

Award Ceremony Speech

Presentation Speech by Thorbjørn Jagland, Chairman of the [Norwegian Nobel Committee](#), Oslo, 10 December 2013.

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highness, representatives of the Laureate, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997 prohibiting the development, production, storage and use of chemical weapons states that the parties to the Convention are “Determined for the sake of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons.”

Is that not beautiful?

Still more beautiful: it can be achieved. We are in fact close to the target.

This is to a large degree due to the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which was created to ensure the implementation of the Convention.

The Nobel Peace Prize for 2013 therefore goes most deservedly to an organisation and its personnel, who have been quietly working to remove an entire category of weapons.

Our congratulations!

And with this year’s prize, we prompt those states that have not acceded to the convention to do so.

The use of chemicals in warfare is nearly as old as mankind. For thousands of years, spears and arrows have had poison applied to them to enhance their effect. Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey tell us that such poisoned arrows were used by the parties to the Trojan War. Chinese Sun Tzu mentions the use of fire with various weapons. In Hinduism, the Law of Manu favours a ban on poison and fire arrows, recommending the poisoning of food and water instead.

Up through the centuries, there are masses of examples of the use of various chemical weapons.

In due course there followed demands for bans on such weapons. The Hague Convention from the Peace Congress of 1899, and the Convention from the Congress of 1907, recommended the prohibition of “poison and poison weapons” in the waging of war.

But it was so little use.

World War One marked the first massive use of chemical weapons in war. By the end of the war, a total of 124,000 tonnes of gas had been produced. 85,000 are reckoned to have lost their lives owing to chemical weapons, while almost 1.2 million were injured.

In the wake of World War I, 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. But it did not have much effect, because it did not forbid the production and storage of such weapons. As long as possession of such weapons was permitted, there was a strong temptation to use them. Hitler used chemical means to take the lives of millions of people during World War Two, but surprised many by not making direct use of chemical weapons when waging the war itself. In Berlin they were probably afraid of what the Allied response might be if the Germans were the first to use such weapons. Their own forces might also suffer from their use on the battlefield.

Since World War Two, chemical weapons have been used frequently. The former regime in Iraq made extensive use of chemical weapons both in the war on Iran in the 1980s and on its own Kurdish population. Terrorists have also used such weapons.

The Geneva Protocol of 1925 had in other words not had the required effect.

A more comprehensive agreement was clearly needed. The new Chemical Weapons Convention was drawn up in 1992-93. It prohibits the use, production and storage of such weapons. The Convention entered into force in 1997. The OPCW was established to see that the Convention was implemented.

The OPCW's objective, then, is not arms control, as so often in such connections; the objective is disarmament in the form of elimination of chemical weapons. In effect a huge step in human history. Because never before has a weapon, previously integrated in the armed forces and doctrines of states, been banned and its removal sought from the earth's surface.

The Convention, which entered into force in 1997, has rendered chemical weapons taboo under international law.

The Convention imposes many and detailed obligations. All countries that ratify the agreement undertake to submit a full survey of whatever they may possess of chemical weapons and equipment for the production of such weapons. They furthermore undertake to destroy whatever they possess of such weapons and production facilities, and to admit international inspectors

to ensure that such destruction has taken place. The destruction must be carried out in cooperation with the OPCW. The OPCW has the right to inspect any production facility in a signatory state at 76 hours' notice.

190 countries are currently members of the OPCW. The members represent 98 per cent of the world's population and territory as well as 98 per cent of the world's total chemical industry. 80 per cent of the chemical weapons have been removed. 90 per cent of the production capacity has been destroyed.

We are accordingly quite close to achieving the highly ambitious target of totally eliminating chemical weapons. This is the result not only of cooperation between many countries, but also of cooperation undertaken between the business and industry, research institutions and organisations of those countries. Without such cooperation, the implementation of many of the provisions in the Convention would not have been possible.

This year's prize is therefore being awarded to a form of international cooperation of which we need more in other areas.

But it has not all been successes. The OPCW was unable to observe the deadline, which was April 2012, for the destruction of declared chemical weapons. Some 20 per cent, chiefly American and Russian weapons, have not yet been destroyed. It is of course not acceptable that two leading powers, themselves so eager to see others destroying their stores as quickly as possible, have not yet themselves managed to do the same. Please, speed up the process!

Now that Syria has joined the OPCW, only 6 states remain non-members. Two, Israel and Myanmar, have signed, but not ratified, the Convention. Please ratify it!

Angola, North Korea, Egypt and South Sudan have neither signed nor ratified. Please do so!

