



Opening Remarks by the OPCW Deputy Director-General at the 19th Induction Workshop for Diplomatic Personnel

As delivered on 12 September 2019, The Hague, Netherlands

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Nineteenth Edition of the Induction Workshop for Diplomatic Personnel.

The Secretariat offers this annual briefing to provide newly arrived delegates with an overview of the OPCW and its work. At the same time, this workshop aims to give you the opportunity to engage and connect with the Secretariat's senior management. The programme also includes a visit to our Laboratory and Equipment Store in nearby Rijswijk. These visits allow you to see the important role that this facility plays in our activities.

We hope this workshop will deepen your understanding of the OPCW and highlight the distance we have travelled and the path ahead.

What has been achieved under the Convention in little over two decades is significant and tangible in terms of its contribution to international disarmament. To date, the OPCW has verified the destruction of 97% of some 72,000 metric tonnes of declared chemical warfare stocks. Moreover, the United States, the last declared possessor State Party, is on track to complete its chemical weapon destruction process by 2023.

In recognition of the OPCW's extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons, the Organisation received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013.

Universality is also nearly within our grasp with 193 States Parties, which is the greatest number of adherents of any disarmament treaty in the world. The Secretariat continues to engage with the four remaining countries – Egypt, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan – to convince them to join our collective endeavour.

While much has been accomplished in a relatively short time, we have faced challenges along the way. In 2013, we began our mission in Syria to verify the removal and destruction of Syria's chemical programme. Never in our history had we overseen a destruction process in such a compressed timeframe and amidst an active conflict. By August 2014, however, the Organisation in cooperation with the UN and 30 States Parties had overseen the destruction of 1,300 metric tonnes of chemical agent.

As large and complicated as this mission was, it does not represent the full extent of our activities in Syria. The OPCW continues to address a range of chemical weapons-related issues in that country through its Fact-Finding Mission, Declaration Assessment Team, and Investigation and Identification Team. Later this morning, you will be briefed in depth about all Syria-related activities and the Secretariat's new initiatives to resolve outstanding issues.

As we look to the future, we must keep a steady eye on new and emerging challenges. We can clearly see a day when the last declared chemical stockpile is destroyed. However, even as this milestone approaches, the threat of chemical weapons remains. Recent incidents in the airport of Kuala Lumpur and the streets of Salisbury and Amesbury in the UK have underscored the continuing threat from the use of chemical weapons.

Central to our ability to prevent re-emergence is the effective implementation of the Convention at the national level. The Secretariat, through its support to legal drafters and legislators, has been aiding States Parties with putting in place appropriate laws.

Implementation must also encompass an ongoing process to ensure the Convention's obligations and prohibitions are being observed as well as enforced. In this vein, the OPCW endeavours to advance States Parties efforts to fulfil their treaty obligations through initiatives such as the National Implementation Framework.

Preventing re-emergence will also rely in part on our ability to keep pace with developments in science and technology. The OPCW's ChemTech Centre will play an important role in this regard. The Centre will not only strengthen our analysis and research capabilities but will also boost our capacity building potential.

The OPCW's capacity building programmes aim to help our Member States realise the full potential of chemistry to improve the lives of their citizens. Indeed, our training courses give instructions across a range of areas from laboratory skills for chemists to medical training for first responders.

Going forward, we are working to provide more tailored assistance to meet the specific needs of Member States. The Africa Programme is a good example of how we are meeting those demands. A meeting was held at the Africa Union headquarters in Addis Ababa just this June to consider the design of this programme and its future priorities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The issues and initiatives that I have raised will be given greater depth and detail by the various presenters today. The Secretariat greatly appreciates your participation in this workshop. Your support and commitment are essential for the OPCW to fulfil its crucial mandate to rid the world of chemical weapons.

I hope that you will receive valuable information and insights today that will assist you in fulfilling your important role.

I wish you all a fruitful and beneficial workshop.
