



**ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

**Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare**

**Statement by the Director-General**

**The Twenty-first Session of the Conference of States Parties**

**30 November 2016**

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*STATEMENT AS DELIVERED*

Mr Chairperson,  
Ambassador Wilke,  
Deputy Mayor Baldewsingh,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome you all to this solemn ceremony marking the Day of Remembrance for all victims of chemical weapons.

This commemoration strikes a deep and solemn note. It is meant to pay homage to the memory of all victims of chemical warfare and to renew hope. I wish to extend a special welcome to victims of chemical weapons from Iran and Iraq who are here with us today.

Every incidence of the use of chemical weapons reminds us of the cruel and insidious nature of this atrocity. Recent confirmed uses of chemical weapons are unacceptable. The OPCW has a special responsibility to ensure an end to this aberration.

The memory of the victims and the brutal suffering they endured sustains our determination to fulfil our mission to rid for ever our world from the threat of chemical weapons. This objective lies at the heart of our endeavours at the OPCW.

For twenty years now, we have steadily moved towards this goal. Our progress has no precedent in the history of disarmament. It has brought us ever closer towards achieving a total destruction of all the global stockpiles of chemical weapons.

All these years, States Parties have worked with determination and dedication to strengthen the ban on chemical weapons and its promotion in all parts of the world. Only a few have chosen not to be a part of this noble mission. We call upon them to do so at the earliest.

Possessor States have remained committed in progressing towards fully eliminating their chemical weapons stockpiles.

With 94% of all declared chemical weapons having been destroyed and 192 Member States subscribing to the chemical weapons ban, we are on track towards our aims.

I see no better tribute to those who have suffered or died from chemical weapons attacks than to reaffirm our dedication and resolve to eradicate these weapons forever.

The ability of our Member States to work together to ensure the application of the Convention in diverse and difficult situations is exemplified in our successes in Syria, and recently, in Libya.

The Convention has always been more than merely destroying declared chemical weapons. Our work covers a broad spectrum of activities that will require greater attention to ensure that chemical weapons will never again re-emerge.

Effective domestic implementation of the Convention should remain a priority so as to make the Convention an effective tool to deter those who may choose to violate its prohibitions for criminal or terrorist purposes.

We will continue to identify the needs of our Member States and provide tailored responses, including in the field of international cooperation, assistance and protection.

Our national capacity-building programmes and training for Member States will continue to enhance implementation of the Convention, and strengthen the capacity for responding to chemical attacks or accidents involving toxic chemicals.

We will engage a broader base of stakeholders, expanding the reach of the Convention to the academia, civil society and other sectors.

Our cooperation with the chemical industry is a unique example of public and private sector cooperation at the international level for the promotion of security.

In strengthening the provisions of the Convention across its various pillars, we need to remain mindful of advancements in science and technology.

Mankind's ability to apply scientific knowledge must never be allowed to detract from the principles of peaceful uses of science.

We will also work wholeheartedly to ensure that the Chemical Weapons Convention remains responsive to new threats, including those posed by terrorist groups and other non-state actors.

We must always bear in mind that the global norm against chemical weapons is not just a legal

one. It is also an unqualified moral obligation.

Despite the anguish caused by the recent incidents of use of chemical weapons, the international community remains united in its resolve to banish this threat forever.

A reaffirmation on this day of a strong commitment to the goals and objectives of the Convention is thus a worthy act of remembrance.

The plight of those victims who suffered unimaginable grief from the use of chemical weapons impelled international action to bring such atrocities to a permanent end. That responsibility now devolves on the States Parties to the CWC. They have through concerted action demonstrated consistently that they are equal to the task.

I am sure as we renew our determination to make the application of the Convention universally acceptable and effectively enforced, they will once again rise to the occasion to collectively carry the beacon of hope that the CWC has come to symbolise.

Thank you.