The Hague Ethical Guidelines

Shared principles guiding chemistry practitioners toward responsible conduct and the prevention of chemical misuse

OPCW and The Hague Ethical Guidelines

To prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) works with chemistry practitioners around the world to foster a culture of ethical science. In 2015, OPCW and international experts developed The Hague Ethical Guidelines to promote the responsible and peaceful use of chemistry.

Key Elements

Core Element

Achievements in the field of chemistry should be used to benefit humankind and protect the environment.

Awareness and Engagement

Teachers, chemistry practitioners, and policymakers should be aware of the multiple uses of chemicals, specifically their use as chemical weapons or their precursors. They should promote the peaceful applications of chemicals and work to prevent any misuse of chemicals, scientific knowledge, tools and technologies, and any harmful or unethical developments in research and innovation. They should disseminate relevant information about national and international laws, regulations, policies and practices.

Sustainability

Chemistry practitioners have a special responsibility for promoting and achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals of meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Education

Formal and informal educational providers, enterprise, industry and civil society should cooperate to equip anybody working in chemistry and others with the necessary knowledge and tools to take responsibility for the benefit of humankind, the protection of the environment and to ensure relevant and meaningful engagement with the general public.

Ethics

To adequately respond to societal challenges, education, research and innovation must respect fundamental rights and apply the highest ethical standards. Ethics should be perceived as a way of ensuring high quality results in science.

Safety and Security

Chemistry practitioners should promote the beneficial applications, uses, and development of science and technology while encouraging and maintaining a strong culture of safety, health, and security.

Oversight

Chemistry practitioners who supervise others have the additional responsibility to ensure that chemicals, equipment and facilities are not used by those persons for illegal, harmful or destructive purposes.

Accountability

Chemistry practitioners have a responsibility to ensure that chemicals, equipment and facilities are protected against theft and diversion and are not used for illegal, harmful or destructive purposes. These persons should be aware of applicable laws and regulations governing the manufacture and use of chemicals, and they should report any misuse of chemicals, scientific knowledge, equipment and facilities to the relevant authorities.

Exchange of Information

Chemistry practitioners should promote the exchange of scientific and technical information relating to the development and application of chemistry for peaceful purposes.