

29 April 2006

Remembering all Victims of Chemical Warfare

Why We Remember all Victims of Chemical Warfare

For over a century, chemicals have been used as weapons to kill and injure en masse. This cruel and universally condemned form of warfare has taken millions of lives. Victims that survive such attacks suffer painful lifelong disabilities and disfigurement.

We remember the victims of chemical warfare to honour their memory and to ensure that the torture they endured will not be forgotten.

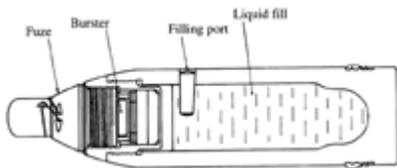
An effective global ban on these weapons will serve as the most fitting memorial to these victims. The scourge of chemical weapons will be lifted when all States join and implement the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Today, [178 States](#) have joined the Chemical Weapons Convention to form the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and forever renounce chemical weapons.

The [Chemical Weapons Convention](#) became international law on 29 April 1997.

Brief History of Chemical Weapons Use

Although chemicals had been used as tools of war for thousands of years—e.g. poisoned arrows, boiling tar, arsenic smoke and



A WWI chemical weapon

During World War I, chlorine and phosgene gases were released from canisters on the battlefield and dispersed by the wind. These chemicals were manufactured in large quantities by the turn of the century and were deployed as weapons during the protracted period of trench warfare. The first large-scale attack with chlorine gas occurred 22 April 1915 at Ieper in Belgium. The use of several different types of chemical weapons, including mustard gas (yperrite), resulted in 90,000 deaths and over one million casualties during the war. Those injured in chemical warfare suffered from the effects for the rest of their lives; thus the events at Ieper during World War I scarred a generation. By the end of World War I, 124,000 tonnes of chemical agent had been expended. The means of delivery for chemical agent evolved over the first half of the twentieth century, increasing these weapons' already frightening capacity to kill and maim through the development of chemical munitions in the form of artillery shells, mortar projectiles, aerial bombs, spray tanks and landmines.

After witnessing the effects of such weapons in World War I, it appeared that few countries wanted to be the first to introduce even deadlier chemical weapons onto the World War II battlefields. However, preparations were made by many countries to retaliate in kind should chemical weapons be used in warfare. Chemical weapons were deployed on a large scale in almost all theatres in the First and Second World Wars, leaving behind a legacy of old and abandoned chemical weapons, which still presents a problem for many countries.

During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union both maintained enormous stockpiles of chemical weapons, amounting to tens of thousands of tonnes. The amount of chemical weapons held by these two countries was enough to destroy



Scene of horror: thousands of civilians died in a chemical weapons attack in Halabja, Iraq in 1988. News of the attack helped to spur progress in negotiating the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Iraq used chemical weapons in Iran during the war in the 1980s, and Iraq also used mustard gas and nerve agents against Kurdish residents of Halabja, in Northern Iraq, in 1988. The horrific pictures of Halabja victims shocked the world at the time of the negotiations in Geneva on the Chemical Weapons Convention. The two most recent examples of the use of chemical weapons were the sarin poisoning incident in Matsumoto, a Japanese residential community, in 1994, and the sarin attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995, both perpetrated by the Aum Shinrikyu doomsday cult. These two attacks re-focused international attention on the potential use of chemical weapons by terrorists, and on the dangers posed by chemical weapons.

The devastating impact chemical weapons have had in the past, and the potential for the use of modern—even more deadly—chemical agents not only by States at war but in other violent conflicts and by non-State actors, provide the imperative for the international effort to uphold the ban on such weapons and to work towards the complete, global elimination of chemical weapons.

