



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS
Opening Remarks by the Director-General
18th Annual Meeting of National Authorities of
States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention
23 November 2016

REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I warmly welcome you to the 18th Annual Meeting of National Authorities. I also welcome representatives of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation.

This meeting remains a key fixture on the OPCW agenda and serves as a forum for sharing experiences, expanding networks and deepening cooperation at all levels.

The broad participation by representatives from more than 114 National Authorities highlights the value that our Member States attach to this event.

The Technical Secretariat finds this opportunity to be of great value whereby it interacts with the National Authorities of Member States and works on various issues related to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

As we approach the Twentieth Anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention, we may look positively at our work in upholding the global chemical weapons ban and ensuring its effective implementation.

With 94% of declared chemical weapons stockpiles destroyed, we are nearing the full eradication of all declared arsenals.

The destruction of Syrian Arab Republic's declared chemical weapons stands out as an extraordinary task that was achieved in the face of daunting challenges. Recently another high-risk operation was carried out with the cooperation of a number of States Parties that removed Libya's remaining Category 2 chemical weapons. These are being safely destroyed outside its territory.

With 192 Member States, the Convention represents a robust and effective platform for

international cooperation, assistance and protection.

The Secretariat continues to work closely with National Authorities in addressing the needs of our Member States and offering assistance through our flagship programmes as well as tailored initiatives.

There had been significant progress with the Secure Information Exchange (SIX) system in 2016. Thirty-seven States Parties are now using it for the transmission of declaration-related documents.

The Secretariat will continue to expand the use of this system and I encourage States Parties to explore the utilisation of this optional, yet strategic communication mechanism.

Member States continue to step up their implementation efforts - with 118 States Parties confirmed as having adopted comprehensive legislation covering all initial measures, 32 States Parties with partial legislation and 42 States Parties still working to adopt initial measures.

Our network of stakeholders has continued to expand, to include representatives of civil society, NGO's, academia, chemical industry and scientific communities.

This has been done at par with our expanded interaction with international organisations, including through education and outreach activities.

We have continued to build up our scientific and technological expertise, with a more forward-looking focus on our future priorities and challenges.

Yet, much still remains to be done by this Organisation and the National Authorities that work to ensure the successful implementation of the Convention.

Your engagement and support remain paramount to preserving our gains and preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons in the future.

Our immediate attention with regard to implementation is focused on providing technical and legislative support to Member States to enhance their national capacities in order to fulfill the CWC requirements. Needless to say that in this endeavor National Authorities play a key role.

The international community has witnessed rapid advances in science and technology.

Advances in chemistry have significantly enhanced our living standards and contributed to important innovations that have benefited economic development.

The forces of globalization have facilitated transportation and trade, allowing greater access to information and materials, including chemicals.

At the same time, these developments have also created novel security risks and threats, including a greater risk of acquisition of toxic chemicals by non-state actors, illicit trade and unchecked exports of chemicals and hazardous waste.

These risks will continue to require our Member States to enhance their monitoring mechanisms, including customs operations and to work ever more closely with representatives of chemical industry and other stakeholders.

Member States are required to elevate the levels of safety and security, promote peaceful uses of chemistry through available education and outreach tools, but most importantly, work closely together in providing expertise, share best practices and knowledge in developing their domestic capacity to respond to national, regional and international challenges.

This work, has been made even more important, but also difficult, in those regions of the world where there is ongoing conflict.

Sadly, the use of chemical weapons in such situations has indeed occurred as the recent confirmations in Syria have amply demonstrated.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances is reprehensible and completely contrary to the legal norms established by the international community and the Chemical Weapons Convention. The OPCW as the only international body charged with upholding the global norm against chemical weapons has a particular responsibility to do everything in its capacity to prevent the use of chemical weapons.

I would like to note that earlier this year, the Secretariat announced the establishment of a Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM) to respond to a request from a State Party for emergency measures of assistance in case of the use of toxic chemicals by a non-state actor. A Secretariat Note was circulated in which States Parties were requested to provide details of their designated National Focal Point in case of request for RRAM.

The Secretariat also continues to pursue options for ensuring air transportation for the RRAM and would welcome such a support by any State Party.

In further guiding us on the issue of threats posed by non-state actors, the Sub-Working Group (SWG) on Non-State Actors of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism will provide an update on its work and offer recommendations for the consideration of States Parties.

On their part, the National Authorities are called upon to re-double their efforts in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons and to preclude access to toxic chemicals by non-state actors.

