



**ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

**Asser Institute Eighth Annual WMD Summer Programme**

**Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in a Changing World**

**Keynote Address by**

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*REMARKS AS DELIVERED*

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased for the opportunity to address you today at this eighth annual Summer Programme on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. I extend a warm welcome to all participants and I wish to convey my appreciation to the organising team for their tireless efforts to make this Programme a success.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is pleased to collaborate once again on this initiative with the reputed T.M.C. Asser Institute. The Institute attracts keen minds from around the world and provides a platform for critical and constructive reflection on issues related to international policy and law.

The network of disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and the organisations that implement them is one of the key features of the modern international system. For its part, the OPCW contributes to global peace and security through its mandate to rid the world of chemical weapons and to prevent their re-emergence. Today's globalised, inter-connected and inter-dependant world makes it necessary to deal with collective threats and dangers through a collective response. The threat posed to international security by weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is as urgent today as it has ever been, while the realities of combatting this threat have grown increasingly complex.

This course aims to offer the tools needed to prepare those who will deal with the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda in future leadership positions. During this week, you will be provided with a comprehensive overview of factors shaping the current WMD context, including the legal, scientific, diplomatic, and geo-political issues. You will listen to a diverse range of

experts and practitioners from various disciplines. You will have the opportunity to interact with them on the basis of your own experience – whether as diplomats, scholars or regulatory officials. I am confident that these interactions will forge new connections and spark new ideas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the founding of the OPCW. Twenty years on, the Convention remains the foundation of the international community's commitment to eliminate the scourge of chemical weapons. The Convention enjoys a unique combination of provisions that make it stand apart from other disarmament treaties. All rights and obligations apply to all States Parties equally. The Convention prohibits not only use, but also the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and transfer of chemical weapons. It has a comprehensive verification regime. And the Convention has specific provisions for addressing noncompliance, including the suspension of rights and privileges.

Impressive progress has been made under the Convention in twenty short years. Over 95% of 72 000 tons of declared chemical warfare agents have been destroyed under the OPCW's verification. This is an historic achievement and a contribution to global peace and security recognised by the Nobel Committee, which awarded the Peace Prize to the OPCW in 2013. The two largest possessor States, namely Russia and the United States, are both progressing steadily towards the end goal of complete destruction of their stockpiles. In fact the Russian Federation will complete the destruction of its stockpile before the end of this year and the US by 2023.

The Convention's international verification regime remains the gold standard among multilateral disarmament agreements. With nearly 3500 industry inspections, the regime is a well tested tool for promoting confidence in compliance with the Convention. Our ability to monitor and inspect destruction of weapons and chemical production activities – in an impartial and credible manner – has been vital for building confidence in our work, and between our Member States. You will hear from OPCW experts about the specific features of this regime later in this programme.

Our international cooperation programmes continue to assist States Parties in developing their capacities in the use of chemistry. Assistance and protection against chemical weapons is an important right enjoyed by States Parties and we continue to enrich our programmes in this area. National implementation of the Convention is showing encouraging progress. Today, 192 countries are States Parties to the Convention, accounting for 98% of the world's population. Only four countries are not yet party to the Convention.

In parallel to our achievements over the last twenty years, we have faced formidable challenges. Our mission in Syria illustrates both the resilience of the Convention and the capacity of the Secretariat to adapt itself. In 2013, the OPCW began an unprecedented mission to remove Syria's chemical weapons. It required us to operate in uncertain and risky conditions in an active war zone within a very ambitious time frame. With the support of the United Nations, the European Union, and more than 30 States Parties, 1300 metric tonnes of chemical weapons material were removed from Syria and destroyed outside its territory. This was an impressive achievement. Unfortunately it did not mark the end of our work in Syria. In the face of persistent

and credible allegations that chlorine was being used in Syria as a chemical weapon, I established a Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in April 2014. Since that time, the Fact-Finding Mission has examined a significant number of incidents and substantiated several cases of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons, an incident involving sarin and another involving sulfur mustard.

Let me elaborate on the sarin incident. In early April, credible reports emerged of another brutal attack in Khan Shaykhun area of Idlib province. The FFM has confirmed this as an attack with Sarin, a nerve agent and Category I chemical weapon. This behaviour flies in the face of every civilized norm and is in direct violation of the Convention. The Organisation not only has the mandate but an absolute responsibility to do everything within its capacity to confront such a situation. In this context, the work of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism which has the mandate to identify the perpetrators assumes high importance.

Our work in Syria in many ways has been emblematic of both our traditional core mission, as well as the emerging challenges we face. As we near the complete destruction of declared stockpiles, it is clear that the threat of chemical weapons remains, and our work is far from complete. Moving forward, our success should not be measured strictly in weapons destroyed, but also in weapons prevented from being built. This is a more elusive task to achieve, and a difficult achievement to measure.

