



## **The 24<sup>th</sup> Conference of the State Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention**

**The Hague, The Netherlands, November 2019**

### **The Statement of Tehran Peace Museum**

**Mr Chairperson**

**Director General**

**Distinguished delegates**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am pleased to speak at this plenary session of the 24<sup>th</sup> Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, on behalf of Tehran Peace Museum (TPM) from Iran.

Please allow me to begin by extending our appreciation to the Director General Ambassador Arias, Technical Secretariat of OPCW, as well as all State Parties in advancing the goals of the CWC during the last year.

These efforts have led to destruction of 97% of the chemical weapons stockpiles declared by possessor States. Today, 98% of the global population lives under the protection of the CWC. These numbers are very promising in having a world fully free of chemical weapons. However, excellencies, there is still a long road ahead of us.

CWC members states have expressed their “determination for the sake of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons”. This can only be achieved through full universality of the convention without delay and rapid destruction of chemical weapons remaining in members states and non-member states. As Director General stated on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, the challenges we face for a world free of chemical warfare are not new, “but certainly require novel thinking”, diplomacy and cooperation above competition. Therefore, we encourage this conference to address the universality of the convention as a priority in future work of OPCW.

**Director General**

During the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the State Parties, member states recognized the suffering of those who have been exposed to chemical weapons in the past and established the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons and Establishment of a Voluntary Trust Fund for victims. This trust fund is financed solely with voluntary contribution of member states and individuals.

Herby we encourage Technical Secretariat of OPCW to take action on the following subjects according to paragraphs 3 and 4 of the decision to establish this trust fund:

- 1- Establishing the registry system of all victims of chemical weapons, including the Iranian ones, as the foundation for further research and assistance for all the victims of chemical weapons.
- 2- Supporting more research on late complications of mustard gas and nerve agents in order to increase the quality of life of the survivors of chemical weapons.
- 3- Advancing the exchange of current available information and promoting such knowledge on treatment of survivors of chemical attacks among the physicians and the medical teams around the world, especially in regions that have already been affected by chemical weapons.
- 4- Enriching the “Supporting Victims of Chemical Weapons” page on OPCW website and make it a reference page on human costs of the use of chemical weapons for delegations, academics, students and all interested individuals.

We, at TPM, guaranty our full cooperation and assistance with the Technical Secretariat on all four categories and we encourage other civil society members to do so. In addition, we invite all member states to consider contributing to the trust fund for the above-mentioned purposes and to support the recommendations.

Furthermore, we, as an organization working directly with veterans and victims of chemical weapons, would like the address the unilateral sanctions against Iran which has resulted in serious difficulties in access to necessary medications and required medical care for victims to maintain the treatment they used to receive, and provide the best possible quality of life after this severe trauma. As a veteran myself, I speak from experience when I state, although it is claimed humanitarian trades are not subject to sanctions, in practice the access to medications and medical equipment have been seriously limited, leading to health problems and tensions among the survivors. We strongly condemn this act and request the conference and OPCW to take action to ease the suffering caused by such illegal measures.

#### **Ladies and gentlemen**

We conclude by expressing our readiness to work closely with Advisory Board on Education and Outreach of OPCW regarding Subitem 8(a) of their 8<sup>th</sup> report on using history of chemical weapons as an educational tool. TPM has been actively working on raising awareness about the consequences of chemical warfare since its establishment. The volunteer network of TPM in cooperation with its partners in Iran, can provide first-hand experiences of exposure to chemical weapons, medical trainings and art programs in person, written or multi-media format.

Thank you very much for your attention.