Mr Chairman,
Mayor of The Hague,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,

I welcome you all to this solemn ceremony.

I thank Ambassador Julio Roberto Paloma Silva for presiding over this commemoration in his capacity as Chairman of the Conference of the States Parties. And, my deep gratitude to all of you for your presence.

Mr Robert de Groot, Director-General for European Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Mr Jozias van Aartsen, the Mayor of The Hague, have kindly joined us in this remembrance for which I express to them my gratitude.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention 14 years ago was a milestone in the path towards a more peaceful world. By banishing chemical weapons, the international community signalled its abhorrence for a method of warfare based on cruelty. History is witness to repeated massacres that spared neither soldier nor civilian. These tragic episodes negated the fundamental values and norms espoused by the global society.

Today’s gathering with representation from governments, international organisations and civil society institutions bears testimony to the shared resolve to prevent the use of chemical weapons.

The collective resolve to bring an end to this method of warfare found concrete expression in the Chemical Weapons Convention. A rededication on this day to its goals and objectives constitutes an appropriate tribute to the memory of the countless victims of chemical weapons.
The memory of those who perished in the most painful circumstances must strengthen our determination to fully achieve the goals of the CWC.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The elimination of over 64% percent of the global stockpiles of chemical weapons is proof of the Convention’s validity. It is only a matter of time before the remaining chemical weapons too are destroyed.

Verification, especially of the global chemical industry provides the assurance against the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

A framework of cooperation established by the CWC regime, enables States Parties to derive tangible benefits of their membership of the OPCW continues to be strengthened. Our assistance and protection procedures and international cooperation programs continue to yield positive results.

A sustained commitment to the Convention has brought us closer to the goal of a world free from chemical weapons. Our States Parties have made the Convention an effective instrument that not only promotes security but also upholds human dignity.

We must however remain mindful of future challenges. The institutional support provided for the implementation of the CWC needs to meet new conditions and new demands. Progress achieved in disarmament will reduce the quantum of verification of chemical weapons destruction. Verification of non-production on the other hand must remain a permanent endeavour. For this the core competences of the Organisation will need to be sustained.

Verification is at the heart of the CWC. It must be kept relevant to the rapidly developing chemical industry as well as science and technology. Confidence in compliance with the Convention will thus endure.

States Parties to the CWC have acted in exemplary fashion. What was once an aspiration is today a solid internationally coordinated and supported regime banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Their guardianship remains the best guarantee of its future.

The Convention is regarded as a model of multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation. OPCW’s example can indeed inspire the international community to further progress in advancing peace and progress.
The achievements of the OPCW represent an example of how the UN Charter’s principles for the promotion of international peace and security can be translated into concrete action.

In remembering the victims of chemical warfare, we rededicate ourselves to the important mission before us. It is the complete eradication of chemical weapons from the world; convincing those few remaining States to join the CWC; ensuring that the Convention is effectively implemented; strengthening verification and promoting international cooperation for peaceful uses of chemistry.

Our progress on all these fronts promises the vision underlying the CWC which is to work together for a world free from chemical weapons. This goal and its sincere pursuit offers a worthy tribute to the memory of those we are gathered today to honour.

I thank you for your attention.