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**MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO THE
EIGHTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES
TO THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION
The Hague, 20 October 2003**

Since the opening for signature of the Chemical Weapons Convention in January 1993, steady and tangible progress has taken place in the field of chemical disarmament. Earlier this year, the First Review Conference to the Chemical Weapons Convention was held to conduct a comprehensive study of the operation of the Convention, with a view to ensuring that the chemical weapons ban remains firm in a changing political and technological environment.

I welcome the remarkable outcome of the First Review Conference, in particular the reaffirmation of the States Parties' intention to comply with all their obligations under all the provisions of the Convention, and their commitment to implementing them fully and effectively. I also welcome the progress made in the ongoing destruction of chemical weapons, and hope that the momentum will be maintained in the implementation of this aspect of the Convention.

The international community remains deeply concerned about the dangers of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorists, and is actively engaged in the work to counter this threat. The Chemical Weapons Convention, fully and effectively implemented, can be a powerful instrument in that work. Less than seven years after entering into force, the Chemical Weapons Convention has 156 States parties. While this represents encouraging progress towards universality, almost 40 States remain outside the Convention -- some of them from regions that would benefit greatly from the assurances which membership in the Convention would bring. I urge those States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the CWC to do so without delay.

I extend my warmest wishes to all participants in the Eighth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and wish you a most productive session.

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