

# **“Navruz – the holiday of spring, renewal and peace in Uzbekistan”**

**Thursday, 23 March 2017, 18:30**

## **Delegates Lounge**

Mr. Gadoev,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan for organising this event, and for providing us with a taste of Uzbekistan’s rich cultural heritage.

I am honoured to open this event today, and I offer best wishes for a happy Navruz on behalf of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Navruz is an ancient tradition with a timeless message.

Its spirit of peace, solidarity, and renewal resonates powerfully with the values of the OPCW.

This year, we celebrate the Twentieth Anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the founding of the OPCW.

Twenty years after the international community vowed to ban chemical weapons forever, 98% of the world’s population now live under the protection of the chemical weapons convention.

This is more than an achievement in disarmament; it is a tangible commitment to peace.

As a time for renewal, Navruz is an occasion for all States to rededicate themselves to this commitment. It is through our unwavering resolve that the global norm against chemical weapons we have forged together will be truly lasting.

It may seem at times that the road to true peace and disarmament is besieged by those who favour strife.

As Navruz transcends borders, interests, and religious divides, our common commitment to peace must prevail, and unite us in our common humanity.

I hope you celebrate today with joy and meaning – and reflect on its message of peace, hope and renewal.

Thank you and Navruz Mubarak!