



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Opening Remarks by H.E. Mr Ahmet Üzümcü, OPCW Director-General

Regional Seminar on Chemical Safety and Security Management

Dhaka, Bangladesh

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REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Lieutenant General Mahfuzur Rahman,

Chairman of the Bangladesh National Authority

Mr Kamrul Ahsan, Add. Foreign Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to join you today on the occasion of the Regional Seminar on Chemical Safety and Security Management.

I wish to thank the Republic of Bangladesh and its National Authority for hosting this event, and for the excellent arrangements and warm hospitality extended to participants.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Permanent Representation of Bangladesh in The Hague for its support, and to the United States of America for sponsoring this workshop.

Globalisation and rapid growth of chemical industry over recent years have increased the need for effective management and enhanced safety and security standards across the globe.

Chemical industry has indeed brought great benefits to our societies.

The fruits of scientific and technological developments are undeniable. But they also create significant responsibilities. We are under an obligation to ensure that these advances and our evolving knowledge are not misused.

All too often significant human and environmental damage is inflicted because of the absence of adequate safety standards and measures.

The damage from the actions of terrorists could be even more severe. The threat is both on account of those seeking to make chemical weapons or using toxic chemicals as weapons as well as through attacks on chemical facilities.

Preventing such contingencies or incidents is a responsibility shared by governments and industry, and by the international community. It has to be a part of a collective endeavour to promote peace, security, and development.

As you know, chemical safety and security has become a key part of OPCW capacity-building activities that aim at preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons and promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry.

Your presence here today signifies the importance your authorities attach to further enhancing your country's safety and security standards, and to building a strong foundation in this regard.

I assure you that the OPCW stands ready to facilitate your important work.

We are continuing to broaden the scope of our international cooperation and assistance activities, which are often tailored to the needs of our Member States.

Since 2009, we have conducted 38 training activities on chemical safety and security in which more than 1,400 Member States representatives have participated.

We highly appreciate the important contributions made by our States Parties that have committed to strengthen the provisions of Article XI in the region, and to provide support and expertise to their neighbours where necessary.

As in other areas of CWC implementation, our strength here lies in joint and collaborative action and ensuring that our common goals and vision of a chemical weapons free world endures well into the future.

For nearly twenty years, the OPCW has overseen the elimination of thousands of tonnes of chemical weapons under the terms of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

94% of the world's declared chemical weapons have now been destroyed with complete elimination of declared chemical weapons expected within the next seven years.

Yet, as impressive as these achievements are, they do not represent the full extent of the OPCW's work.

Disarmament is about more than getting rid of weapons – it is about making sure they are never again developed or used. And, in the case of chemical weapons, it is about making sure that any chemicals – including freely traded industrial ones – are not used as weapons.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria and in Iraq – both chlorine and sulfur mustard – continues to be a source of serious concern, particularly as our focus shifts from destruction of chemical weapons to preventing their re-emergence.

It is my hope that convening this seminar in Asia, with such broad representation, will help strengthen further regional cooperation in this key area. This event provides an important forum for sharing experiences and exchanging best practices on practical implementation of safety and security standards and mechanisms.

As experts, you will play a key role in providing guidance to industry on effective management that fosters economic development while following the highest standards of safety and security.

By working together with industry, we can make meaningful and effective investments in sustainable safety and security practices.

During the course of this workshop, you will have an opportunity to discuss ways of minimising the risk of chemical accidents and possible attacks and to explore common approaches and solutions.

We also look forward to your deliberations on ways and means to raising awareness in relation to peaceful uses of chemistry as well as fostering a greater safety and security culture.

Successful implementation of the CWC is greatly facilitated when professionals such as yourselves use your knowledge and expertise to make a contribution. This in turn allows the full beneficial potential of chemistry to be harnessed in a safe and secure environment.

Destruction of existing stocks of chemical weapons will by no means signal the final chapter of the OPCW's mission.

Among other important initiatives, our goal will remain to ensure that chemistry is used exclusively for peaceful ends and that our Member States develop safety and security standards afforded by the highest level of expertise.

This will require engaging with a broader community of stakeholders, high degree of awareness and a shared sense of responsibility.

In the hope that this event will be a step towards further cooperative initiatives, I wish you all an enjoyable and productive seminar.

Thank you.