

IEPER: A CENTENARY COMMEMORATION MESSAGE
DELIVERED BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DR SAAD ABDULMAJEED IBRAHIM AL
ALI,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE OPCW
ON BEHALF OF THE ASIAN GROUP
AT IEPER, BELGIUM ON 21 APRIL 2015

Mr. Chairman,
Mr. Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is Ieper, the unforgettable battlefield with significant lessons for the future, that reminds us of one of the greatest fears in modern war—the use of chemical weapons.

On 22 of April 1915, a poison gas was used at Ieper. It was the first demonstration of the incapacitating effects of poison gas against humans.

Unfortunately, Ieper is a first of series of "accidents" that took place in the modern history, followed by the same scenarios in several parts of the World. People in Asia also suffered from the use of chemical weapons during the World War II and subsequent conflicts including in Sardasht and Halabja in 1987 and 1988 by Saddam' regime and recently in Syria.

The results were indiscriminate and often devastating. Since World War I, the chemical weapons have caused more than one million casualties globally.

It is therefore a distinct honor for me, on behalf of the OPCW Asian region member states, to address this commemorative event which honors the memory of all the victims of chemical weapons in the past hundred years and reaffirms our commitment to never forget their suffering. I would also like to express our appreciation to the OPCW Technical Secretariat, to the Belgian Government and to the Ieper City Council for organizing this very significant commemorative meeting. The "Ieper Declaration" will remind the visitors to this city

that one century after the horrendous events of 1915, the OPCW member states are determined not to allow a repetition of history and are committed to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances.

On this occasion, we would like to recall The Geneva Protocol. As a result of the public outrage, this Protocol, which prohibited the use of chemical weapons in warfare was founded and signed in 1925.

The Protocol, together with many International and Regional agreements, finally led to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) entering into force with 87 States Parties on 29 April 1997 and becoming a binding international law.

Since then, the CWC has achieved unprecedented success, with 190 States representing 98% of the global population becoming Parties to it. The principles underlying this Convention which prohibit defined the use of chemical weapons, as well as its successful implementation won global recognition when the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the OPCW.

Dear Delegates,

We, the Asian States Parties, are committed to the full implementation of the Convention. The near universality of Asian States adherence to the Convention demonstrates our determination to get rid of all categories of chemical weapons including abandoned chemical weapons and to foster international cooperation. Yet, we still recognize that much remains to be done.

It is necessary to achieve a global ban on chemical weapons. We are here, to call for the universal adherence to, and full implementation of the Convention, which will strengthen the security of all States.

For all those who have suffered, and those who are still suffering from the use of chemical weapons, this Convention is dedicated to you.

Before I conclude let us remind ourselves, as we go back to The Hague from the fringes of Flanders, of our duties to keep the torch from Flanders high enough to deter all the darkness of war and oppression.

Thank you