It marks a big step forward that Syria has joined the OPCW, and that plans are now being drawn up for the destruction of all its chemical weapons. It is of course a huge challenge for the OPCW to manage to destroy all these weapons under the conditions of war and chaos prevailing in the country, and in much less time than is normally available.

The anonymous inspectors from the OPCW do an extremely important and difficult job. That makes the presence of many of you here today so significant. Today's prize is also your prize.

The target of removing chemical weapons from the surface of the earth is highly ambitious, but it is not necessarily the case that it will be achieved once and for all. Development does not stop. We suspect the emergence of new

forms of warfare, new types of chemical weapons, types which the world has not seen up to now and which are potentially dreadful in their consequences. Discussion of possible new substances that are not currently defined in the Convention will confront the OPCW with new challenges.

We should never underestimate the policy of small steps. The follow-up on the Chemical Weapons Convention by the OPCW has shown how small steps can produce large results.

The dominant direction of the Norwegian Nobel Committee's work over the years has partly been the struggle for disarmament, but still more the struggle for international cooperation, whether through the League of Nations or the United Nations. The OPCW has its feet firmly planted in both traditions, which also figure so prominently in Alfred Nobel's will.

The current situation in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf lends an important perspective to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the existence of the OPCW, namely that such a multilateral framework once again became a platform from which to attempt to resolve a current crisis without the use of weapons. We were on the verge of a new military confrontation in the Middle East which could have unimaginable consequences. That has so far been avoided.

The improved climate this creates may pave the way for negotiations for a solution to the whole conflict in Syria. We know from experience that one good step may be followed by others.

I hope everyone is with me in a plea to the parties: lay down your arms, stop the bloodbath, come to the negotiating table.

That the leadership of the Russian Federation saw that the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW could be used to shift the conflict over chemical weapons onto a new track, and that President Obama responded favourably, may also have contributed to creating a new climate around Iran's nuclear program. President Rouhani went to the UN General Assembly with a more favourable message than we have heard before. A telephone conversation between the Presidents of Iran and the United States took place for the first time for over 30 years. An important, though as yet only preliminary, agreement has been concluded to limit Iran's nuclear program.

We know that a political solution in Syria and a peaceful solution to Iran's nuclear weapons program are difficult. But developments are more promising than for a long time.

Peace is a difficult issue, as we see even in the debate on the Nobel Peace Prize. Many feel that the prize should always go to bold individuals with firm principles. We need such role models to create hope in a complicated and for

many a threatening world. The prize has often gone to such outstanding individuals. Many of them have moved the world in the right direction.

But peace is not brought about by individuals and idealists alone. We also need practical politicians, capable of moving the world away from confrontation within often narrow limits. We also need institutions, not least the global ones within the United Nations.

It is the interplay between all of these that can create peace. The Nobel Peace Prize has accordingly honoured all these directions.

This must remain the Nobel Committee's platform.

Alfred Nobel's will is a visionary document. And concrete at the same time. He wrote that the prize should go to whoever had done most for fraternity between nations, the reduction of standing armies, and the holding of peace congresses.

The agreement of 2010 between Presidents Obama and Medvedev concerning strategic nuclear arms was important because the alternative was a new nuclear arms race. So it fitted in with a modern understanding of Alfred Nobel's demand for the reduction of standing armies.

The Chemical Weapons Convention and the work of the OPCW meet all of Alfred Nobel's requirements. They concern disarmament, are a form of modern peace congress, and strengthen fraternity between nations.

What is more: while negotiations concerning nuclear arms have been based on the exclusive right claimed by the nuclear powers to have nuclear arms, the Chemical Weapons Convention contains no such right. It is a real disarmament agreement. All countries must eliminate their chemical weapons. All nations are treated equally.

This must be the perspective also where nuclear arms are concerned, as was resolved by the UN Security Council meeting called by President Obama in 2009.

Nuclear weapons, too, must vanish from the face of the earth!

Many people ask, not least in Syria itself, whether it really makes any difference whether one is killed by chemical weapons or by conventional means. For those who are hit, the answer is no, though no one should underestimate the suffering that chemical weapons impose on their victims.

On the road to a more peaceful world, it is nevertheless important to combat the most monstrous weapons first, the weapons of mass destruction. We have

banned the biological weapons. The Norwegian Nobel Committee has awarded many prizes to the struggle against nuclear weapons.

Today the focus is on chemical weapons, and on the progress we have made. The honour for that goes to the 1997 Convention and to the OPCW. We praise today's laureate and extend our best wishes for success in the important tasks remaining.

Thank you for your attention.