



## **Opening Remarks by the OPCW Deputy Director-General at the Global Women's Breakfast 2021**

**As delivered on 9 February 2021, The Hague, Netherlands**

Dear colleagues,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2021 OPCW-IUPAC Global Women's Breakfast. The OPCW is honoured to participate in this worldwide event for the second time. I would like to thank our partner, the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, for launching this important initiative. I would also like to thank the Staff Council for making this virtual gathering possible.

Events like this one are already underway and will continue throughout the day around the world, linking women in chemistry under this year's theme of "Empowering Diversity in Science". The timing of today's breakfast is well chosen as we will also be marking the International Day of Women and Girls in Science on 11 February.

The OPCW is proud of its diversity and in particular the different backgrounds, cultures, religions, and experiences of our colleagues. We all work together to contribute to this organisation's mission of ensuring a world free of chemical weapons and promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry. But we can only achieve these goals with an equitable and inclusive workforce.

Each year, we are making further strides forward in this regard. In 2020, the OPCW stepped up its efforts to create an enabling working environment where all employees are included, valued, and empowered to contribute at their best. COVID-19 and its related challenges have accelerated positive change in terms of increasing flexibility at work, and sensitivity towards diversity. Last year, webinars and courses for staff on gender in disarmament, gender mainstreaming, diversity and inclusion expanded our internal dialogue and understanding around these issues. Along with these activities, in November the OPCW and Sweden held an online event to highlight the need for gender diversity in disarmament. It attracted 140 participants from over 40 Member States and the Secretariat to discuss advancing gender balance and inclusion in the disarmament field. The Women in Chemistry Symposium, which has now been running for a number of years, also explores opportunities and challenges for women working in the chemical sciences, academia, and industry.

Through our Gender Focal Points, the OPCW is putting our commitment to gender diversity into action by acting as divisional points of contact on all gender related concerns or challenges, thereby helping to achieve a positive and collaborative work environment. In addition, a Gender and Diversity Audit is currently being conducted to explore how to further improve the

diversity and gender balance of the organisation. To create a supportive work environment which benefits all OPCW staff, especially women, issues such as flexible working conditions, paid parental leave, and effective measures against all forms of harassment are either being examined or policies are already in place.

Whilst we have accomplished gender parity in our senior management structure, we have yet to reach our goal of achieving gender balance across the whole Organisation. Nevertheless, we are moving in the right direction. Our efforts to attract more women candidates in our recruitment process are showing results. Last year more women applied for positions than ever before. However, there is still much to do. Science and technology are advancing faster than ever before, and it is time that women's empowerment in the scientific world travelled at a similar speed. We commend institutions such as the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry for encouraging greater participation of women in chemistry and connecting them with OPCW.

Our fellow participants at events hosted around the world today come from diverse sectors, including government, academia, industry, and the scientific community. This diversity presents a wonderful opportunity for us share and learn from women in different fields and at different stages in their careers. These alternative vantage points can reveal enlightening perspectives on leadership and professional development.

As has so often been said, 2020 was a year like no other. During this pandemic, the OPCW has continued to provide support to women worldwide to expand their networks and realise their professional aspirations through virtual training courses and events. I would like to thank you for all your efforts which have enabled the OPCW to continue its important work throughout this difficult time.

I hope today's activities and discussions help you to connect with your colleagues and that you enjoy this event. I urge you to reach out through social media platforms under the hashtags #GWB2021 to share your photos and comments from this meeting. I thank you all for taking the time today to come together and make this event a success. I am confident you will be glad you did.

Thank you.

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