



Opening Remarks by the OPCW Deputy Director-General at the Closing Ceremony of the Associate Programme - 2019

As delivered on 27 September 2019, The Hague, Netherlands

Excellencies,
Distinguished Associate Programme participants,

On behalf of the OPCW's Director-General, Fernando Arias, I am pleased to welcome you to the closing ceremony of the 20th edition of the OPCW Associate Programme. Let me extend to you my heartfelt congratulations on your successful completion of the programme. You are now part of a large, diverse and dynamic group of alumni from 121 of the OPCW's Member States.

Twenty years since its launch the Associate Programme is still delivering on its promise of promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of chemistry. The programme attracts participants from industry, academic institutions and government agencies. You have been trained—in a hands-on way—to further implement the Chemical Weapons Convention in your home countries and to operate more effectively and safely in a modern chemical industry environment. Furthermore, the programme has demonstrated how closely your respective areas of responsibility are connected to one another.

Our purpose in highlighting these links is simple: to create a network of experts who can provide direct and practical support to their National Authorities. In addition to the overall goal of contributing to economic and technological development, your expertise will be sought in more specific areas such as strengthening chemical safety and security standards and the sharing of best practices. The positive feedback we have received from former participants suggests that we are moving in the right direction.

With your skills you will be able to offer assistance through your National Authorities to further enhance your countries' implementation of the Convention. Most importantly, the Associate Programme is adding value to global efforts to ensure that chemical weapons never re-emerge again, and that chemistry is applied exclusively for the benefit of humankind. We appreciate that our alumni are passing on what they have learned in their places of work and beyond. This has a significant impact on educating people, especially students and researchers, about what it is that the OPCW does and why it is important. Responsible science must be a key message that we convey to future generations of scientists, and we hope you will be passionate advocates of this ideal.

During the programme you have experienced—first-hand—how modern chemical industries work and what is required to ensure their efficiency and safety. And you have discussed how

processes can best be managed in a variety of ways, from scenario-based role playing to knowledge exchange and sharing of experiences with world-class experts.

The end of this year's programme is not the end of our association. I strongly encourage National Authorities to draw on programme participants to raise awareness of the Convention and to support—and improve—its implementation. To this end, we will be communicating dissemination plans to your respective National Authorities.

The Associate Programme's Alumni Association has proven to be a valuable platform for hosting exchanges of views, scientific information, and professional experiences. We need to work together to ensure that this remains the case. Such engagement is important since the alumni are an important resource, and over the years we have seen many of them follow through on their interest. Several have joined their National Authorities, while others have taken up senior positions in industry. As many as twenty have also joined the Secretariat in various capacities, six of them have served as Inspection Team Leaders. Making an important contribution to education and outreach strategies, one alumnus is currently serving on the OPCW Advisory Board on Education and Outreach – Dr Austin Aluoch of Kenya. An alumna of the programme, Dr. Syeda Sultana Razia of Bangladesh, is also serving as a member of the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board.

To help you keep in touch in an interactive way, we hope to continue, and expand, our annual webinar series for the Alumni Association. These webinars have provided useful recommendations on how to fine-tune, improve and make more relevant the programme in the face of emerging challenges. Implementation of these recommendations has served to deepen the programme's impact at the national level.

Before concluding, I wish to take this opportunity to thank our partners who have supported this Programme. There are too many individuals, companies, and universities for me to mention here. Nevertheless, without their contributions, the Associate Programme would not be what it is today – the flagship capacity building activity of the OPCW. Special appreciation for the invaluable support goes to the European Chemical Industry Council, the World Customs Organization, the European Chemicals Agency, the European Chemical Industry Council, the European Association of Chemical Distributors, the Dutch Customs, and the City and Port of Rotterdam. I would also like to thank the University of Surrey for, once again, running two parallel courses on chemical engineering, which has allowed us to accommodate such a large number of participants. As always, we are especially grateful for offers of industry placements – seventeen were offered this year across twelve of our Member States in Europe, Asia and Latin America. I must also express my gratitude to all of the hosting Member States and industries.

Let me finish by saying that I hope you will pass on what you have learned in our common endeavour to ensure chemistry is used exclusively for the benefit of humanity. The strong commitment you have shown during the programme leaves no doubt in my mind that you will

add enormous value to your countries' economic and technological development, as well as to our global mission. I wish you every success in the future as part of the OPCW family.

Thank you for your attention.
