

Statement of Mr Khder Kareem
Mayors for Peace
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Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
The Hague, The Netherlands

Mr. Chairman, Director-General, CWC Coalition Colleagues, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all know that this year is totally different, and that Covid-19 has changed almost everything around the world. I hope therefore that everyone has stayed safe and healthy. Since the whole world is right now fighting Covid-19, I think this is directly related to our conference focus – building a world free of chemical weapons. Since our country has suffered from chemical weapons, we know this wound well.

As we check the rate of Covid cases this year in those areas where chemical weapons have been used in the past, we note that the rate of infections and deaths from the pandemic is higher than in other regions of Iraq. This indicates once again that our experiences with chemical weapons attacks have had long-lasting health impacts, making our population more vulnerable to the pandemic than other populations. Chemical agents, which killed thousands of our people and wounded many more over three decades ago, continue to have an impact on our public health. For this reason, among many others, we should all work much harder than before to establish a much safer, healthier, and better world for our children.

We need to do our best to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction – chemical, biological, and nuclear. Mayors for Peace and the International Peace Bureau helped to achieve a major goal this year – the fiftieth national ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), thus allowing this historic milestone to enter into force in January, 2021.

In addition to working for peace, we all must work as well on improving national and international public health systems, because sustainable good health is the top priority of our communities. The coronavirus has indeed proven this to us all this year.

We've all got a long way to go to meet these goals and move our communities beyond the current pandemic, but we must do so to make this a much better and sustainable world.

I wish you all a more peaceful and healthy world. Thank you for your kind attention, and I ask that this statement be made part of the published proceedings of CSP-25.