In addition to comprehensive national implementing legislation, National Authorities have to ensure their effectiveness by maintaining knowledge, expertise and resources that would allow them to contribute to regional and global implementation of the Convention through a collective approach.

In this regard, we also have to consider potential avenues for new activities and approaches for the promotion of partnerships with representatives of the chemical industry and scientific communities.

Only through maintaining a high level of engagement and cooperation with multiple national stakeholders can we contribute to strengthening the prevention of re-emergence of chemical weapons.

Given the rapid pace of technological innovation, the present challenge is to ensure that the CWC's legal prohibitions are comprehensive enough to extend the reach of verification to new chemicals and new methods of production.

In this context, the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board continues to play its part and we can all look forward to its report on developments in science and technology which will be meant for the 4th Review Conference. The report will take into account recommendations received from the SAB's Temporary Working Group on Verification.

The OPCW continues to broaden cooperation with industry across the world, including through our work with the Chemical Industry Coordination Group (CICG), comprising representatives of the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) and the European Chemical Industry Council (Cefic).

On-going endeavours will also involve assisting governments and national authorities in establishing security measures and to help ensure more effective import and export controls.

Education and outreach will continue to play an essential role in enhancing the understanding and awareness of the Convention.

In this regard, the recently established Advisory Board on Education and Outreach is expected to provide strategic guidance.

This year's regional meetings on education and outreach have provided opportunities for interaction as well as exchange of best practices between national authorities and relevant stakeholders.

As a follow-up, the Technical Secretariat conducted a survey on follow up actions that were proposed at those meetings.

As a result, I am pleased to note that a number of countries have either planned or have already implemented various education and outreach related activities at the national level. I encourage you to continue developing these platforms and to seek ways and means to further enhance CWC awareness in your regions.

The Secretariat continues preparations for the 20th anniversary of the OPCW next year. To mark the occasion, a solemn ceremony will be held in the "Hall of Knights" in the Houses of Parliament of the Netherlands in The Hague on 26 April 2017.

The celebration will provide an opportunity to convey our message on global ban on the chemical weapons to a wider audience. This will not only be a suitable moment to reflect on the

achievements of chemical weapons disarmament, but also to highlight the continued relevance of the Convention and its essential contribution to global peace and security.

I take this opportunity also to reiterate my invitation to States Parties to host and organize relevant events in your respective countries on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Convention next year.

The Secretariat stands ready to facilitate such initiatives within its means and capabilities.

In the context of identifying country specific needs and tailored capacity building and training programmes, the Technical Secretariat has maintained a results-based management approach.

The OPCW Customs Officials training programme has continued to ensure sustainability as well as stronger ownership and commitment by our Member States to train their customs officers in relation to the enforcement of the CWC transfers regime of scheduled chemicals.

This year, the Secretariat organized a pilot Training-of-Trainers Course for representatives of customs training institutions. Such programmes facilitate Member States in continuing to conduct training activities at the national level.

In addition to multilateral platforms for cooperation, the Secretariat facilitates bilateral partnerships.

In 2016, four Partnership and Mentorship Programmes have been held. States Parties with considerable knowledge and experience have been invited to assist other States Parties in implementing the provisions of the Convention.

For the first time this year, the Partnership and Mentorship Programme included participation by National Authorities of the WEOG region, namely, - Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Our continued engagement with the World Customs Organization as well as other international, regional and sub-regional organisations in the field of capacity-building and training programmes will remain crucial for the success of our work and our ability to provide technical assistance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With the verified elimination of the declared chemical weapons stockpiles in sight, the OPCW's future priorities will demand a range of activities to ensure that the CWC remains a permanent barrier against chemical weapons, including efforts for the full universality of the Convention.

We will need to continue working together in finding effective solutions to emerging challenges and relying on the key norms enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention to do so.

We will need to find durable and effective ways to channel the forces of globalization towards peaceful ends, monitoring advances in chemical industry, science and technology.

As we transition to the post-destruction phase, our determination, resolve and shared goals will undoubtedly provide the building blocks for strengthening the CWC implementation globally.

It is my hope that through the work undertaken by National Authorities we will be able to further enhance the implementation of the Convention at all levels and offer solutions to the looming challenges that may test the durability of the Convention in the years to come.

Effective national implementation of the Convention will enhance our ability to maintain our expertise, capacity, resources and durability of the CWC regime well into the future.

I look forward to your deliberations this week and wish you an informative and productive meeting.

Thank you.