

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS TO HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE ORGANISATION FOR THE
PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS (OPCW)
New York, 1 October 2012**

Director-General Ahmed Üzümcü,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for coming together in support of the goal of the total elimination of chemical weapons.

The issue of chemical and biological weapons disarmament has been a longstanding item on the agenda of the United Nations. And although the Chemical Weapons Convention was many decades in the making, it was not opened for signature until 1993 – and did not enter into force until 1997.

Today, we celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Convention and the Organisation that was created to serve as its implementing body.

The Convention now has 188 States Parties. Three-quarters of the world's declared chemical weapons stockpiles have been eliminated. This is a remarkable achievement. It reflects the dedication and commitment of both the OPCW's Member States and the Technical Secretariat.

Today's meeting is an opportune moment to reaffirm our support for the core objectives of the CWC – and look to current and future challenges.

The verified elimination of declared chemical weapons stockpiles is approaching its completion.

Now is the time to build upon the Convention's achievements and prevent the re-emergence and proliferation of chemical weapons.

The universality of the CWC is indispensable to eliminating an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. I urge the eight States that are not yet Party to the Convention to join without delay.

These eight States are: Angola, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Israel, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

With respect to Syria, I have expressed grave concerns with statements made by representatives of the Syrian Government regarding the existence of chemical weapons and their possible use. I have also personally conveyed these concerns directly to President Assad in writing many weeks ago.

I once again emphasize the fundamental responsibility of the Syrian Government to ensure the safety and security of any such stockpiles. The use of such weapons would be an outrageous crime with dire consequences.

Let us also never forget that chemical weapons are not only a security concern; they also have profound humanitarian implications.

The work of the OPCW and its Member States affects all of us.

Let us all work together to eliminate the threat posed by chemical weapons for all people and for all time.

Thank you.