Brief History of the Chemical Weapons Convention

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (otherwise known as the Chemical Weapons Convention or CWC) was opened for signature with a ceremony in Paris on 13 January 1993—130 States signed the Convention within the first two days. Four years later, in April 1997, the Convention entered into force with 87 States Parties—the ratification of the Convention by at least 65 States, achieved in November 1996, was a precondition to trigger the 180-day countdown until the Convention's entry into force. In July 2003, the CWC comprised 153 States Parties, as well as a fully functioning implementing Organisation, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The Convention had been the subject of nearly 20 years of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. The States involved in these negotiations were seeking to finalize an international treaty banning chemical weapons, and designed to ensure their worldwide elimination. This goal was indeed achieved.

The Convention is unique because it is the first multilateral treaty to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and to provide for the international verification of the destruction of these weapons. Furthermore, it is the first disarmament treaty negotiated within an entirely multilateral framework, leading to increased transparency and its application equally to all States Parties. The Convention was also negotiated with the active participation of the global chemical industry, thus ensuring industry's ongoing cooperation with the CWC's industrial verification regime. The Convention mandates the inspection of industrial facilities to ensure that toxic chemicals are used exclusively for purposes not prohibited by the Convention

Altogether, the international community succeeded in producing a treaty that would verify the destruction of chemical weapons worldwide as well as ensure the non-proliferation of these weapons and the toxic chemicals used in their manufacture. The Convention also encourages international cooperation between States Parties in the peaceful uses of chemistry, and provides for assistance and protection to States Parties that are threatened or attacked by chemical weapons.

Before the Convention is considered in greater detail, it is useful to understand why such a treaty was necessary. Where does the threat from chemical weapons come from?

History of Chemical Disarmament

For as long as chemicals have been used as a means of warfare, efforts to curtail such use have been undertaken internationally. The first international agreement limiting the use of chemical weapons dates back to 1675, when France and Germany came to an



Soldiers wearing anti-phosgene masks during World War I (Photo: Corporate Press Inc.)

Almost exactly 200 years later, in 1874, the next treaty or agreement of this sort was concluded: the Brussels Convention on the Law and Customs of War. The Brussels Convention prohibited the employment of poison or poisoned weapons, and the use of arms, projectiles or material to cause unnecessary suffering. Before the turn of the century, a third agreement came into being; an international peace conference held in The Hague in 1899 led to the signing of an agreement that prohibited the use of projectiles filled with poison gas.

In the wake of World War I, during which the world witnessed the horrors of large-scale chemical warfare, international efforts to ban the use of chemical weapons and prevent such suffering from being inflicted again, on soldiers and civilians, intensified. The result of this renewed global commitment was the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. The Geneva Protocol does not, however, prohibit the development, production or possession of chemical weapons. It only bans the use of chemical and bacteriological (biological) weapons in war. Furthermore, many countries signed the Protocol with reservations permitting them to use chemical weapons against countries that had not joined the Protocol or to respond in kind if attacked with chemical weapons. Since the Geneva Protocol has been in force, some of these States Parties have dropped their reservations and accepted an absolute ban on the use of chemical and biological weapons.

In 1971 the Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee (ENDC) (later to become the Conference on Disarmament) completed negotiations on the text of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons, commonly referred to as the Biological Weapons Convention or BWC. In conjunction with the 1925 Geneva Protocol, it banned its States Parties from developing, producing, or possessing biological weapons, but contained no mechanism to verify the compliance of States Parties with these prohibitions. Included within the BWC was the stipulation that countries commit themselves to the negotiation of an international treaty banning chemical weapons.



Iranian victim receiving medical treatment for exposure to chemical weapons

Even today, more than ten years after the end of the Iran-Iraq war, approximately 30,000 Iranians are still suffering and dying from the effects of chemical weapons deployed by Iraq during the war conflict. The need to manage the treatment of such a large number of casualties has placed Iran's medical specialists in the forefront of the development of effective treatment regimes for chemical weapons victims, and particularly for those suffering from exposure to mustard gas.

Beginning in 1986, the global chemical industry actively participated in these negotiations.

