



## **Opening Remarks by the Deputy Director-General of the OPCW, Ms Odette Melono, at the Regional Pilot Workshop on National Protective Programmes against Chemical Weapons for GRULAC States Parties**

**As delivered on 9 September 2019, Lima, Peru**

Excellencies,  
Distinguished participants,  
Dear colleagues,

I would like to welcome you all to the Regional Pilot Workshop on National Protective Programmes against Chemical Weapons for Latin American and Caribbean States Parties.

It is a great pleasure to be here in Lima opening today's Workshop. I wish to express my sincere thanks to Peru for hosting this event and the warm hospitality it has extended to the participants.

Peru is a long-standing and committed partner of the OPCW and we deeply appreciate their help in organising this event for representatives from across the region. I wish to also acknowledge the support of the Federal Republic of Germany, whose recent voluntary contribution helped make this gathering possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

For more than 20 years, the Convention has worked as a bulwark against the threat of the use or acquisition of chemical weapons. Since the Convention entered into force in 1997, the OPCW has overseen the destruction of 97% of some 72,000 metric tonnes of chemical warfare agents. And by 2023, we expect all declared stockpiles to be destroyed with the United States completing its chemical demilitarisation process.

Nonetheless, while the dangers posed by State chemical arsenals are now receding, other threats are emerging that require us to remain vigilant. The possibility of non-State actors using toxic chemicals for hostile purposes is just one such hazard that we must all consider.

Prevention is of course the first line of defence, but preparations to deal with the consequences of an incident are essential to ensuring that States Parties' response measures will be effective. Consequently, the assistance and protection obligations that are found under Article X of the Convention play a fundamental role in protecting citizens against the effects of chemical weapons and chemical incidents.

Article X also promotes transparency by requiring States Parties to submit information on protection programmes. This lays the groundwork for confidence-building and encourages better communication and understanding among the States Parties.

Information sharing helps the Secretariat, as well as all States Parties, to better identify their needs, appreciate the dangers, and determine levels of readiness. Such interaction is also

essential for critically examining how we, collectively and individually, can best counter the threats.

Despite the clear benefits that can be found in information exchange, regrettably submissions from States Parties have been decreasing over recent years. In 2019, in the GRULAC region, 14 States Parties submitted information and six reported not having any protective programme in place at all. I strongly encourage States Parties to more proactively implement this part of the Convention.

The Technical Secretariat is here to assist in clarifying the requirements and to develop a tailored approach that fits the conditions of your region and your State. The primary objective of this Workshop is to equip you with the tools to identify and establish national programmes or frameworks for protection against chemical weapons.

To extract the full value from this workshop, it is vital that you share your experiences and best practices; and I thank all the States Parties who are here today. You will benefit from the expertise of members from the Technical Secretariat as well as other regional experts who are here to share their knowledge.

At the end of these few days we hope that you will take home the necessary means to institute your own national programmes, thereby fulfilling a vital obligation under the Convention. We also hope that your interactions here will strengthen the exchange of information on Article X in your region and by extension contribute to regional security.

Distinguished participants,

It is the success of workshops such as this one that strengthens the very bedrock of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Our common goal is clear: to ensure that the practice of chemistry is always – and exclusively – committed to the pursuit of peace, security and prosperity for all.

With that, let me wish you all an enjoyable and productive workshop.

Thank you for your attention.

\*\*\*\*\*