

**Opening Remarks for the
Workshop on Guidelines for the Practice of Chemistry
under the Norms of the Chemical Weapons Convention**

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**Director-General OPCW
Ahmet Üzümcü**

Professor Suarez,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome such an accomplished group of chemistry practitioners here at the OPCW to continue this important discussion on the responsible practice of the chemical sciences.

I especially wish to thank Professor Suarez, a former chairperson of our Scientific Advisory Board, for her able stewardship of the March workshop and for convening this important follow-up.

The need to promote peaceful uses of chemistry has never been greater.

This year, in April, we marked the centenary of the first large-scale use of chemical weapons.

And more recently, we have heard – and continue to hear – allegations of the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria and Iraq.

Over the past century, the misuse of chemicals has spread fear and terror, which the Chemical Weapons Convention has over the past 18 years allowed us to abate and almost completely remove.

Recent developments have however shown that we cannot be complacent, especially given new threats posed by non-state actors, coupled with the accessibility of many toxic industrial chemicals.

At the same time, we are seeing breathtaking advances across the sciences – advances that offer extraordinary benefits: for example, in health through the

creation of new diagnostic tools, and in energy through the development of new chemical production technologies.

These not only serve to ensure a sustainable future for humanity. They can also directly benefit our work at the OPCW – work which advances the goals of human security and global peace.

As scientific developments continue to proceed at an ever increasing pace, it is crucial that we strengthen our partnership with the scientific community.

Science underpins the Chemical Weapons Convention, and it is those who are trained in science and engineering – here at the OPCW and in national jurisdictions – will continue to contribute to our common objective to rid the world of chemical weapons, and to prevent them from ever re-emerging.

As we promote science and engage technical stakeholders, we must work to address and allay the concerns that policy-makers might have about the implications of scientific developments.

This means that our policy-makers must seek and engage with scientists and the advice they provide.

In short, they must make efforts to become more science-literate.

There are many paths to promoting this sort of dialogue, ranging from citizen science projects that seek to engage technical and non-technical participants alike, to more proactive efforts by the scientific community to show how science can serve as a tool for peace as well as prosperity.

The initiative before you – ethical guidelines for the practice of chemistry under the Chemical Weapons Convention – represents an overarching commitment in this area.

It is intended to strengthen bonds between science and society by better sensitising scientists to the importance and impact of their work.

This is an initiative by scientists for scientists – an initiative whose objectives we wholeheartedly support.

Your discussions from the March workshop have evolved into the draft guidelines you will be discussing today.

Key elements include the use of chemistry for the benefit of humankind and the environment, safety and security awareness, sustainable practice, oversight and accountability, and education.

These elements address the many areas in which chemistry affects our lives.

They remind us how science can generate concern amongst disarmament policy makers, and they provide a basis for fostering a culture and practice of responsible science.

I very much look forward to the outcome of your deliberations.

The text you will agree on, and the recommendations you will draw, will make a valuable contribution to advancing discussion on ethical issues touching on your work – to ensure that such issues are not left behind, as science and technology continue to march rapidly forward.

In March, you discussed a number of existing codes of conduct and ethics relevant to chemistry.

Your work has not taken place in a vacuum, but in a tradition that taps into more than 140 such codes.

This provides a solid foundation on which to build and introduce new ideas that complement and strengthen an already impressive body of work in this area.

As demonstrated by the many common themes across these codes, responsible science knows no borders.

I am pleased to see participants from across all regions of the world, from academia and industry, from prominent national and international scientific societies.

This group provides unique perspectives that, I am certain, will stimulate many useful new ideas and fresh approaches.

Over the next two days, we must appreciate that producing an ethical code is just the beginning.

It is practice that justifies and shapes theory, and creates better norms of behaviour.

To this end, all successful codes of this sort must be permitted to evolve as a way of attesting to their usefulness and relevance.

We have before us the very real prospect of a future free of chemical weapons – a future in which the chemical sciences will play a vital role in preserving disarmament gains.

The sort of discussion you have engendered shows the world that scientists are much more than stakeholders in the disarmament project, but also drivers of science that actively serves peace and security.

It is in this role that you and your peers are creating a culture in which such barbarous weapons can, effectively, no longer be created.

This is, to my mind, a crucial investment in ensuring that chemical weapons remain forever relegated to history.

I wish you every success.

Thank you.