converge: destruction of all chemical weapons, avoidance and prevention of future use of these horrible arms, and assurance that the OPCW promotes transition towards more verification activities and cooperation in the peaceful and not hostile use of chemistry. We represent a vast repository of knowledge and experience which together with our embrace of new technologies and our training capacities give us more and exciting opportunities to develop the future of our organization to serve humanity.

I am proud to be a candidate for the position of Director General of our organization, which has contributed so much to world peace and will continue to do so. In 2013, OPCW was honored to receive the Nobel Peace prize. This was awarded in recognition of our unique contribution in promoting a safer world free of chemical weapons.

If elected, as your Director General, I will be committed to work with all of you to build upon and continue the extraordinary work we do.

Thank you very much.