



OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES AT ITS TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. I warmly welcome all delegations to the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.
2. At the outset, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria on his election as the Chairperson of the Conference. I wish you success in your new and important role.
3. I wish to thank the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Yun-young Lee of the Republic of Korea, who efficiently steered the work of the Conference.
4. I also thank Ambassador Andrea Perugini of Italy for his able guidance of the Executive Council as its Chairperson during a busy and productive period. His predecessor, Ambassador Jana Reinišová of the Czech Republic, fulfilled this role with skill and dedication.
5. I welcome representatives of international organisations, industry associations, and civil society to this session of the Conference. Sustained and productive cooperation between the OPCW and its partner organisations is essential to succeeding in our common objectives.
6. Over the past year, the Secretariat has extended its efforts to expand the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention at a time of great challenge. The complete elimination of declared chemical weapons, which is a key goal of the Convention, is nearing.
7. Yet, challenges to the norms of the Convention are serious, as the use of chemical weapons in Iraq, Malaysia, Syria, and the United Kingdom has proven. The OPCW is now expected to act as a bulwark against the re-emergence of chemical weapons. This has also augmented our tasks.
8. Thousands of tonnes of toxic chemicals are produced, transported, stored, traded, and consumed daily—across the world—for entirely legitimate ends. And these legitimate



activities are monitored by the Secretariat through a stringent industry inspection regime. Still, as long as re-emergence of use of chemical weapons is a reality, the risk exists of fractions of these dangerous products, if diverted with ill intent, causing serious harm. In this context, the international community needs to ensure that no country stays outside the Convention.

9. During this session, States Parties will be requested to consider and adopt a Programme and Budget for 2020. The draft put forward to States Parties provides resources for the Secretariat to implement its activities with no increase in State Party assessed contributions.
10. Therefore, it is a key responsibility of the Conference to ensure that the Organisation has a budget in order for it to operate next year. Despite the increase in demands on its resources, the Secretariat has continued to deliver concrete and tangible results. In the context of zero nominal growth, the Secretariat has continually adapted and delivered. Yet, operational cost increases, such as inflation, may affect the implementation of the activities of the Secretariat.
11. Furthermore, due to cash pressures this year, namely because of late payments of assessed contributions, the Secretariat has already had to utilise the Working Capital Fund in September in the amount of EUR 2.5 million. I urge States Parties to pursue appropriate measures to pay their assessed contributions and reimbursements in a timely manner.
12. The OPCW was created to achieve the goals enshrined in the Convention. It is a unique instrument for the benefit of all its States Parties, built to last, and States Parties should make every effort to protect it and guarantee its independence in dealing with new challenges and risks.
13. For the first time since the entry into force of the Convention in 1997, the Conference of the States Parties is requested to approve two proposals—one by Canada, the Netherlands, and the United States of America, the other by the Russian Federation—to amend the schedules of chemicals listed in the Convention.
14. The activities of the Secretariat are broad and diverse, but the work related to the Syrian Arab Republic remains of significance for the Organisation. The Secretariat has informed States Parties about these activities through briefings in February, May, and October this year.
15. The Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) continues its work on allegations of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. On 1 March 2019, the FFM issued its final report on the incident of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Douma on 7 April 2018. The evaluation and analysis of all the information gathered by the FFM provide reasonable grounds that the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon had taken place.
16. As I have repeatedly expressed to States Parties since the briefing held on 28 May, it is in the nature of any thorough inquiry for individuals in a team to express subjective views. The overall conclusions of the inquiry, however, are based on the preponderance of objective facts. The Secretariat has, as it always does, considered

and taken into account all information submitted and views exchanged. The findings of the Douma report are drawn from their analysis.

