



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

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“Fifteen years of the Chemical Weapons Convention: Celebrating success.
Committing to the future”,

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR AHMET ÜZÜMCÜ, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF
THE OPCW**

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this High Level Meeting. The theme “Fifteen years of the Chemical Weapons Convention: Celebrating success. Committing to the future”, defines the purposes of this gathering.

We have come together as partners in a unique and noble cause. We look back at what we have accomplished in the past 15 years; recognising the progress that has been made in eliminating an entire category of weapons of mass destruction - an achievement that has no precedent in history.

And, we wish to look ahead to building on that success and committing to the future.

I am most grateful to H.E. Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations. His presence with us here today shows his strong support for promoting the global disarmament agenda.

I express my gratitude to you all, especially to the Ministers who have spared time from their busy schedules to participate in this meeting. Their presence makes this a truly memorable event.

This is a gathering that signifies the value of multilateralism. We echo today our collective resolve for a more humane; a more cooperative and peaceful world based on the abiding principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Today we remember the countless victims across the world who suffered the cruelty of chemical weapons; soldiers and civilians alike. A weapon that kills indiscriminately strikes at the heart of a longstanding tradition that forbids wanton killing. The carnage of Ieper and the atrocities of Halabja and Sardasht, stand as permanent reminders of a tragic era. These memories drive our determination to prevent such tragedies from ever happening again.

Ensuring the success of the Convention is our collective responsibility. Since the Convention came into force there has been steady progress towards realising its goals. Stockpiles of chemical weapons, once inordinately large and dangerous have now been reduced to a quarter of their original size.

The almost daily occurrence of an inspection of chemical industry somewhere in the world provides the basis of confidence in the treaty as an effective non-proliferation instrument.

OPCW programmes in the areas of assistance and protection against chemical weapons as well as international cooperation offer strong incentives to our wider membership to remain engaged and benefit from their participation in the OPCW.

That the Convention is regarded as a valuable and worthy instrument is evident from the numbers that have joined it in such short a period of time. 188 States Parties subscribe to the global ban on chemical weapons.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Success creates expectations. And maintaining it demands renewed commitment and resolve.

Three countries declaring possession of chemical weapons have commendably fulfilled their obligation to destroy their entire stockpile of chemical weapons. Despite having missed the destruction deadline, the two largest possessor states are on track towards that end. The States Parties took a decision based on foresight and wisdom encouraging the remaining possessor states to complete the task while keeping progress under close review.

Destruction of chemical weapons declared in good faith and as part of treaty commitments is only a matter of time. Our single most important challenge, however, is convincing those few countries that have not yet joined the Convention. This is a source of serious concern. States that do not join the Convention prevent their capabilities from being declared and eliminated under international verification. Without that the vision of a chemical weapons free world will remain elusive. There was recently a declaration emanating from a State not Party to the Convention alluding to the astonishing possibility of the use of chemical weapons. We must deplore this development. It flies in the face of the global sentiment that regards chemical weapons as abhorrent and unacceptable.

We must therefore redouble our efforts to persuade the remaining 8 states to join the Convention.

The Convention is designed to preclude the possibility of the use of chemical weapons. Together with universal acceptance is the imperative that all our States Parties continue to make steady progress towards its full and effective domestic implementation. This is a clear prerequisite.

Effective implementation builds confidence in the international community and realises more fully the security benefits of the Convention. It is not an imposition but an advantage. A legal framework through legislation and the means to enforce it create the domestic capacity to monitor, to report, and to guide activities involving chemicals along peaceful and productive lines. Such measures also represent the most practical means of addressing the contemporary threats relating to chemical terrorism.

Assistance for our States Parties to fulfil their national implementation obligations has been one of our major areas of work. We have shared our expertise and experiences at forums organised by the United Nations to support the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540 whose objectives are consistent with the goals of the CWC. Our cooperation with the United Nations goes deeper. For example, the Convention foresees placing the resources and expertise of the OPCW at the disposal of the U.N. in cases of investigations of alleged use of chemical weapons.

At the OPCW, we are aware that the future of the CWC will place new demands on the Organisation. As we approach the completion of the destruction of declared arsenals, progressively greater attention will have to focus on the objective of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Reviewing the industry verification regime to ensure that it will continue to promote confidence in compliance will be important. The regime will need to keep pace

with developments in science and technology. States Parties will be called upon to improve surveillance of transfers and trade in chemicals.

The culture of cooperation, constructive engagement and consensus that marks the OPCW multilateral experience, promises to be our greatest asset in our quest to deal with the unfinished business and in taking up future challenges. The Third Review Conference in April next year will provide an important opportunity to address these issues.

The motto of our Organisation is ‘working together for a world free of chemical weapons’. Your participation confirms your commitment to that goal.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has proved its value and shown that disarmament is not a utopian ideal. The results reinforce our faith in multilateralism. The CWC and the OPCW offer a model that can indeed spur progress in other areas of global policy.

I wish to conclude by once again expressing my gratitude to you all for your presence today.

Today’s meeting conveys the message that the international community remains committed to find enduring solutions to the problems of weapons of mass destruction.

Let us rededicate ourselves to collectively building a better and more secure future for ourselves and our future generations.

I thank you for your attention.