



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

**17th Annual Meeting of National Authorities of
States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention**

Remarks by Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü

OPCW Headquarters

27 November 2015

REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the 17th Annual Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. This meeting is a highly valued fixture on the OPCW calendar. It provides a forum for you to compare notes, share experiences, expand networks, and deepen cooperation at all levels.

The participation of more than 200 representatives from 123 States Parties amply demonstrates the importance of this event.

I am especially pleased to welcome representatives from Myanmar, one of our newest Member States, as well as from our partner organisations, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In its eighteenth year, the Chemical Weapons Convention is widely recognised as a multilateral success – and rightly so. The treaty codified the first ever comprehensive ban of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction under international verification. Never before have so many States joined a disarmament treaty in such short order. And never before has the international community come so close to eradicating all known stocks of a weapon of mass destruction.

At its core, the Convention owes its success to the dedication of its States Parties, and to the tireless efforts of their National Authorities. Indeed, your efforts guide and enforce what determines our success – namely, implementation of the Convention within your national jurisdictions. At this time of historic transition for the OPCW, your work is set only to increase in importance.

For as we shift our focus away from destruction of chemical weapons, National Authorities will play a frontline role in new efforts to prevent the re-emergence of such weapons. This has become particularly important in view of the increasing threat of use of Chemical Weapons by non-state actors.

Now, more than at any other time in our history, we need to strengthen the links in our global implementation chain.

Let me share with you what this might mean in practice over coming years.

First and foremost, we must identify weak links in our chain and act to reinforce them. This, of course, means working to persuade the four countries still outside the Convention – Egypt, Israel, North Korea and South Sudan – to join without delay. But we must also work to ensure our existing 192 States Parties have baseline standards in place for implementation.

For its part, the Technical Secretariat has sought to do this by working with Member States to identify their specific needs, and to tailor our capacity-building and training programmes accordingly. For example, some 44 States Parties have not yet adopted implementing legislation, and several others do not have legislation covering all initial measures.

It was for this reason that we continue to provide legislative assistance through the internship for legal drafters programme and have developed the internet-based Legislative Assistance Support Tool, or LAST, which some of your experts have drawn on. And we have unrolled the Influential Visitors Programme as a vehicle for engaging senior officials on best practices in the area of national implementation.

It was as a result of participation in this programme by the Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament earlier this year that Uganda moved to enact national implementing legislation.

The mentorship and partnership programme is a vital mechanism for networking among the States Parties. It encourages States Parties with advance knowledge and experience to assist and cooperate with other States Parties for effective implementation. I would encourage States Parties to volunteer taking part in this programme.

To allow us to fine-tune our capacity-building and training programmes, it is vital that National Authorities provide feedback to the Secretariat – a point which I will be making at the Conference of the States Parties next week.

We also rely on your linkages into regional and sub-regional organisations to add value and reach to our capacity-building efforts by drawing on the resources of such organisations.

Another area in which we need to expand our efforts is our stakeholder relationships, especially our partnerships with industry and the scientific establishment. We already enjoy practical exchanges facilitated by the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board, which this year included valuable recommendations for National Authorities arising from the work of the Temporary Working Group on verification. And we have seen an increase in participation by industry in OPCW-related events, including the second annual meeting of chemical industry and National Authorities from the Asian region in Doha.

Closer engagement with industry will be particularly important if we are to successfully broaden our defence against chemical weapons in the post-destruction phase.

Finally, I would mention education and outreach.

The Conference of the States Parties will decide next week on the creation of an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach to better guide development of programmes and strategies for engaging academia, scientists, industry and civil society on the work of the OPCW. It is now well understood among States Parties that the responsible application of chemistry is intrinsically linked with our efforts to prevent re-emergence of chemical weapons. To this end, we must nurture a culture of science working in the service of peace and security – especially among our young scientists and students.

An important contribution to this has been a German initiative to develop ethical guidelines for chemistry professionals in relation to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The OPCW hosted two workshops in the course of this year, attended by scientists and experts from more than 20 States Parties. They produced a set of ethical principles for responsible chemistry known as The Hague Ethical Guidelines. I invite you to familiarise yourselves with these guidelines and promote them amid your stakeholder communities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I mentioned at the outset of my remarks that the OPCW is undergoing a historic transition. Historic, because we are on the verge of completing destruction of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons. And also because our success in maintaining a high level of engagement will determine our future as a non-proliferation regime.

For there are many challenges ahead.

Will we be able to maintain our expertise and resources for the more complex task of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons?

How will we address the threat from non-state actors?

How can we keep abreast of new advances in science and technology?

In what ways can we better engage industry, the scientific community and civil society?

These are just some of the questions which we need to ask ourselves if we are to innovate for future success.

But, most importantly for meetings such as this one, we need to ask ourselves how we can help each other to strengthen our global implementation chain. Effective national implementation across all of our jurisdictions is the first base of our future success.

I wish you an informative and productive meeting.

Thank you.