

**Statement by Dr Johannes Georg Weinig (Germany),
Chairperson of the OPCW Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO),
to the 26th Conference of the States Parties,
The Hague, 29 November – 3 December 2021**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to congratulate you, Mr Chairperson, on your election to lead the work of this important Conference.

Since my last statement to the 25th Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in April 2021 ABEO's activities have still been affected by the restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the Board was able to carry out multiple activities and to reach an important milestone with the final report of the ABEO Temporary Working Group (TWG) on e-Learning, and its corresponding recommendations for the improvement of the Secretariat's e-Learning offering and its future development. A landmark for OPCW, without doubt, was the first pillar ceremony for the new Centre for Chemistry and Technology on 23 September 2021. The ABEO continuously promotes the project by engaging scientists, experts, and institutions to support the ChemTech Centre.

The Board focuses on ongoing efforts in active learning, e-Learning and educational resources for National Authorities and the next-generation, in order to contribute to raising awareness of the mandate and work of the OPCW. With the support from the Technical Secretariat, ABEO was able to convene two online meetings, an intersessional working meeting on 22 June 2021 and its Eleventh Session on 26 to 27 July 2021, that was also the last meeting of the current Board. ABEO will start its third term of office with both its new and re-appointed members on 1 January 2022.

ABEO members conducted several activities related to education and raising awareness about the Convention and the OPCW during the inter-sessional period, either individually or as a group. In addition, and to facilitate its work during the inter-sessional period, the ABEO established internal working groups focusing on concrete projects. In line with ABEO's Strategic Plan different target audiences, such as industry, scientists, academia, civil society, policy makers, and young professionals are being addressed.

Concrete areas of current and future work

The Report of the ABEO Temporary Working Group on e-Learning was adopted by the TWG in July and after a review by the ABEO sent to the Director-General in August. The TWG, chaired by Board member Professor Rocael Hernandez Rizzardini (Guatemala) thoroughly reviewed the Technical Secretariat's e-Learning offering and provided advice on the further development of e-Learning modules and on a strategy for the Secretariat to develop e-Learning

offers with a common approach. During its second meeting, held virtually on 28 April 2021, the TWG finalized the drafting of five thematic recommendations on the OPCW course catalogue, on its current e-Learning modules, on the creation of an e-Learning committee, general guidelines for online courses and the creation of a content pack for academia and alliances with universities. The work of the TWG on e-Learning was co-financed by the OPCW and the European Union through the “EU Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/538 of 1 April 2019 in support of activities of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the framework of the implementation of the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction”.

Within the EU Project 5B “Translation and Dissemination of Education and Outreach Tools and Materials” the “Jigsaw Exercise on The Hague Ethical Guidelines”¹ by Board member Professor Alastair Hay (United Kingdom) and the “ABEO report on the role of education and outreach in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons”² have been translated into all other official OPCW languages and are available at the OPCW website. The dissemination of these materials will increase the use of OPCW education and outreach materials in non-English speaking regions.

A closer collaboration with the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) has been successfully established and two observers of each Board were able to take part in ABEO’s and SAB’s virtual meetings, respectively.

ABEO has continued its cooperation with the International Cooperation and Assistance Division and the provision of advice and assistance to requesting National Authorities. In this context, Board members presented education and outreach activities at the Twenty-Second Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Latin America and the Caribbean, held virtually from 8 to 10 June 2021, at the Nineteenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities in Africa, held virtually from 15 to 17 June 2021, and at the Eighth Annual Meeting of representatives of the Chemical Industry and National Authorities, held virtually from 12 to 13 October 2021. I also had the honour to participate at the Twenty Third Annual Meeting of National Authorities held from 23 to 26 November 2021.