17. While some of these diverse views continue to circulate in certain public discussion fora, I would like to reiterate that I stand by the impartial and professional conclusions reached by the FFM. As with all other FFM reports concluding that the use or likely use of chemical weapons occurred, the report on the incident that took place in Douma has been duly forwarded to the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which will examine it pursuant to its mandate. Currently, the FFM is looking into seven incidents of alleged chemical weapons use. It will report on its activities in due course.
18. The work of the Secretariat, through its Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), is to assist Syria in resolving all the gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that have arisen from its initial declaration of its chemical weapons programme.
19. To date, 22 rounds of consultations have taken place between the Secretariat and the Syrian Government. This year, three rounds of consultations have been held; the most recent took place in Damascus, from 14 to 23 October. Their outcome was reported to Executive Council at its regular sessions.
20. During the twentieth round of consultations held at OPCW Headquarters in March, the status of all outstanding issues, some of which raise serious concerns, was discussed and a plan of action was developed for each. In line with this plan, the DAT was deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic in April and October 2019. During these deployments, the DAT collected samples and received additional information from the Syrian National Authority. This information, together with the results of the analysis of samples collected, is being analysed by the DAT and the outcome will be reported to States Parties accordingly.
21. The Secretariat will continue to assist the Syrian Arab Republic in this matter. It remains the responsibility of the Syrian Arab Republic to fully comply with all its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the relevant OPCW decisions and United Nations Security Council resolutions.
22. In accordance with Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, adopted on 11 November 2016, the Secretariat conducted its fifth and sixth rounds of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in July and in November 2019.
23. During the third round of inspections in November 2018, a scheduled chemical was detected in one of the samples taken at the Barzah SSRC facilities. Upon the Secretariat's request for clarification, the Syrian Arab Republic provided an explanation in a note verbale dated 7 November 2019. The Secretariat is analysing this explanation and will inform the Council of the progress made in clarifying this issue in due course.
24. Pursuant to the decision adopted in June 2018 by the Conference of the States Parties on "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use" (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018), the Secretariat established the IIT to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons use in Syria.

25. The IIT is now fully functional and is an integral part of the Secretariat. The IIT has developed and implemented working methods for its investigations, consistent with international standards used by international commissions of inquiry. Its structure, functioning, and procedures are designed to ensure independence, impartiality, and integrity of its work.
26. Despite the current refusal by the Syrian Arab Republic to allow the IIT to enter its territory, the IIT has been actively collecting and examining extensive and relevant information related to nine incidents. Consistent with the decision adopted by the Conference, the Secretariat will provide in due course reports on its investigations to the Executive Council and the United Nations Secretary-General for their consideration.
27. A meeting of the Steering Committee on OPCW activities related to Syria took place in Damascus last week. In line with the Convention and relevant Executive Council decisions and Security Council resolutions, the Secretariat expects activities to take place during the whole of 2020. For this purpose, the extension of the Tripartite Agreement signed between the three parties in 2014 is to be signed before the end of the year.
28. Consultation took place and progress was made in 2019 on several initiatives that reflect the Organisation's current and emerging priorities and ensure that it remains fit for purpose. In this vein, I am pleased to report that progress has been made in the project to build a new Centre for Chemistry and Technology.
29. The ChemTech Centre will enable the OPCW to develop new and improved verification tools and increase training and capacity-building activities provided to States Parties. To date, financial contributions and pledges totalling EUR 28.6 million have been received from 24 States Parties and the European Union. I thank all contributors for their generous support.
30. An additional EUR 5 million is required by July 2020 to fully fund the project and ensure that it is completed in accordance with the projected schedule. As the project will generate tangible benefits for all States Parties, I renew my appeal to all to pledge financial support for this project, regardless of the amount.
31. As the threat from chemical weapons evolves, we must continuously adjust our response. This year, the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism considered how the Secretariat's capacity-building programmes are being adapted in light of contemporary security concerns.
32. In this regard, I was pleased to share with States Parties two innovative, new programmes: one on building institutional capacity in emergency planning and chemical first response, and a second on strengthening legal frameworks to counter chemical terrorism.
33. Turning our attention to progress in chemical demilitarisation, as at 31 October 2019 a total of 68,621 metric tonnes (MT) or 97.3% of the declared Category 1 chemical weapons had been destroyed under verification by the Secretariat. This includes the destruction by the United States of America of 25,897 MT, or 93.3% of its declared Category 1 chemical weapons.