Unlike the BWC, the negotiators of a chemical weapons ban reached an understanding that this ban would be subject to international verification. To this end, trial inspections of both industrial and military facilities were undertaken, starting in late 1988.

On 3 September 1992 the ad hoc committee submitted to the Conference on Disarmament the agreed text of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons, and on Their Destruction, now commonly referred to as the Chemical Weapons Convention or CWC. The Chemical Weapons Convention was opened for signature in Paris on 13 January 1993 and it was subsequently deposited with the United Nations Secretary-General in New York.

According to the terms of the Convention, the CWC would enter into force 180 days after the 65th country ratified the treaty. To prepare for the treaty's entry into force and the implementation of the verification regime, a Preparatory Commission (PrepCom) was established in 1993. Its mission was to lay the groundwork for the establishment of the permanent implementing body for the CWC: the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons or OPCW. The PrepCom was housed in The Hague, which became the host city of the OPCW as well. In addition to preparing the Convention's implementation guidance, another of the PrepCom's most important tasks was training 200 inspectors to conduct inspections worldwide of both military and industrial sites in order to verify compliance with the Convention.

Hungary was the 65th country to ratify the Convention, in late 1996, and on 29 April 1997 the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force with 87 States Parties—becoming binding international law. (An additional 22 countries had ratified the treaty in the 180 days between Hungary's ratification and entry into force.)

With the entry into force of the Convention, the OPCW immediately began its work to implement the Convention. Both the Convention and its implementing body are intended to adapt not only to shifts in the international environment and the changing needs of States Parties, but also to respond to the rapid pace of scientific and technological developments.

Every five years, the Convention foresees that the States Parties should undertake a review of the implementation process. These review conferences serve as fora for the assessment and evaluation of the CWC's implementation, and the identification of areas where change is needed. A particular focus is given to the verification regime and the changing context within which it is implemented as well as scientific and technological advances in chemistry, engineering and biotechnology. The first review conference was held from 28 April to 9 May 2003.

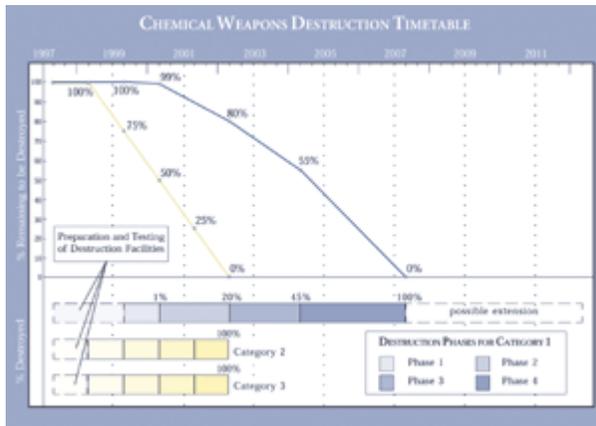
Even today, more than ten years after the end of the Iran-Iraq war, approximately 30,000 Iranians are still suffering and dying from the effects of chemical weapons deployed by Iraq during the war conflict. The need to manage the treatment of such a large number of casualties has placed Iran's medical specialists in the forefront of the development of effective treatment regimes for chemical weapons victims, and particularly for those suffering from exposure to mustard gas.

