



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

THIRD INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON ANALYSIS OF
CHEMICAL WARFARE AGENTS TO MARK THE
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF CHEMISTRY

FINNISH INSTITUTE FOR VERIFICATION OF THE CHEMICAL
WEAPONS CONVENTION (VERIFIN)

STATEMENT BY

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Professor Paula Vaninnen, Director of VERIFIN,

Professor Markku Leskelä, Professor of Inorganic Chemistry, University of Helsinki,

Professor Marliku Rasanen, Head of the Chemistry Department,

Distinguished Scientists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by expressing my gratitude for being invited to speak at the inauguration of the “Third International Workshop on Analysis of Chemical Warfare Agents”, jointly supported by VERIFIN, the University of Helsinki and the OPCW.

My presence here today represents an acknowledgement of the invaluable contribution Finland has made and continues to make towards the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention both politically and through the most substantive programmes of direct relevance to the effective operation of the Convention.

Since the inception of the OPCW in 1997, Finland has been a generous contributor to OPCW activities. These programmes have raised the value and profile of OPCW’s endeavours relating to verification as well as international co-operation. The organization of this International Workshop on topics that are crucial to the success of the chemical weapons prohibition is yet another testimony of Finland’s steadfast

commitment to the vision of a world that is free from the scourge of chemical weapons.

I also wish to express my deepest appreciation for the outstanding contribution made by the Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (VERIFIN) in support of the work of the OPCW.

The extent of support that the OPCW and its Member States have received from the Institute is difficult to summarize in a few words. It is not only one of the first OPCW designated laboratories, and the Finnish National Authority; it does active research and develops guidelines for chemical analysis. In fact, I have been told that VERIFIN was the only OPCW designated laboratory which has scored strength A's in the proficiency tests since 1996. VERIFIN offers high quality training to chemists from other Member States for the purposes of implementing the CWC. Combining all these roles, VERIFIN has represented an indispensable and reliable partner for the OPCW in support of its critical verification tasks and other important areas of its work.

The various courses and workshops organised by OPCW and VERIFIN and its offers of internships to qualified candidates from developing countries creates a deep reservoir of goodwill. This in turn promotes amongst our States Parties a sense of true ownership of the Convention and enhances their participation in OPCW activities and programmes.

With its extraordinary history of research in the field of studying and developing identification methods for chemical warfare agents, VERIFIN and its predecessor, the Chemical Weapons research project, rank amongst the top entities whose work has made it possible to demonstrate

that chemical disarmament and non-proliferation are not utopian but attainable objectives.

Thanks to the contribution of University of Helsinki, this Workshop is linked to the commemoration of 2011 as the International Year of Chemistry. The objectives of this designation were generally to celebrate the achievements of chemistry and its contributions to the well-being of humanity. Determined that we should find an occasion to underline the importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW organised an international conference in September on the theme of “International Cooperation and Chemical Safety and Security”. States Parties contributed enthusiastically towards the success of this well-attended event. It is indeed gratifying to note the solid support for the Convention and the OPCW that our Member States demonstrated through the success of this Conference. This Workshop marks an important additional reminder of the critical importance of the CWC in terms of its objective of guiding progress in chemistry towards exclusively peaceful ends.

An important objective of the “Third International Workshop on Analysis of Chemical Warfare Agents” is to share up-to-date scientific expertise and knowledge on chemistry with other shareholders of the Convention. I am confident that the information materials and scientific guides – such as this workshop’s flagship publication, the “New Blue Book 2011” in the area of recommended operating procedures for chemical analysis – will be regarded as very useful by all stakeholders. I also hope that the workshop will enable the participants to acquire a better understanding of this complex scientific field and will help train the younger generations for the future. This workshop can also serve as a platform to establish and maintain the network of stakeholders - in particular though by no means exclusively from science and academia - that are involved in dealing with

scientific issues, methods and tools related to the implementation of the Convention.

As part of their research, VERIFIN has published manuscripts and books on Recommended Operating Procedures for the analysis of Chemical Weapons Agents. This collection of books, published with a blue cover, became known as the “Blue Books”. Today, the “Blue Books” are the foremost reference point for the basic procedures for a large number of laboratories in the analysis of Chemical Weapons agents. As such, the Blue Book is a tool of far-reaching practical importance to the Convention.

This workshop marks the publication of the new edition of the Blue Book, called the “New Blue Book 2011”. This important compilation includes - carefully and comprehensively updated - “recommended operating procedures” (ROPs) for the Chemical Weapons Convention-related analysis. It has been revised in collaboration with expert laboratories in this field. This landmark publication is the outcome of a sustained effort by the Chemical Weapons analytical community - more than 48 authors and reviewers from fourteen laboratories in twelve countries contributed. The OPCW also made its contribution to this comprehensive revision. I wish to commend the efforts of all those who were involved in this important endeavour.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has been in operation for nearly 15 years.