Our work to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons and to ensure that the Convention remains a permanent barrier against chemical weapons requires a multifaceted approach. As this course rightly recognises, new challenges will be confronted in the context of a changing world. What does that mean for the CWC regime?

One thing that is very clear, the challenges of tomorrow will be very different from those of yesterday. The continued use of chemical weapons, the mounting threat of chemical terrorism, and the evolution of science and technology are all shaping our future. The threat of chemical terrorism is a real concern, and one that cannot be easily addressed with current approaches to non-proliferation. We have already seen the willingness and ability of some groups to acquire and use chemical weapons. Countering this threat will require action on many fronts using all available tools, including multilateral coordination and legislative means.

We take this threat seriously at the OPCW. The OPCW's Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism is tasked with identifying opportunities for enhanced interaction and coordination with relevant international bodies. A Sub-Working Group focusses particular attention on the problem of non-State actors. We also have an active partnership with the United Nations Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), which helps us and over a dozen other international organisations practice and coordinate responses to biological and chemical weapons threats. Together with the IAEA, the OPCW co-chairs the working group on preventing and responding to WMD terrorist attacks with chemical or biological weapons.

On the legal front, ensuring that all our States Parties have effective legal and other regulatory measures in place, and supporting internal structures to administer them is critical. These legal frameworks provide the foundation for preventing non-State actors from gaining access to materials that could aid the development of chemical weapons. Particular attention is required for

dual use technology and material. Advances in science and technology will also impact how we implement the Convention. Indeed, evolution in those fields will be one of the drivers shaping our future as we all work to ensure that developments in science and technology are only for the benefit of humankind. This has implications for the Convention's verification regime as the global chemical industry continuously reshapes itself.

Although the OPCW verification regime is demonstrably robust, the more than 5,300 chemical production facilities by States Parties are producing an ever wider range of new compounds. This makes it necessary for us to have the ability to detect new chemicals and establish if they are relevant to the Convention. Similarly, we need to acquire a deeper understanding of the growing interaction between chemistry and biology which also gives rise to the ability to produce potentially dangerous chemicals through new techniques and methods.

The OPCW Scientific Advisory Board, which is composed of eminent experts from 25 different States Parties, for 20 years now has helped to keep us abreast of these developments. The independent scientific advice we receive through the Board acts as an early-warning system allows us to recognise where new developments could have an impact on implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Advancements in chemistry cannot of course be constrained.

But it is imperative to monitor them closely, to utilise them for improving verification and protection measures. It is also important to promote ethical practices through awareness raising and education. Closer collaboration with the chemical industry is also needed to track advancements in technology and promote chemical safety and security. To this end, the OPCW established the Chemical Industry Coordination Group (CICG) in 2015 to strengthen our relationship with the chemical industry. The initial projects undertaken by the CICG aim to deepen cooperation in education and outreach, safety and security, and verification.

Preventing re-emergence in this changing environment will not be a single track undertaking, but rather will require action on many fronts and enhanced engagement of key stakeholder groups. I believe there is untapped scope for greater collaboration with international organisations on a broader platform including in the field of counter-terrorism. A pooling of expertise and resources and the utilisation of synergies can greatly benefit us all given the ultimate unity of our goals and objectives that outweighs any political sensitivities or differences of membership. For example, UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) represents an important instrument for denying weapons of mass destruction capabilities to non-state actors. At its heart lies the same notion of effective national legal frameworks and enforcement ability. The OPCW, with its institutional capacity, experience and implementation support record, is uniquely placed to advance the objectives of that resolution.

Engaging a wider range of partners will require expanding our reach in terms of awareness. To this end, the OPCW has established an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach. This body will guide the development of new activities, and teaching tools to increase awareness of the dangers posed by the possible misuse of dual-use technology. They also help us to expand our reach into universities and schools in order to nurture a culture of responsible science. The goal is to develop and promote professional ethics that support the aims of the CWC.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In a world that sometimes finds it difficult to reach a common ground on crucial issues, the Convention and the work of the OPCW demonstrate what can be achieved if we remain steadfast in supporting global norms for the common good. Tobias Asser believed that legal conflicts between nations could best be solved by common international solutions, to be implemented by each nation. The global prohibition on chemical weapons is a worthy example how multilateral cooperation can produce peace and security for the world. It represents advancement not only in the field of disarmament but also towards humanitarian ideals.

As we mark the twentieth anniversary of our mission, it is difficult to predict what the next twenty years will bring. The path ahead is wide open for the next generation to shape the future. In the coming days, I invite you to think imaginatively about how to holistically address WMD challenges. How can we use science and technology to our benefit, and not our detriment? How can we work with key partners in science and industry to achieve our non-proliferation goals? Perhaps most importantly, how can we fortify the multilateral model and agreed upon norms that are needed to continue our success?

I wish you a productive meeting and continued success.

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