



Opening Remarks by the Deputy Director-General of the OPCW, Ms Odette Melono, at the Workshop on Best Practices in the Development of a Legislative and Regulatory Framework on Chemical Security

As delivered on 27 September 2022, San Salvador, El Salvador

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I warmly welcome you to this Workshop on Best Practices in the Development of a Legislative and Regulatory Framework on Chemical Security.

On behalf of the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, let me first thank the Government and the National Authority of El Salvador for hosting this critical event. After more than two years of travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I am delighted to be here in person to open this regional workshop in the beautiful city of San Salvador.

The Chemical Weapons Convention establishes the international norm against chemical weapons. Thanks to OPCW verification, the world can have confidence that chemical weapons destruction results are real. However, despite the OPCW's accomplishments, the re-emergence of chemical weapons means that our mission will remain vital, beyond my generation.

This is the second in a series of regional workshops promoting best practices on national implementation of the convention, the first one having taken place in Bangkok in July 2022. The aim of this series of workshops is to provide a forum for participants to share their experiences on developing national chemical security legislation. It is also a platform for participants to discuss how they assess and manage risks and gaps in chemical security at the domestic level.

I am pleased to see so many legal experts and chemical security practitioners gathered here today. We have 44 participants from 17 OPCW Member States in attendance, which underlines the high level of interest in this topic from across the Latin American and Caribbean region. The knowledge and experiences shared here over the next days, along with the input from the other workshops of this series, will become part of a future compendium of best practices.

Distinguished delegates,

Expanding national implementation of the Convention, especially with respect to chemical security, is our first and best line of defence against malicious use of toxic chemicals. Rapid advances in science and technology as well as an ever-expanding chemical industry provides great benefits for humankind. Unfortunately, it also brings with it an increased the risk of diversion of chemicals into the wrong hands.

Developing effective legislative frameworks is a complex but necessary task, involving a wide spectrum of national stakeholders and partners such as the chemical industry and civil society.

It requires striking the right balance between prevention of the use of toxic chemicals for hostile purposes and promoting economic development and the peaceful use of chemistry.

As representatives of regulatory authorities or chemical industry associations, you have a critical role to play in ensuring that such comprehensive legislation and regulation is in place. The challenge is two-fold; developing appropriate legislation and regulation, and ensuring its enforcement. I encourage all of you to share your valuable insights into how your country's legislation and regulatory frameworks were developed to prevent toxic chemicals from being diverted for hostile purposes and how they are being enforced.

Your contributions during this workshop will be utilised for creating legal benchmarks and milestones for developing or strengthening chemical security legislation. Such legal frameworks and their enforcement are further enhanced by effective chemical safety and security management as well as response capacities for incidents involving toxic chemicals.

As the OPCW reaches the completion of destruction of all declared stockpiles of Chemical Weapons in 2023, efforts like this workshop will assume greater significance. They will complement and amplify the Organisation's work on preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

Distinguished participants,

Despite the current strain on the global system of disarmament and arms control, the established norm against chemical weapons remains strong. Safeguarding the Chemical Weapons Convention and its contribution to international peace and security will continue to hinge on our collective commitment and actions.

The best defense against chemical threats is to ensure that national measures are fully established. In that respect, I urge you to continue to maintain contacts across the region, share information and expertise and build lasting partnerships.

Pursuing an agenda of continuous improvement for regulating chemical security issues through such partnerships is a necessity in a world characterised by globalising scientific communities and industry. The OPCW's Technical Secretariat stands ready to support you in these efforts toward our common goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

I wish you a productive workshop and I look forward to learning about the outcomes of your discussions.

Thank you.