34. In April, a delegation of the Executive Council visited the destruction facility of Pueblo, in Colorado. Destruction is ongoing and should meet the deadline of 2023 communicated by the United States of America.
35. In Libya, the project to clean up the former chemical weapons site in Ruwagha is scheduled to be completed on 30 November. The Secretariat, in collaboration with the Libyan National Authority, oversaw the rinse and treatment of Category 2 chemical material and storage tanks and the treatment of 350 MT of highly acidic effluent. I wish to thank Cyprus, Finland, New Zealand, Spain, and the European Union for their generous support of this project. Its conclusion demonstrates the OPCW's ability to undertake complex chemical treatment operations in a conflict zone.
36. With regard to the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) by Japan on the territory of China, cooperative efforts continued in 2019. As at 21 November, a total of 56,281 items of ACW out of 78,244 verified items recovered since operations began had been destroyed. A further estimated 330,000 ACW items are awaiting recovery and destruction. During the reporting period, the Secretariat conducted 12 related inspections in China.
37. In September, a delegation of the Executive Council visited China. The visit helped assess the status of efforts to destroy chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China. I also wish to commend both China and Japan for their commitment to achieving the goals of the Convention.
38. Moving now to old chemical weapons (OCW), in 2019 the Secretariat conducted eight inspections of OCWs in seven States Parties, namely, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
39. This week, the Secretariat is completing the 241 industry inspections planned for 2019. Since the entry into force of the Convention, there have been over 4,000 of these inspections. I would like to express the Secretariat's appreciation for the cooperation extended by the States Parties to ensure the ongoing smooth functioning of the verification regime.
40. In the area of international cooperation and technical assistance, 95 training courses, workshops, seminars, and other capacity-building programmes have been delivered in 2019, benefitting 2,364 participants. Here also, I wish to express the Secretariat's gratitude to the many States Parties that have provided substantial voluntary financial and in-kind contributions to our activities in this area.
41. In 2019, the Secretariat has continued to address the specific needs of African States Parties through the Africa Programme. An overview of the key activities and results of the fourth phase, which concludes this year, has been submitted to this session of the Conference as a Note entitled "The Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention" (EC-92/DG.13 C-24/DG.11, dated 9 September 2019).
42. The fifth phase of the programme will start in 2020 and will cover the next three years. Based on the fruitful consultations between the African States Parties and the Secretariat, a tailor-made concept was developed and approved by the African States

Parties. The concept will be formally submitted to the Council at its Ninety-Third Session.

43. At the end of today, this year's OPCW-The Hague Award will be presented. As you know, this award is a legacy of the OPCW receiving the 2013 Nobel Prize for Peace. The award, which was jointly established in 2014 by the OPCW and the City of The Hague, recognises individuals and institutions that make an outstanding contribution towards the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This year's three recipients have contributed meaningfully to the Chemical Weapons Convention, making progress in permanently eliminating chemical weapons while promoting chemistry for peace. I look forward to seeing you at this evening's ceremony.
44. The Scientific Advisory Board held its Twenty-Eighth Session in June, with a focus on its next science and technology review process. The Board's temporary working group on investigative science and technology held three meetings in 2019 and is currently drafting its end-of-mandate report, which will provide me with recommendations.
45. This year was a year of transition in terms of senior management. I am pleased to report that women now hold 50% of positions in the Secretariat's senior management structure, while ensuring due consideration of geographical distribution.
46. The continued relevance of the OPCW in contributing to peace and international security was clearly demonstrated when I was invited to address the United Nations Security Council earlier this month. I used the occasion to underscore the complementarity of the missions of the OPCW and the United Nations. In response, the Security Council reaffirmed in a presidential statement its strong support for the Convention. It also expressed its strong conviction that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons should be held accountable, calling on all States Parties to the Convention to fully comply with their obligations, and calling upon all States that have not yet done so to join the Convention without delay.
47. The OPCW has been successful because States Parties have chosen to make it so. In the process, they have established an exemplary model for multilateralism. Your continuing commitment and support are critical to the international community's preparedness to meet contemporary challenges. I can assure you that you can count on the commitment, independence, and expertise of the Secretariat to assist you in this shared endeavour.

Mr Chairperson,

48. The full text of my statement detailing our work over the last year will be circulated to delegations as an official document of this session.