

**Statement by Eduardo Ibarrola, Ambassador of Mexico on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC)
on the occasion of the Centennial Commemoration of the
First Large-Scale Use of Chemical Weapons**

(Ieper, Belgium, 21 April, 2015)

One hundred years ago, the first large-scale chemical weapons attack was perpetrated in Ieper, causing the death and suffering of thousands of people. The countries of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States pay homage to the victims of that attack as well as to all those who have suffered the effects of weapons of mass destruction.

The memory of the victims strengthens our commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention to achieve a safer world free from such weapons.

The existence of weapons of mass destruction continues to pose a serious threat to international peace and security, which is compounded by the disturbing fact that nuclear weapons have not yet been subjected to a comprehensive prohibition. Our region pioneered the ban on the acquisition and development of weapons of mass destruction by establishing the first nuclear weapon-free zone in a densely populated area of the world with the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1967. Also, all the States in our region are parties to both the Chemical and Biological Weapon Conventions, which is an undeniable contribution to the achievement of a safer and more peaceful world.

The Latin America and the Caribbean region, faithful to its tradition of being a Zone of Peace reaffirms its unwavering commitment to general, complete and immediate disarmament under strict and effective international control which includes the prohibition and elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

We acknowledge the significant progress made by the international community in the elimination of chemical weapons. We reaffirm that the destruction of all categories of such weapons, including abandoned chemical weapons, should be concluded in the shortest possible time, within the established timeframes, and in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and its relevant decisions.

We call upon all States not Party to adhere to this Convention without delay, in order to achieve universality. We also call for the complete, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of all aspects of its provisions, in order to achieve full implementation.

We reaffirm that the fostering of international cooperation and assistance in the field of activities not prohibited under the Convention is one of its pillars and promotes the peaceful use of chemistry for the benefit of technological progress and scientific development. Chemical industry for peaceful purposes is a key element for ensuring progress in our region, which is why we support the right of every State to develop such industry, and to participate in the broadest possible exchange of chemicals, equipment,

and information in the field of chemistry, in accordance with the provisions of Article XI of the Convention.

A comprehensive approach in the field of security and cooperation, based on strict adherence to the provisions of the Convention, as well as the necessary balance between its pillars will strengthen the pre-emptive capabilities of both the OPCW and the international community to prevent the resurgence of chemical weapons and the threat of their use by non-state actors.

The Latin America and Caribbean region believes that a world free of chemical weapons should also draw on the promotion of education and of the culture of responsible use of scientific knowledge, by including codes of ethics in chemical activities and disseminating information contained in the provisions of the Convention.

The memory of the horrors of Ieper should further reinforce our efforts to achieve a world free of weapons of mass destruction, based on international law and cooperation as a way of ensuring peace among nations.