Board members participated and presented in several dual-use related initiatives and events, such as the EU-funded “Targeted Initiative (TI) on Export Controls of Dual-Use Materials and Technologies”, the Non-proliferation for Global Security Foundation³ (NPSGlobal), and the

¹ The translated resource “The Hague Ethical Guidelines Jigsaw Exercise” has been uploaded on the respective language’s landing page at <https://www.opcw.org/ar/mwjwihat-lahay-alkhlaqyt>, <https://www.opcw.org/zh-hans/hai-yalunlizhunze>, <https://www.opcw.org/fr/les-principes-directeurs-ethiques-de-la-haye>, <https://www.opcw.org/ru/gaagskie-eticheskie-principy> and <https://www.opcw.org/es/directrices-eticas-de-la-haya>.

² The translated material “ABEO report on the role of education and outreach in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons” has been uploaded on the OPCW webpage in the section “Other Resources” in “How People Learn”: <https://www.opcw.org/resources/education-and-outreach/other-resources>

³ Contribution with lectures in 8 modules on nonproliferation of chemical and biological weapons and export control of dual use materials and technology. Modality: online synchronous learning. (2020 and 2021).

online Conference “Dual Use in Chemical Research: Opportunities, Risks and Responsibility”, organised by the German Joint Committee on the Handling of Security-Relevant Research.

Within activities towards chemical safety and security, Board members contributed to raising awareness of The Hague Ethical Guidelines in a meeting with the International Chemical Trade Association (ICTA). ABEO’s presentation at the meeting with ICTA contributed to the full endorsement of the Guidelines by ICTA. In its efforts to raise awareness of The Hague Ethical Guidelines, the Board was successful in getting a mention of the guidelines into the most recent recommendations of the German Chemical Society (GDCh) for bachelor studies in chemistry at universities in Germany (September 2021).

Board members also participated in a World Health Organization (WHO) working group that was producing guidance on biosecurity for the biological sciences, and in the instructional team of the course on legislative and regulatory issues in chemical security in Pakistan.

ABEO was able to attract several chemical societies to join the group of chemical societies who already financially supported the ChemTech Centre. I was honoured to attend the first pillar ceremony at the new site in Pijnacker-Nootdorp. The ABEO will keep investing energy to support the ChemTech Centre by identifying further scientists, experts, and institutions who can contribute to promotion and work of the Centre. Promising correspondence with the Executive Secretariat and the Council of the Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings about an invitation to Director-General Fernando Arias at the 2022 Lindau Meeting of Nobel Laureates in Chemistry will trigger the promotion of the ChemTech Centre among Nobel Laureates, young scientists and media.

An ABEO internal working group is focusing on a proposal to initiate a dialogue with National Authorities and create regional online courses for them on the reasons why education and outreach can be useful in reaching out to academia and scientific associations, and on how education and outreach can contribute to the implementation of the Convention. A second working group will prepare a contribution of the ABEO to the Secretariat’s submission to the United Nations Secretary-General’s Report on Disarmament Education for 2022 and the selection of educational resources that could be shared with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and published on its webpage.

Conclusion

Mr Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates, the pandemic situation still did not allow a personal presentation of this statement and the overall list of ABEO activities is yet much longer. Nevertheless, I do hope that you and all delegates were able to get a flavour of ABEO’s interesting discussions and future-oriented work.

At the end of 2021, the ABEO will have already completed two three-year terms since its establishment in 2015. Following the call for nominations in January 2021 eleven new Board members have been appointed by the Director-General and four ABEO members have been re-appointed for a second term of office. The composition of the Board is diverse in terms of geographical basis, as all regional groups are represented at the Board both in current and future

composition. Gender balance is also fully taken into account. I wish the Board every success for its next three-year term.

Some of the outgoing and former Board members offered already earlier this year to build a group of ABEO alumni willing to contribute on a voluntary basis with their experience to the OPCW as well as the ChemTech Centre. It is planned to set up the ABEO alumni network at the beginning of next year.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Mr Shahab Ud Din (Pakistan) who served as Vice-Chairperson in 2021 and all Board members for our fruitful co-operation and all their constructive contributions to the work of the ABEO.

Before concluding, I wish to thank on behalf of the Board all States Parties that have recognized and supported the work of the ABEO. We invite you to extensively make use of the education and outreach materials provided by the ABEO that support the worldwide implementation of the Convention.

I request that this statement be published on the OPCW Catalyst and public website.

Thank you very much.