



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

“20 Years of the OPCW: Its Achievements, Future Outlook and Cooperation with Industry”

**Statement by Director-General of the OPCW, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü
At the ICCA Board Meeting, Vienna**

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REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Distinguished members of the ICCA Board,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address the ICCA Board meeting today. This is the first time that I have had the opportunity to speak before the Board Meeting of the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) and I am grateful for this invitation. As the trade association whose members account for 90 percent of global chemical sales, the ICCA is an important and highly-valued partner for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The chemical industry has long been recognised by the OPCW as a key stakeholder with regards to the full and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

The Convention is a unique disarmament instrument and its implementation has produced tangible results to the benefit of humanity over its short history. Commemorating the Twentieth Anniversary of its coming into force has given us pause to take stock of where we have come from, where we are, and what the future will hold. The CWC contains a clear mandate for the OPCW: its role is to ensure the implementation of the Convention and to provide a forum for cooperation and consultation among States Parties. But to effectively carry out this role, the Organisation needs to be responsive to stakeholders on both the policy and the science and technology side of its work.

In the CWC's third decade, greater coordination and cooperation is required among all stakeholders. Cognisant of this, the OPCW has been strengthening its interaction with the chemical industry in general and the ICCA in particular. Amidst the shift in focus away from stockpiles to preventing their re-emergence, the OPCW's cooperation with the industry will assume greater significance, especially in chemical safety and security.

Achievements of the OPCW

Going forward the OPCW has much to consider, but it can also feel satisfied with what it has achieved over the past twenty years. The CWC requires its States Parties to destroy all the chemical weapons they possess, and presently we are closer to completing the destruction process. As of today, 96.3 percent of some 72,000 metric tonnes of chemical warfare agent have been eliminated. Just last month, the Russian Federation announced the completion of its demilitarisation process. The United States has destroyed more than 90 percent of its chemical weapons arsenal, and is on track to completing its own demilitarisation process by the planned time of 2023.

To monitor compliance with these destruction obligations, as well as the Convention's core prohibitions, the CWC created one of the most extensive verification systems devised for a disarmament instrument. To date, OPCW inspectors have undertaken nearly 3,500 industrial inspections in over 80 States Parties. Inspections have generated confidence in the efficacy of the Convention, and promoted trust between the States Parties.

The OPCW's universalisation activities have engaged numerous countries since the entry into force and we have attained outstanding results. Today, 192 States Parties enjoy the CWC's protection. Only four countries are not yet party to the Convention. In parallel to these achievements, the Organisation has also had to face formidable challenges. Our Syria mission was both a test of the Organisation as well as a demonstration of our capacity to adapt to new situations.

In 2013, the OPCW commenced the unprecedented and ambitious task of monitoring the demilitarisation of a declared chemical weapons programme in an active conflict zone. Despite the difficulties, the OPCW verified the transportation out of Syria and destruction of 1,300 metric tonnes of chemical warfare agent in less than a year. Our mission in Syria continues. In the face of persistent and credible allegations of chlorine being used as weapons in Syria, I established the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in April 2014 to assess these incidents. The FFM has investigated multiple cases, most recently confirming the use of sarin during an attack this April on the town of Khan Sheikhou.

I should point out, that the FFM's role in Syria is not to attribute responsibility, only to evaluate the facts. However, the results of the FFM's activities are forwarded to the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, which has the mandate to identify perpetrators.

We are aware that the use of chlorine in many of the incidents investigated by the JIM is not only a concern to the OPCW and the CWC States Parties, but to the chemical industry as well. I wish to acknowledge the support offered by the American Chemistry Council and Cefic on this issue. Even though much of the OPCW's work has occurred outside the public eye, the international community has still taken notice. In 2013, the Nobel Committee decided to award the OPCW the Nobel Prize for Peace for its extensive efforts in chemical disarmament. It was my privilege as the Director-General to receive the award in Oslo, on behalf of the Organisation.

Cooperation with industry

The chemical industry has always had a proactive interest in the CWC regime. When the Convention was being negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, representatives of industry were present there, exchanged views with diplomats and provided their inputs. The focus of that engagement revolved around verification issues, and it is safe to say that without the chemical industry's input the task of the OPCW in verification activities would be considerably harder. Despite this initial close involvement, formal avenues for cooperation with industry have been limited.

This situation underwent a sea-change at the Third Review Conference in 2013 where the States Parties expressed a desire for improving interaction with the chemical industry. Since then the frequency and the quality of our engagement has increased. First, the States Parties agreed to amend the rules of procedure of the Conference of the States Parties to allow major industry representatives to address them directly. I would like to take this moment to express my appreciation to Cal Dooley, the former Council Secretary of ICCA, for his statement at last year's Conference and I look forward to an ICCA representation in November.

It was recognised that more could be done to deepen our cooperation. In 2014, we had established a more structured and systematic dialogue between the OPCW and the ICCA. We put in place a coordination mechanism through the creation of the OPCW-ICCA Joint Steering Committee and the Chemical Industry Coordination Group (CICG). Indeed, today we will be holding the second meeting of the Joint Steering Committee and the fifth CICG meeting will be held next month in the margins of the 22nd Conference of States Parties.