Chemical Weapons Major Developments in Their Use and Prohibition

1675	The Strasbourg Agreement	The first international agreement limiting the use of chemical weapons, in this case, poison bullets.
1874	The Brussels Convention on the Law and Customs of War	The Brussels Convention prohibited the employment of poison or poisoned weapons, and the use of arms, projectiles or material to cause unnecessary suffering.
1899/1907	Hague Peace Conferences	Bans on use of poisoned weapons, "asphyxiating or deleterious gases".
1915-1918	Europe, World War I	1.3 million casualties, 90,000 fatalities from chemical weapons; first large-scale use of CW, Ieper, Belgium.
1925	Geneva Protocol	Ban on CW use; but no prohibition on development, etc. - some states interpret as "no first use" - 132 parties by 2000.
1972	Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention	Comprehensive BW prohibition - 143 parties, 17 signatories by 2000; but no verification mechanism; commitment to negotiate on CW.
1980's	Iran-Iraq War	Including use by Iraq of CW agents against its own civilian population, Halabja, 1988
1993	Chemical Weapons Convention	Signing of CWC in Paris, January; Comprehensive bans on development, production, stockpiling and use of CW, with destruction timelines; Preparatory Commission for OPCW established.
1997	OPCW, The Hague	The Chemical Weapons Convention enters into force for 87 States Parties; The OPCW commences its operations in The Hague; as of June 1997, inspections begin.
2003	Sixth Anniversary of Entry into Force	The OPCW numbers 153 Member States and has conducted over 1,500 inspections on the territory of 56 States Parties.

Destruction / Conversion

The most important obligation under the Convention is the [destruction of chemical weapons](#). It is also the most expensive aspect of the Convention's implementation.



Timetable illustrates destruction deadlines for countries that were States Parties on the date of entry into force of the CWC, 29 April 1997. The Convention gives States Parties the option of destroying their chemical weapons sooner and at a faster pace than indicated if they so desire.

Most of the destruction costs are generated by the investment in state-of-the-art technology to ensure that the risk to people and to the environment is kept to a minimum at every stage in the transportation and destruction of munitions, as well as during the removal and destruction of chemical agents. Destruction, therefore, has to be carried out at highly specialised facilities.

There are two main technological approaches to the destruction of chemical agents: the direct incineration of the agents and neutralisation by means of various chemical reactions. Research to develop other methods is continuing. It is up to each State Party to determine which destruction method it wishes to use, provided that it meets strict environmental standards, that the destruction is complete and irreversible, and that the design of the facility allows for adequate verification. It is important that the exploration of alternative technologies for the demilitarisation and destruction of chemical weapons continues in order to develop processes that are both cost effective and environmentally responsible.

The States Parties must submit detailed plans to the Technical Secretariat that set out the process to be used in the destruction activities and the timelines to be followed. These plans must be submitted for each chemical weapons destruction facility (CWDF—where the chemical weapons are being destroyed—and for each CWPF that is to be destroyed as well. If a CWPF is to be converted, detailed plans of the conversion process must also be submitted. The plans for destruction and/or conversion are placed before the Executive Council for approval. If approval is not forthcoming, then destruction may commence under continuous



Examining abandoned weapons

The destruction of old and/or abandoned chemical weapons is especially difficult and potentially dangerous. Old and/or abandoned chemical munitions have often become less stable with time and there is a greater risk of an explosive detonation or agent contamination. The destruction of such weapons is being undertaken in a small number of States Parties, as a matter of urgency. Thousands of tonnes of chemical agents and munitions were dumped in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, as well as other bodies of water worldwide, in the years immediately following World War II. These weapons are not covered by the Convention, which requires only that chemical weapons dumped at sea after 1 January 1985 be declared to the OPCW.

Non-proliferation

The States Parties regulate the use of Scheduled chemicals by industry within their borders, and prepare industry to receive regular OPCW inspections designed to verify that Scheduled chemicals and "discrete organic chemicals" (DOC) are being utilised solely for peaceful purposes.

Under the terms of the Convention, the transfer of Schedule 1 chemicals is strictly controlled among Member States—only for research, medical, pharmaceutical or protective purposes, and in limited quantities—and is forbidden to States not Party. A similar ban on the transfer of Schedule 2 chemicals to States not Party came into force in April 2000. Free trade in Schedule 2 chemicals is permitted among States Parties. It is permitted to transfer Schedule 3 chemicals to both States Parties and States not Party; however, a recipient State not Party must produce an end-user certificate, which ensures that the chemicals are being used for peaceful purposes. The Convention does foresee that States Parties may consider other measures regarding the transfer of Schedule 3 chemicals to States not Party five years after the Convention enters into force.

