



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Training-of-Trainers Course on technical aspects of the CWC Transfers Regime

for representatives of Customs Training Institutions

Opening remarks by the Deputy Director-General

20 June 2017

REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Distinguished participants,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to extend to all of you a warm welcome to the Training-of-Trainers Course and to the OPCW. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the founding of the Organisation of the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

An anniversary is an appropriate time for reflecting on achievements and to reflect on the challenges ahead of us. On several accounts developments have been impressive. Today, 192 nations are States Parties to the convention. This is very near universal application.

The CWC is a unique convention banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Since 1997 States Parties have been working tirelessly to ensure the treaty's successful implementation.

To date, the OPCW has verified the destruction of tens of thousands of tonnes of chemical warfare agents. Thanks to the CWC, over 95 percent of declared chemical weapons stockpiles are gone along with their production facilities. In recognition of this achievement the OPCW was awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize. This has raised awareness about the important mission of the OPCW.

As nearly all declared chemical weapons stockpiles are destroyed we must start shifting the focus to preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. In particular the threat posed by non-state actors' ability to access and deploy toxic chemicals will continue to test us. States parties and their institutions are key to countering these challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Many of 192 countries, who have joined the Chemical Weapons Convention to date, have developed or continue to develop capacity to achieve full implementation of the Convention at the national level. This requires an effective national authority that engages with key stakeholders in chemical industry, laboratories, state institutions and agencies, including customs authorities.

Each stakeholder is important and has a specific role to play. Parliamentarians adopt national legislation that incorporates the Convention into domestic legislation. Government ministries lead in coordinating assistance and protection measures in case of a chemical weapons attack or a chemical incident.

Chemical industries inform on how toxic chemicals are being used and traded. As you can see, full and effective implementation of the Convention is a collective effort requiring cooperation, partnership and trust. In this regard, customs authorities play a pivotal role in ensuring the effective implementation of the CWC provisions.

When inspecting transfers of chemicals, customs officials are at the frontline of implementing the CWC transfers regime of scheduled chemicals. This means ensuring that no chemical transfer, import or export of significance, goes unnoticed and it is duly reported to the National Authority.

The skill set, knowledge and expertise required in enforcing these mechanisms should not be underestimated. The role of customs authorities is even more prominent in the context of today's challenges posed by non-state actors.

Regrettably, terrorist organisations continue to seek acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. To counter such threats, the OPCW together with its partners has continued to enhance capacity of Member States and their national authorities to deal with contingencies and most importantly, to develop and implement prevention mechanisms.

Raising awareness, dissemination of knowledge, improving safety and security standards, as well as supporting education and outreach initiatives in relation to promotion of peaceful uses of chemistry remain paramount in this regard. You may further note that the Technical Secretariat continues to provide a number of initiatives in the context of its international cooperation and assistance programmes, which includes:

- offering legal drafting support and expertise;
- engaging chemical industry representatives with a view to improving safety;
- capacity building support to customs officials to help detecting and identifying scheduled chemicals; and
- improving risk assessment and licencing procedures.

Ladies and gentlemen,

By offering training courses on the transfers regime in different regions, we aim to strengthen control of scheduled chemicals and assist our States Parties to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to do so.

To date, over a thousand customs officers from our States Parties have been trained and they have made great contributions to effective implementation of the CWC transfers regime.

To maximise utilisation of limited resources in a challenging environment, we think that the training-of-trainers courses would further enhance our efforts on this front, as you would design training programmes, which would be tailor-made for your country and region's needs and circumstances. We expect that this practice would also improve knowledge management and cooperation among relevant national authorities.

This is why I am particularly pleased to launch this training programme today as it is one of the results of our cooperation with the World Customs Organisation, which is represented by Mr German. The OPCW highly values and appreciates the support and cooperation extended by the WCO in organising this course.

Earlier this year we signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the OPCW and the WCO which paves the way for expanding our cooperation in various areas, including through organising joint capacity-building events.

The World Customs Organisation holds expertise on many customs-related mechanisms, including those that contribute to strengthening transfers regime of scheduled chemicals across States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Dear Participants,

Through your active engagement in discussions, you will not only strengthen your own expertise but also help us to better understand your needs and requirements. I wish you all a productive and fruitful workshop and look forward to receiving your feedback in future.

Thank you for your attention.
