



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Official Opening of the Tree of Life Monument

Statement by the Director-General

Garden of the Embassy of Iraq

16 March 2017

REMARKS AS DELIVERED

H.E. Ambassador Saywan Barzani, Excellencies, Distinguished guests,

I am honoured to address you at this solemn ceremony to mark the opening of the Tree of Life Monument, a symbol and a memorial to the tragic events that unfolded in Halabja twenty nine years ago today. On behalf of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, I wish to convey my deepest sympathies for the thousands of victims who suffered and perished in one of history's most brutal chemical weapons attacks.

In remembering this atrocity, we are also reminded that their suffering impelled the international community to conclude the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The purpose of the Convention in both spirit and practice is to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons in the world. This year we mark the 20th Anniversary of its adoption, which ushered in a new era in humanity's quest to outlaw and eliminate these inhumane weapons.

Since its inception, 192 countries have joined the Convention and over 98% of the world's population now live under its protection. Through this commitment, the international community has established and affirmed a global norm against use of chemical weapons. We remain steadfast in this commitment. Despite the anguish caused by recent incidents of use of chemical weapons, the international community remains united in its resolve to banish this threat forever.

A tree is a symbol of life, resilience and renewal. It represents our collective hope that the tragedies of the past are not repeated in our future. The OPCW will continue to galvanize the international community to realise a world where a tragedy like Halabja is forever consigned to history. In closing, I express my appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Iraq, H.E. Ambassador Saywan Barzani for memorialising the events Halabja in such fitting and lasting way.
