



Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

The Hague, 29 November 2021

Statement by Mr Paul Huijts, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

As a representative of the Netherlands, the proud host country of the OPCW, I am honoured to have the opportunity to share my thoughts with you on this Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare. Unfortunately, for the second year in a row, we will not be able to gather in person to pay our respects to the victims of chemical warfare. These men, women and children should be remembered. Their fate serves as a grim reminder of the horrors associated with chemical warfare and the duty that we collectively have to ensure that we rid the world of these terrible weapons. That is what the world owes to all of those who we remember today.

In its nearly 25 years of existence, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has been instrumental in achieving tremendous progress to this end. Almost all stockpiles declared by possessor states have been destroyed, and completion of this destruction is within reach. The organization and all of us, as Member States, can be truly proud of this great success. The OPCW's achievements underline the importance and effectiveness of multilateral diplomacy.

The past year marked the first ever decision of the OPCW membership to impose sanctions on a state for its continuing failure to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention. A milestone step, that underlines the resolve of all OPCW member states to enforce the solemn pledge they made upon accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention: to rid the world of chemical weapons, so that no one – no man, no woman, no child – will ever fall victim to chemical weapons again.

On a day like today, it is important to highlight our collective progress and achievements. At the same time, let me underline that the OPCW's task cannot be considered to be done. Unfortunately, the threat of the re-emergence of chemical weapons is real, as major incidents with chemical weapons have demonstrated in recent years. These incidents prove that despite the imminent complete destruction of all declared stockpiles, the risk of the renewed use of chemical weapons remains. Constant vigilance in preventing this will be paramount in the years to come.

Therefore, I would like to close with an appeal to all of you: keep on fighting the good fight. The Netherlands continues to stand ready to work with each and every one of you to fulfil the promise of the OPCW and ensure that the victims we remember today will not have passed in vein.