



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

UN Disarmament Fellowship Programme Visit to the OPCW Closing Remarks by Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao, OPCW Deputy Director-General The Hague, 4 September 2017

REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Good afternoon, distinguished fellows,

It is a matter of privilege for me to address this year's fellowship programme today. As a former UN disarmament fellow, I am particularly pleased to note that this programme continues to prominently feature on the UNODA's agenda, gaining popularity and relevance in the realm of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Let me make a few observations about your visit to the OPCW this year.

Firstly, this has been a special year for the Organisation and its Member States, as we mark the 20th anniversary of the Convention and re-dedicate ourselves to upholding the comprehensive chemical weapons ban that was established through this Convention. Our work will continue to focus on achieving a global chemical weapons zero, and striving to strengthen the provisions of the Convention across all pillars. Over these two decades, the Convention has been tried and tested. In the most challenging of times, our Member States have shown resilience and dedication to the cause of multilateralism and peace. This has also been the case in our mission to destroy Syria's declared chemical weapons, and most recently the operation to extract and destroy Libya's remaining category 2 stockpiles.

And yet, regrettably, the scourge of chemical weapons remains real as has been evidenced by recent chemical weapons attacks in Syria. In condemning these vicious acts, the OPCW will continue to serve the objectives of the Convention to ensure that its prohibitions remain irreversible and undisputable.

Secondly, you would have learned that the success of the Convention is multifaceted and that the work of disarmament and non-proliferation is broad. In this regard, we will continue to strengthen our partnerships with key stakeholders and work with Member States to ensure the effective implementation of the Convention. Whether this work involves countering risks posed by non-state actors, or those seeking to misuse the science of chemistry for non-peaceful purposes – only working together can we truly achieve a more peaceful and secure world.

Thirdly, effective implementation of the Convention offers important opportunities and benefits to Member States and the international community. Through our work under the umbrella of international cooperation, assistance and protection we have been able to offer support and enhance capacity of Member States that are in the process of strengthening their CWC implementation capabilities. We have worked to facilitate national implementation of the Convention – a key factor that determines the effectiveness of the treaty. Our efforts have also focused on building relationships with representatives of chemical industry, academia, NGOs and other international organisations; the scope of OPCW’s education and outreach activities continues to be strengthened. This work also includes developing ethical norms for scientists - a code of conduct, so to speak, that would set moral and ethical standards for practitioners across the globe. With such instruments in place, the OPCW and our Member States will be better equipped to deal with emerging challenges and able to keep abreast of scientific and technological advances.

Finally, let me remind you of one thing that you may be learning in the course of your Fellowship Programme – something that I have come to learn only too well during my many years in multilateral diplomacy, including at the Conference on Disarmament. Multilateral negotiations require patience and persistence. For success it is very important to understand the politics and the process of multilateral fora, including how their work fits into specific national priorities as well as transcends such priorities, in joint efforts for the benefit of all.

Let us keep working together to make a world free of chemical weapons.

With that, and as one UN Disarmament Fellowship Programme alumnus to another, please accept my best wishes in your future careers. On behalf of my colleagues here at the OPCW, I thank you for your participation and your kind attention.