In addition to the requirements for end-user certificates for transfers of Schedule 3 chemicals, the States Parties are required to monitor carefully exports and imports of all Scheduled chemicals and report this information to the Technical Secretariat on an annual basis.

Assistance and Protection

Under Article X of the Convention, each State Party has the right to request, and receive from the OPCW, [assistance and protection](#) if:

- Chemical weapons have been used against it;
- Riot control agents have been used against it as a method of warfare; or,
- It is threatened by actions or activities of any State that are prohibited for States Parties by Article I of the Convention.

States Parties are required by the Convention to inform the OPCW of any national protective programmes and to contribute to the protective capabilities of the OPCW, including by making contributions of equipment and/or personnel, or by contributing funds to the Voluntary Fund for Assistance.

The OPCW has made preparations to respond and act on an emergency basis should the Organisation be required to do so. These preparations include coordinating and mobilising international mechanisms to respond to requests for assistance and establishing a cooperative response structure to handle requests for assistance and protection against chemical weapons.

The OPCW provides training courses and coordination seminars and workshops throughout the year that help to prepare the Technical Secretariat and the States Parties to protect civilian populations from chemical attack, and to respond with adequate assistance and protection on an emergency basis.

OPCW Pays Tribute to Dr Arie Jacobus Johannes Ooms (1925–1999)

On 27 April 2006, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, H.E. Mr Jan-Peter Balkenende, during his visit to the OPCW on the occasion of the First Observance of the Remembrance Day for All Victims of Chemical Warfare unveiled a photograph of [Dr Arie Jacobus Johannes Ooms](#). The Prime Minister also officially named one of the main conference rooms used by OPCW delegates at the Headquarters the "Ooms Room".

OPCW Remembers All Victims of Chemical Warfare; Prime Minister Balkenende Addresses Member States

OPCW Press Release 2006/27

The Remembrance Day for All Victims of Chemical Warfare was observed for the first time at the Headquarters of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague on 27 April 2006. The 178 OPCW Member States implement the Chemical Weapons Convention, which bans absolutely the development, production, transfer, stockpiling or use of chemical weapons and also stipulates the irreversible destruction of all existing stocks of these weapons.

The Remembrance Day was established by the OPCW to ensure that the memory of the victims of these weapons is not forgotten. The Remembrance Day also serves to remind all peoples of the horrors of chemical warfare and to prevent its recurrence.

On the occasion of the Remembrance Day's first observance, [the United Nations Secretary-General, H.E. Mr Kofi Annan, forwarded a message](#) to the OPCW and noted that the Convention and the OPCW have played a vital part in international efforts to "exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons". Secretary-General Annan called on those States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention to do so without delay. He urged all States Parties to redouble their efforts to work for full implementation of the Convention and to ensure that chemical weapons are kept out of the hands of non-State actors. He stressed that this task will require stepped up vigilance and improved coordination among Governments, international organizations and the private sector. Secretary-General Annan concluded by requesting all States to honour the victims of chemical warfare by pledging to consign these dreadful weapons to the pages of history.

The [Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, H.E. Mr Jan Peter Balkenende, stated in his address](#) that it is of great importance to remember those killed by chemical weapons attacks and those that are still suffering from the effects of these attacks. He noted that when we remember, we pay tribute to them and we rediscover the importance of our fight for a world of peace and security. Prime Minister Balkenende stressed that through determination and hard work all chemical weapons will be destroyed. He urged that the terrible suffering chemical weapons have caused millions of people should never be forgotten and to honour that memory, we must redouble our efforts to make sure that these attacks will never happen again. Prime Minister Balkenende concluded by underscoring that an expanded and more effective international legal framework will serve to honour all those that have suffered in armed conflict.

