

**Remarks made by the Director-General  
during the flag-hoisting ceremony, 31<sup>st</sup> August 2012**

Mayor Van Aartsen,

Distinguished Guests,

- A special day, a special occasion, and a special location. And special company I might add. We are gathered here today to mark the start of the 15th anniversary celebrations of the OPCW, one of the many international organisations in The Hague, however unique in its kind.
- On 29 April 1997, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) commenced its task to ensure the effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). This task could very well be summarized by our motto:
- *‘Working together for a world free of chemical weapons’*

I would like to take the opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the city of The Hague which has proven a reliable partner in our continuing efforts to secure the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The hospitality shown throughout the years has embedded the OPCW firmly in the city and local society.

- As host to numerous international organisations and tribunals, The Hague has demonstrated its strong commitment to peace. It stands out as a city dedicated to the promotion of fundamental human rights in conditions free from conflict. The Chemical

Weapons Convention and the OPCW are equally committed to ensure lasting international peace and security.

- The Hague with its long history of neutrality and contribution to international law was the logical choice for hosting the First Hague Peace Conference in 1899. An effort to find a durable solution to the problem of chemical weapons had then begun. When this endeavour culminated more than a hundred years later in 1992, The Hague was again an appropriate choice, for hosting the first truly disarmament organisation in the world.
- The Chemical Weapons Convention is unique in its scope of application as it is the first multilaterally negotiated and verifiable treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.
- The Convention is one of the most widely endorsed treaties ever (accepted by 188 States Parties). Under the Convention all of them are committed to implementing a regime that eliminates chemical weapons and prevents their re-emergence.
- It seeks to retain its value by also promoting peaceful uses of chemistry and assuring protection against chemical weapons for all its Member States.
- With its current membership representing 98 % of the world population, the OPCW is close to reaching universal adherence to the CWC.

- The Organisation has overseen the destruction of three-quarters of all declared chemical weapons. It inspects chemical industry on a daily basis.
- In addition to the verification activities, the OPCW continues to provide assistance to States Parties through a variety of programmes both for international cooperation as well as effective national implementation of the Convention.
- All in all, The Hague hosts an international organisation that has no parallel. Its actual record of achievements will ensure a long term future for the OPCW.
- Fifteen years on, I can say with certainty that the achievements of the OPCW would not have been possible without the constant commitment of the States Parties. The support and cooperation of the host country, the host city and the civil society have been crucial to this success.
- Shortly, the mayor and I will hoist the first commemorative flags that will fly for a whole week on this very bridge. These flags will be flying high to mark our 15 years of success, and will take us to further heights to create a world free of chemical weapons.
- My special thanks go out to Mayor Van Aartsen, who is playing a crucial role in promoting The Hague as the city for Global

Peace, Justice and Security and giving the OPCW continuous opportunities to consolidate its endeavors.