

**Closure of Shchuchye Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility
Kurganskaya Oblast, Russian Federation**

**Remarks by Deputy Director-General, Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao
20 November 2015**

[Honourable Minister Manturov,]
Distinguished Governor Kokorin,
Dear General Kapashin,
Dear General Kholstov,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to be with you today to mark this historic occasion.

We have gathered to celebrate an important milestone on the path to a world free of chemical weapons.

A few weeks ago, operations at the Shchuchye Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility drew to a close.

Over the past six years, nearly two million munitions were destroyed here.

In all, almost five and a half thousand metric tonnes of chemical weapon agent – or 13.6% of all stocks declared by the Russian Federation.

This has been a long and arduous journey.

It has required a firm commitment of substantial human and financial resources.

It has also drawn on extraordinary technical expertise, highly specialised skills and problem-solving ingenuity.

Those of you who operated and supported this facility can take enormous pride in having risen to a complex technical challenge.

A challenge that has often required you to develop customised, state-of-the-art solutions for a hazardous task.

On behalf of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, I warmly commend your efforts and determination, and the success they have borne.

Today's closing ceremony follows closely those of other chemical weapons destruction facilities in the Russian Federation – at Leonidovka, at Maradykovsky and at Pochep.

These developments offer clear testimony of Russia's steadfast commitment to achieving the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

These goals aim for nothing less than the complete eradication of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

To make a tangible and lasting contribution to international peace and security.

To this end, the OPCW has worked hand in hand with Russian authorities to verify achievements at Shchuchye and other destruction facilities.

The Russian Government has made a truly significant and fruitful investment in its destruction programme.

And it is well on track towards achieving destruction of its remaining stocks by December 2020.

I wish also to acknowledge the generous support provided by several of our States Parties for the destruction effort in the Russian Federation.

This sort of cooperation underlies the collective spirit and firm resolve shown by the international community in ridding the world of the tragic legacy of chemical weapons.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As we reflect on the evolution of the Chemical Weapons Convention, none of us can doubt that history will look favourably on the occasion we mark here today.

It took almost a century to achieve a total global ban against chemical weapons.

Nearly two decades later, we are closer than ever to achieving a future free of these terrible weapons.

A future to which all of you, who made the Shchuchye facility a success, can justly claim to have made a valuable contribution.

Thank you.