



External Relations Division
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NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

OPCW CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND CHEMICAL SAFETY AND SECURITY

Background

1. By its resolution 63/209 of 19 December 2008, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2011 as the International Year of Chemistry.
2. The objectives of designating 2011 as the International Year of Chemistry (IYC 2011) are, inter alia, to celebrate the achievements of chemistry and its contributions to the well-being of humanity as well as to increase the public appreciation and understanding of chemistry in meeting world needs. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been designated as the lead agency and focal point for IYC 2011.
3. Considering that advancements in chemistry have been used not only for progress, but also for military use and to the detriment of humankind, the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) represents the singular legal instrument comprehensively banning chemical weapons and the misuse of chemistry, while seeking to ensure that it is used only for peaceful purposes.
4. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will host the OPCW Conference on International Cooperation and Chemical Safety and Security on 12 and 13 September 2011 as a contribution to the activities organised during the year. This event is designed to ensure that, of the several objectives identified for the celebration, the work of the OPCW under the Convention to guide progress in chemistry towards exclusively peaceful ends finds adequate coverage and international support.

Purpose

5. This conference is intended to promote the goals of the Convention by highlighting, in conjunction with major international stakeholders, both the achievements of the Organisation and the challenges that lie ahead. The stakeholders include States Parties to the Convention, States not Party, the United Nations and other relevant international and regional organisations, the chemical industry, including the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), as well as scientific and academic institutions, think tanks, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).



6. By focussing on the essential and unique role that the Convention plays in ensuring that chemistry is exclusively used in the service of humankind, the conference will seek to enhance support for the objectives of the Convention—including in the area of international cooperation—within policy-making circles in national capitals and among relevant stakeholders.
7. The conference will also serve as a forum for exploring sustainable ways and means of sharing knowledge and best practices to protect chemical plants from potential security threats. In order to prevent the misuse of toxic chemicals, it is crucial to strengthen measures to improve the safety and security of chemical plant sites. Given the comprehensive prohibition of the Convention on chemical weapons, the OPCW is well placed to serve as a forum for governments and industry to promote efforts in the context of chemical security issues. Inclusion of this aspect as a major topic for the conference is in keeping with the decisions of both the First and the Second Special Sessions of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the First Review Conference” and “the Second Review Conference”), held in 2003 and 2008, respectively.
8. The conference will involve all stakeholders of the Convention and therefore will also respond to the recommendations of the Second Review Conference which “underlined the importance of the involvement of all stakeholders, including the chemical industry and the scientific community in the promotion of the Convention’s goals and in supporting national implementation” (paragraph 9.136 of RC-2/4, dated 18 April 2008).

Venue and date

9. The two-day conference will be held in The Hague, at the OPCW Headquarters, on 12 and 13 September 2011.

Format

10. The conference will be conducted in both plenary and interactive panel-discussion format, and will include presentations by staff of the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”), representatives of relevant international and regional organisations, representatives from the chemical industry and chemical-industry associations, as well as representatives of NGOs.
11. The outcomes emerging from structured discussions will be collated as a record.
12. A non-commercial exhibition will be held to showcase the themes under discussion at the forum.
13. The themes the conference will aim to cover include:
 - (a) International cooperation:
 - (i) Chemicals management and international conventions;
 - (ii) National implementation – national experiences;

- (iii) Innovations in chemistry and their applications for developing countries;
 - (iv) Emerging areas in chemistry;
 - (v) International collaboration for the promotion of centres of excellence in the field of chemistry; and
 - (vi) The OPCW and challenges in promoting international cooperation.
- (b) Chemical safety:
- (i) Chemical safety management;
 - (ii) Chemical safety in transportation of chemicals;
 - (iii) Green chemistry;
 - (iv) Responsible Care[®] – chemical safety for small enterprises;
 - (v) Safety management in chemical industry;
 - (vi) Lessons in chemical safety – learning from incidents and accidents; and
 - (vii) Chemical safety management – emergency planning and response.
- (c) Chemical security:
- (i) The OPCW as a global platform of support for cooperation in decreasing the chemical threat and for the prevention of and preparedness against misuse of toxic chemicals;
 - (ii) Lessons learned from national and international agencies;
 - (iii) Training;
 - (iv) Promoting awareness of chemical security and safety;
 - (v) Exchange of best practices; and
 - (vi) Fostering cooperation between chemical professionals.

Participation

14. The conference is expected to be attended by representatives from Member States; governmental agencies that are involved in the monitoring or supervision of activities in the sphere of national implementation and control of toxic and precursor chemicals; the chemical industry, including chemical associations; international organisations; NGOs; academia; independent experts; and laboratories.

Funding

15. It is estimated that the proposed budget will be EUR 180,000, part of which will be used to sponsor participants.
16. No financial resources have been earmarked in the regular OPCW Programme and Budget for 2011. The conference is to be funded through voluntary contributions from Member States.
17. Requests for financial contributions have been sent to all States Parties through the regional coordinators.
18. A trust fund entitled “Conference on International Cooperation and Chemical Safety and Security” has been established to administer the funds made available to the Secretariat by donors.

Inquiries and contact information

19. Inquiries about the conference should be addressed to the Government Relations and Political Affairs Branch at +31 (0)70 416 3237, fax +31 (0)70 416 3280, or by e-mail at grb@opcw.org.
20. Information about the conference will be updated regularly and distributed on the OPCW website and OPCW social media sites.

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