



## **Opening Remarks by the Director-General of the OPCW, Fernando Arias, to the 20th Induction Workshop for Diplomatic Personnel**

**As delivered on 17 September 2020, The Hague, Netherlands**

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Twentieth Edition of the Induction Workshop for Diplomats.

The Secretariat offers this annual briefing to provide newly arrived delegates with an overview of the OPCW and its critical work. The OPCW diplomatic community is very active and it is essential. You join it at a challenging time.

The situation regarding the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime is worrying. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was signed in 2017, may not enter into force. The successful Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) was suspended in 2019. The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II) was signed in 1993; however it has not entered into force. The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty was terminated in 2002. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) opened for signature in 1996, has not entered into force, and recent developments indicate its founding principle may be under threat. The Treaty on Open Skies that entered into force in January 2002, and has brought important benefits during the last 18 years, will come to an end very soon. The Biological Weapons Convention entered into force in 1975. Progress has certainly been made by its 183 States Parties; however, the challenges to its effective implementation remain clear. So clear that the Convention was never granted an Organisation in charge to implement it. In this context we realise with concern that the internationally recognised legal structure that underpin the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture can feel under threat.

And here in The Hague we have the Chemical Weapons Convention. With 193 States Parties, the treaty covers 98% of the world's population. The Convention and the OPCW have delivered concrete and durable results in the global effort to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction. Over 98% of the declared stockpiles of chemical weapons in the world have been verified as eliminated. Safe and steady destruction continues and the remaining fraction is on track to be destroyed by the year 2023.

The Convention is a unique treaty as it embodies a total and verifiable ban, which is a goal much more ambitious than the one of non-proliferation, because we work for complete elimination, total destruction of chemical weapons, vigilance against re-emergence, zero tolerance. In recognition of the OPCW's extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons, the Organisation received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013.

What has been achieved under the Convention in little over two decades amounts to a significant and tangible contribution to international disarmament. Much has been invested to attain this achievement and at present the international community and the Organisation have an obligation to protect it.

The success of the OPCW is the result of several generations of diplomatic work in The Hague and in the capitals of the States Parties. Over 1.4 billion in State Party public funding has been dedicated to accomplish this achievement.

We are nearing the end of the elimination of declared chemical weapons. As we near this milestone, our focus is shifting to the difficult challenge of preventing re-emergence and implementing the Convention in its full extent.

Across the world, thousands of tons of toxic chemicals are produced, transported, stored, traded, and consumed daily for entirely legitimate ends. Still, the risk exists that fractions of these dangerous substances, if diverted with ill intent, can cause serious harm. Further, the rapid evolution in chemical substances, science, and technology enhances the potential risk of accidents, with consequences for people, infrastructure, and the environment.

Our ability to attract, maintain, and develop a team of high calibre experts in the Secretariat is central to our capacity to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Essentially, the Secretariat is a service provider. As such, the Secretariat must guarantee expertise across a broad range of areas to ensure the services we provide to States Parties are of the highest quality.

The Secretariat's expertise is meant to be in the benefit of States Parties through our many different programmes. This translates into transfer of information and training for inspectors, scientists, technologists, safety and security experts, first responders, medical professionals, legal experts, customs agents, national authorities etc.

The OPCW's project to upgrade our current OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store to become a Centre for Chemistry and Technology will play an important role in this regard. It will create new capacity building and joint research opportunities and will provide a platform for international cooperation. It will enhance our knowledge management capabilities. The new laboratory will equip the Organisation with the tools and resources needed to adapt to new developments in science and technology.

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 outbreak, the project has continued to make steady progress within the planned timeline. The final design of the ChemTech Centre has recently been completed and the construction tender process is underway.

The Secretariat will work with States Parties to prepare a dossier of potential projects that can be carried out at the Centre as soon as the construction is completed. These projects would be implemented in the field of international cooperation and assistance, and could encompass activities such as scientific research programmes, lectures, and visits from academics.

To date, financial contributions and pledges totalling 30.6 million EUR have been received from 44 countries, the European Union, and personal contributors. I sincerely thank all contributors for their generous support. An additional 2.9 million EUR is needed to fully fund

the project. I encourage all States Parties from all regions to pledge financial support for this project, with amounts that suit their situation.

The OPCW also remains sharply focused on our most challenging ongoing priorities. In 2020, the OPCW entered its seventh year of engagement in the Syrian Arab Republic. The OPCW has invested a great deal of time, attention, and resources in our efforts to deliver on the mandates given to us by States Parties regarding the Syrian chemical weapons dossier.

We have three instruments at our disposal to complete our work in that country: the Fact-Finding Mission, the Declaration Assessment Team, and Investigation and Identification Team. Later today, you will be briefed in depth about their work and all Syria-related activities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have stressed that the Secretariat's expertise is essential for our success. Equal to the need for high calibre human resources is the requirement of sustainable and reliable programmatic funding.

States Parties are currently considering the 2021 Programme and Budget. I thank you for your contributions to the Programme and Budget consultations.

The 2021 draft Budget seeks to strike a balance between the constraints of the current global situation and the steady loss of purchasing power of the OPCW. However, budgeting based on zero-nominal growth is not sustainable. The gap between assessed contributions and States Parties' programmatic needs is widening each year.

I thank States Parties for the voluntary contributions to the OPCW's trust funds to support key initiatives. However, the growing number of long-term issues we must address and threats we are facing cannot be addressed with these resources alone. Sustainable regular budget funding is needed to enable effective planning and efficient delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The presenters today will provide greater detail on the issues and initiatives I have raised. The Secretariat greatly appreciates your participation in this workshop. Your support and commitment is essential for the Organisation to fulfil its crucial mandate to rid the world of chemical weapons. We must succeed in this critical mission. We owe it to the victims of chemical weapons and to future generations.

I hope that today you will receive valuable information and insights that will assist you in fulfilling your important role. I am confident this workshop will deepen your understanding of the Organisation and highlight the distance we have moved forward and the path ahead. I wish you a productive and beneficial workshop.

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Please click [here](#) for the video recording of the Director-General's remarks.