The [Chairman of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, H.E. Ambassador José Antonio Arróspide Del Busto, Permanent Representative of Peru to the OPCW, indicated in his address](#) that the Remembrance Day is intended as a great tribute to the numerous victims, disappeared and survivors, of the use of chemical weapons. He stated that the commemoration is an expression of the determination of many men and women of good will to make this planet a better place for the present and future generations. Chairman Arróspide noted that a solid OPCW and effective implementation of the Convention may greatly counteract the threat of use and actual use of chemical weapons in the future. In conclusion he extended on behalf of the Organisation prayers and condolences to all the victims of chemical weapons and their families and called upon all Member States to reinvigorate their firm commitment to eliminate chemical weapons for once and forever.

The [Chairman of the Executive Council, H.E. Ambassador Alfonso M. Dastis, Permanent Representative of Spain to the OPCW,](#) underscored in his address the fact that the praiseworthy goal of building a world free of chemical weapons has kept the Member States united around a table. He acknowledged that nations belonging to very distant regions and different cultural backgrounds, and holding often opposed political points of view, have been able to give birth to a successful Convention and to guarantee, through this Organisation, its strength and permanent contribution to peace and security. While noting the lack of some very important nations within the OPCW, which Executive Council Chairman Dastis would like to see join soon, he stated that the very wide membership of the OPCW provides it with a high level of legitimacy. In his estimation, the culture of multilateralism and dialogue is an outstanding contribution that this organisation may offer to international society. Executive Council Chairman Dastis stated that when the goal is noble and the rules fair and transparent, the nations of good will are ready to work together, to which the OPCW's healthy ten-year-old project bears witness. In conclusion, he looked upon the goals achieved thus far as an invitation for the Member States to keep working for the implementation of the Convention and to be guided in that effort by the memories of the past and by the determination not to have to mourn any future victims of chemical weapons.

[In his address, OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter,](#) recalled that unprotected civilians are the main target of chemical weapons. Director-General Pfirter stressed that due to the challenge posed by the threat of chemical terrorism there is no room for complacency. He noted in this regard that the destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles is far from complete and the Convention's full implementation by all Member States has yet to be achieved. Director-General Pfirter called upon all countries to join the Convention to rid the world of chemical weapons once and for all, in particular all those in the Middle East, as well North Korea. In conclusion, he noted that Remembrance Day means paying due tribute to the suffering and death of the thousands of victims of chemical warfare, as well as recognising effective multilateralism at work, renewing the international community's determination to prevent any further use of chemical weapons, and ensuring that chemistry is used exclusively for the benefit of people the world over.

[Speaking on behalf of the African Regional Group, H.E. Ambassador Abuelgasim Abdelwahid Sheikh Idris, Permanent Representative of Sudan to the OPCW,](#) recalled that the name of Ieper is deeply engraved on the African memory because Africans were among victims of the first mass use of chemical weapons at Ieper, Belgium in 1915. Ambassador Idris recalled that the African Union at its inaugural Summit meeting in Durban, South Africa in 2002 adopted a Decision on the Universality and Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and called for the African Region to be a Chemical Weapons-Free Zone. He noted that 46 African Nations are Member States signifying the commitment of that region to the objectives of the Convention and by so doing making the world a better place for future generations to live.

[In his address on behalf of the Asian Regional Group, Mr Malik Azhar Ellahi, Alternate Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OPCW,](#) stated that the Remembrance Day gathering honours the memory of those who suffered death and injury by chemical weapons and serves to keep them alive in our collective conscience. He recalled that their sacrifices impelled global action to completely prohibit this abhorrent means of warfare. Mr Ellahi underscored the fact that the only means to ensure that our technical civilization would not one day become the cause of its own destruction was, and remains, the complete elimination of such horrendous weapons and unremitting efforts for the promotion of international peace and security for all.