During this period of time, it has brought significant benefits and advanced the objectives of international security.

It is the only international agreement that has actually led to the roll back of chemical weapons programmes. Through its industry verification regime, it promotes confidence in compliance with treaty obligations that prohibit production of chemical weapons. International cooperation activities, both for assistance and protection against chemical weapons as well as promotion of chemistry for peaceful purposes have expanded over the years.

By April 2012, three-quarters of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles are expected to have been destroyed and by the year 2016 only 1 percent will remain to be eliminated. The fulfilment of one of the core objectives of the Convention namely, the complete elimination of declared chemical weapons is in sight. This is an objective that has also taken up until now most of our attention and resources.

We envisage significant reductions in inspections to verify the destruction of chemical weapons. As a consequence, in 2012, the size of the OPCW inspectorate will be reduced by nearly a quarter. With this major task nearing completion, we are required to look at the long term mission of the OPCW.

This crucial objective, namely, permanent security against the threat of chemical weapons is an enduring one. The OPCW is and will remain the only international mechanism to ensure that chemical weapons will not re-emerge once these have been eliminated. There are also growing expectations from the Organisation to play a part in promoting security and protection against the misuse of toxic chemicals.

We have a number of challenges as we transition into a new era for the Organisation.

An Advisory Panel on future priorities of the OPCW that I had commissioned recommended several steps to ensure that the Organisation was able to respond to the challenges of a fast changing world. A debate on the future priorities of the OPCW will continue in the coming months.

A key area to strengthen is effective domestic implementation of the Convention globally. More than 50 percent of States Parties need to take action to ensure that their legislation covers all key areas of the Convention. Among the many changes in the security environment is the threat posed by non-State actors. This calls for vigilance and for States Parties to enact and enforce effective controls covering the manufacture, transfer and use of dual use materials. This safety net needs to be anchored within their internal legal systems.

Preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons as well as their misuse is a multidimensional undertaking. Not only does it entail a strengthening of the industry verification regime of the Convention, but also a sustained effort to keep abreast of developments in science and technology. New discoveries and developments could lead to new types of chemical weapons as well as novel methods of production including through processes resulting from the convergence occurring in life sciences.

The OPCW must therefore continue to retain core competencies not limited to the expertise to handle chemical demilitarisation, conduct challenge inspections and investigations of alleged use but also in the area of science. At the same time we must keep our States Parties fully informed on these important issues given the fact that policy decisions are in their hands. I am sure the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) which has eminent experts, such as Dr Paula Vaninnen, will play its part in this effort. Today we have among the participants Dr Coleman, the

Chairperson of the Board, Dr Black chairperson of one of the temporary working groups.

The just concluded session of the Conference of States Parties has approved the appointment of a Science Adviser in the Technical Secretariat. Together with the work of the SAB, this will augment our ability to make the science behind the Convention more accessible. I also attach great importance to enhanced collaboration between SAB, that has established a working group on education and outreach, the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) and the OPCW as such, in promoting a Code of Conduct for scientists as well as for the inclusion of the CWC and its norms in courses of study at academic institutions around the world.

We must also strengthen our ability to respond to the growing interest amongst our Members to increase their national capacities for emergency response and consequence mitigation. The provisions of the Convention that entitle our States Parties to receive assistance and protection in emergency situations will continue to remain of high importance.

International cooperation in the peaceful uses of chemistry was an important incentive for many countries to join the Convention and remains a major motivation for them to remain engaged. We look forward to deepening our international cooperation programmes while ensuring that these are optimised to also serve the Convention's effective implementation.

The near universal acceptance of the CWC with its 188 Members is cause for satisfaction. However, the goal of a world free from chemical

weapons is not assured without the remaining 8 members of the United Nations who have not yet joined the Convention.

We continue to stress to all those States to accede to the Convention at the earliest. The CWC offers both a security guarantee and has a humanitarian purpose. Its acceptance should be considered independent of regional considerations or other linkages. The inhumane nature of chemical weapons and the long effort that led to their total prohibition have established a global norm. Accepting to be legally bound by this norm will signify support for the principles and purposes of the UN Charter and will promote regional security in regions such as the North East Asia and the Middle East.

In short, while our achievements are many, so are the challenges ahead of us. The OPCW has been successful because of the close cooperation and support it has enjoyed not only from its States Parties but important entities and institutions such as VERIFIN. It remains my hope that in the critical period ahead of us, we will be able to forge closer collaboration as we work together to strengthen the Chemical Weapons Convention and make the work of the OPCW even more meaningful.

I wish you a successful workshop.