The purpose of the CI Coordination Group has been to better manage the efforts of the OPCW and the ICCA and to avoid duplication. Specifically, we have focused our cooperation in three areas of mutual interest: chemical safety and security; activities related to verification; and education and outreach. Chemical safety and security has been a key focus of the OPCW. Greater awareness and strengthened capacity in this area helps mitigate risks, reduce industrial accidents and prevents the diversion of industrial chemicals to prohibited activities. As such, since 2009 chemical safety and security management has been a major capacity building programme offered by the Organisation. This year alone the OPCW has held eight workshops on this subject, all involving participants from the chemical industry.

Verification has been an issue of long-standing interest for the chemical industry, and the OPCW maintains close cooperation in this area to maximise confidence in compliance while minimising disruption to legitimate activities. With the OPCW's permanent mandate of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, we will seek a risk-based approach to enhance the verification system without any additional burden on industry.

In fact, within the OPCW-ICCA Joint Steering Committee we have worked together to tackle mutual verification concerns. It was agreed at the first Committee meeting, for example, that the issue of transfer discrepancies should be addressed as a cooperative effort. Accordingly, we examined this issue at a meeting last year at the Cefic headquarters in Brussels and again during

a follow-up workshop this year in Frankfurt. We look forward to the ICCA paper on transfer discrepancies which will be one of the results of the Frankfurt workshop.

In education and outreach, the OPCW has been assisting the States Parties build capacity to implement the Convention through our extensive programmes and training activities. The support of the chemical industry has been significant in this area. This year the ICCA and national chemical associations assisted the OPCW by hosting at 18 plants in 15 States Parties participants from our Associate Programme, a training activity for chemistry professionals from developing countries. OPCW is ready to explore further avenues of cooperation with the chemical industry.

Future outlook

Maintaining this engagement the interaction will be important given the overlapping interests and shared concerns. In the fields of science and technology, rapid advances have created significant prospects for building happier, healthier, and more sustainable societies. Chemistry and the continuous research undertaken by the chemical industry has resulted in numerous world-changing discoveries, and many innovative products. New scientific developments also present opportunities to improve the implementation of the Convention in such areas as verification and monitoring techniques. At the same time, it must be recognised that substantial risks exist of potential new chemicals with weapons applications being discovered by chance or design. The Scientific Advisory Board, a subsidiary body of the OPCW, plays a critical role in this regard.

The Advisory Board's function is to provide advice on scientific issues to ensure the OPCW and the States Parties are never blind to new scientific breakthroughs relevant to the CWC. We welcome, therefore, the participation of representatives from the ICCA in an Advisory Board workshop earlier this month in Zagreb, where they shared their views on trends in the global chemical industry.

It is not enough for the OPCW to understand the evolution in science. The Organisation must adapt itself in view of these developments. We have initiated a project to expand and upgrade the OPCW Laboratory to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology. This will enable us to augment a range of existing analytical and research capabilities, as well as obtain new ones.

To guard against the misuse of chemistry and to foster a culture of responsibility in the chemical sciences, in 2015 the OPCW provided a platform to develop and launch The Hague Ethical Guidelines. The chemical industry contributed to this work. We encourage all stakeholders involved in the field of chemistry, to refer to them when considering the broader impact of their activities. Consequently, I commend the ICCA for its analysis of the Guidelines along the Responsible Care programme and their dissemination to its member associations. The Guidelines do not compete with, but complement Responsible Care.

While the shifting scientific landscape has always presented potential hazards, the problem of chemical terrorism is a new and more concrete challenge. The dangers associated with non-state actors acquiring chemical compounds and their use for hostile purposes have gone beyond

theoretical or possible – they are real. They were evident in the Tokyo subway in 1995 and they are evident today on the battlefields of Syria and Iraq.

The JIM has confirmed definitively the use of sulphur mustard by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria. I would like to highlight, though, that this current threat from terrorism has not employed the scientific developments of this century, but rather has made use of the chemistry of 100 years ago. This is an issue that will be difficult to tackle. It has no neat timelines, and it is likely to manifest itself in unforeseeable ways and unpredictable locations. The OPCW and the States Parties are aware of this issue and we are addressing it.

Within the OPCW, the States Parties have an Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors. In these groups, legal, prevention and response aspects are being addressed. Recognising the strain that a chemical attack can have on domestic emergency services and law enforcement, the OPCW established a Rapid Response and Assistance Mission to help States Parties dealing with these situations. Our team of experts can be dispatched at short notice to assist a requesting State Party to respond to a chemical attack.

It is a paradox that while we see the peril from military arsenals recede, our need to ensure the full implementation of the Convention has become higher in order to grapple with the threat of chemical terrorism. Industry has a mutual concern as well as an obvious role to play in addressing these new threats.

Conclusion

The CWC is a holistic regime that relies upon not only prohibitions, but also assistance and transparency to achieve its object and purpose. Giving representatives of the chemical industry a greater voice in the implementation of the CWC will bridge knowledge gaps and enhance the sense of ownership. It is my hope that the chemical industry will continue to act as our partner in the years to come. The world is leading us in new directions and the resulting challenges we face require new perspectives. Chemical industry has played a significant role in contributing to the sustainable development by making investments in various parts of the globe.

I was in Africa recently and observed first-hand the eagerness of countries there to grow and expand their capacity to address challenges they face in the implementation of Convention. We are working together with them through our Africa Program to build necessary capacities in those countries. I believe that OPCW's capacity building programs may contribute to creating an environment conducive to investment from the global chemical industry in Africa or elsewhere. The OPCW's motto "Working together for a world free of chemical weapons" underlines the necessity that we all share the responsibility of achieving that goal, as well as reap the rewards of its realisation.

I thank you for your attention and wish you all the best in your deliberations.