The [Coordinator for the Eastern European Group —Mr. Plamen Ivanov, Alternate Permanent Representative of Bulgaria to the OPCW—](#) noted in his address that the devastating impact chemical weapons have had in the past, and the potential for the use of modern, even more deadly, chemical agents not only by States at war, but in other violent conflicts and by non-State actors, provide an imperative for the international effort to uphold the ban on such weapons and to work for their complete, global elimination. He stated that by achieving the universal, full and effective application of the Convention, all Member States will have passed on a crucial legacy of enhanced peace and security for future generations, as well as honoring the memory of the victims of chemical weapons.

[Speaking on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, H.E. Ambassador Carlos Mora, Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the OPCW](#), underlined the Region's role at the forefront of the international efforts in the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction. He noted that for the Latin American and Caribbean Group, the Chemical Weapons Convention represents one of the main pillars of the international security framework, an efficient instrument to contain the threat of chemical weapons proliferation. He called upon the Member States to continue the fight against terrorism in the field of non-proliferation. Ambassador Mora stated that the memories of the victims of chemical warfare must liberate the will to fulfil the main aim of the Convention, the total and verifiable elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction within a fixed timeframe.

In his capacity as [Coordinator for the Western European and Other States Group, H.E. Ambassador Mr Alfonso Dastis, Permanent Representative of Spain to the OPCW](#), stated in his address that today Member States can proudly say that no Member State has used this kind of lethal weapons since the entry into force of the Convention, which, after the horrifying experiences the world has undergone during the past century, is indeed worthy of celebration. He noted that this result is precisely the objective of the OPCW's efforts. He indicated that the new threats to peace and security, namely the possibility of terrorist attacks, are per se a sound reason to give renewed value to the Convention. Ambassador Mr Alfonso Dastis highlighted the fact that universality and full implementation of the Convention have become indispensable to guarantee the highest level of protection. He concluded by renewing, in the name of the Western European and Other States Group, their commitment to the Convention and to its objectives.

[H.E. Ambassador Bozorgmehr Ziaran, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the OPCW](#), submitted in his statement the proposal to mobilise an international support network to provide special care and services to those that suffer from the effects of exposure to chemical weapons. He expressed the sentiments of his nation as it grieves for those that lost their lives to chemical weapons and stands by those that continue to suffer.

The Remembrance Day commemoration in The Hague was attended by representatives of OPCW Member States, as well as representatives of other international organizations, among them the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization.

Additional resources

- [Why we remember all victims of chemical warfare](#)
- [Message by the UN Secretary-General on the Remembrance Day for Victims of Chemical Warfare](#)
- [Programme of Activities in The Hague](#)
- [A biography of Arie Jacobus Johannes “Jack” Ooms \(1925–1999\)](#)
- The [Remembrance Day brochure](#) is available for download.
- A [press kit](#) is available for download.
- The [OPCW Image Gallery](#) contains royalty-free photographs that can be used for academic, educational or research purposes only. Please contact media@opcw.org before hand to receive approval, and further advice if necessary.

Speeches in The Hague

The following speeches were given during the Commemoration Ceremony to Mark the Inaugural Observance of the Remembrance Day for All Victims of Chemical Warfare, held at OPCW headquarters in The Hague on 27 April 2006:

- [Message by the UN Secretary-General on the Remembrance Day for Victims of Chemical Warfare](#)
- [Speech by H.E. Mr Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands](#)
- [Speech by the Chairman of the Conference of States Parties —H.E. Mr José Antonio Arróspide, Permanent Representative of Peru to the OPCW](#)
- [Speech by H.E. Mr Alfonso M. Dastis, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Spain to the OPCW, on behalf of the Executive Council](#)
- [Speech by H.E. Mr Rogelio Pflinter, Director-General, OPCW](#)
- [Speech by H.E. Mr Abuelgasim Abdelwahid Shiekh Idris, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Sudan to the OPCW, on behalf of the African Group](#)

- [Speech by Mr Malik Azhar Ellahi, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the OPCW, on behalf of the Asian Group](#)
- [Speech by Mr Plamen Ivanov, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria to the OPCW, on behalf of the Eastern Europe Group](#)
- [Speech by H.E. Mr Carlos Mora, Permanent Representative of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay to the OPCW, on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group](#)
- [Speech by H.E. Mr Alfonso M. Dastis, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Spain to the OPCW, on behalf of the Western European and Other States Group](#)
- [H.E. Mr Bozorgmehr Ziaran, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the OPCW](#)

Programme of activities in The Hague

Programme of the Commemoration Ceremony to Mark the Inaugural Observance of the Remembrance Day for All Victims of Chemical Warfare, OPCW headquarters, The Hague, 27 April 2006

- 14.30: Arrival of Dignitaries
- 15.00: Arrival of the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
- 15.05: Ceremony commences. Addresses in order of appearance by:
 - [The Chairman of the Conference of States Parties — H.E. Mr José Antonio Arróspide](#)— opens the commemorative act, and reads the [Message by the UN Secretary-General on the Remembrance Day for Victims of Chemical Warfare](#)
 - H.E. Mr Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
 - [H.E. Mr Rogelio Pfirter, Director-General, OPCW](#)
 - [H.E. Mr Alfonso M. Dastis](#), Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Spain to the OPCW, on behalf of the Executive Council as Chairman and on behalf of the [Western European and Other States Group](#)
 - H.E. Mr Abuelgasim Abdelwahid Shiekh Idris, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Sudan to the OPCW, on behalf of the [African Group](#)
 - H.E. Mr Carlos Mora, Permanent Representative of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay to the OPCW, on behalf of the [Latin American and Caribbean Group](#)
 - Mr Malik Azhar Ellahi, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the OPCW, on behalf of the [Asian Group](#)
 - Mr Plamen Ivanov, Alternate Permanent Representative of the Republic of Bulgaria to the OPCW, on behalf of the [Eastern Europe Group](#)
 - H.E. Mr Bozorgmehr Ziaran, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the OPCW
- Musical Interlude
- 16.00: The [Chairman of the Conference of States Parties — H.E. Mr José Antonio Arróspide](#)— closes the commemorative act.
- The Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, H.E. Mr Jan-Peter Balkenende, unveiled a photograph of Dr Arie Jacobus Johannes Ooms. The Prime Minister also officially named one of the main conference rooms used by OPCW delegates at the Headquarters the “Ooms Room”.

A biography of Arie Jacobus Johannes “Jack” Ooms (1925–1999)

As the head of Dutch chemical defence research, Dr Ooms worked for 23 years for the eradication of chemical warfare, which he believed could best be achieved by a combination of effective chemical protection and international chemical arms control.

In 1942 Dr Ooms entered the University of Utrecht to study chemistry. In 1943 he refused to sign the Nazi loyalty declaration and made his way to England by way of Spain and Portugal, much of it on foot. He joined the U.S. Army and, in August 1944, returned to mainland Europe with the Allied landings in southern France. After completing his MSc degree and national military service, he joined the newly formed Chemical Laboratory of the National Defence Research Organization. In 1952 he finished his studies, and was appointed director of the Chemical Laboratory in 1965. Dr Ooms was appointed director of the newly merged Technological Laboratory RVO-TNO and the Chemical Laboratory in 1978 where he remained until his retirement in 1988.

Dr Ooms’ active participation in the negotiation of a permanent, multilateral ban on chemical weapons, began in 1969 when he joined as technical adviser the Netherlands’ delegation to the Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee (ENDC) that later became the United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Dr Ooms was the only delegate to the Conference on Disarmament

that continuously participated over the full twenty-year course of these negotiations, which culminated in the adoption of the Chemical Weapons Convention for signature by the United Nations General Assembly in 1992. Subsequently, he served on the Netherlands' delegation to the OPCW Preparatory Commission.

In 1991, Dr Ooms was appointed to the UN Special Commission then being established to oversee Iraq's renunciation of weapons of mass destruction. This work continued to engage him in the months immediately prior to his death.

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