



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION  
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

LIONS DAY WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

OPENING REMARKS BY

GRACE ASIRWATHAM

DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL

ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS  
(OPCW)

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Dear Lions Club members, ladies and gentlemen,

1. I am very pleased to welcome you to the OPCW Headquarters to mark the annual Lions Day with the United Nations. We are very pleased to host this important meeting and to introduce you to the work of the Organisation. For this, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of The Hague Municipality and the City Council.
2. It is a particular honour to have with us today Ambassador Pieter de Savornin Lohman, Permanent Representative of The Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OPCW, Ms. Marjolein de Jong, Deputy Mayor for International Affairs of the city of The Hague, and Mr. Henk Schaap, Chairman of the Lions Club Board.
3. Lions Club International was established in 1917; only two years after humanity experienced the first large-scale use of chemical weapons during the First World War. Although it has been almost a century since then, and the use of chemical weapons appears to be something from the past, it was only fairly recently, 1992, that the international community agreed on a near universal treaty that bans this entire category of weapons of mass destruction: the Chemical Weapons Convention.

4. This unique Convention, which entered into force in 1997, creates a comprehensive international verification regime to ensure the destruction of declared chemical weapons' stockpiles while, at the same time, it establishes a series of measures to prevent the re-emergence of such weapons. It also contains a series of mechanisms for providing assistance and protection to States Parties against the use or threat of use of chemical weapons and finally it promotes international cooperation for the peaceful uses of chemistry.
5. In a short span of 15 years, the work of the OPCW has become a cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation edifice. The Organisation's work and its record of accomplishments testify to its success.
6. With 188 Member States, the OPCW has proved a successful endeavour in true multilateralism. It is a forum for consultation and for dialogue, enabling States to cooperate and reach agreement, quite often on sensitive and complex issues, in order to progress effectively towards the Convention's full implementation.

7. Verification of destruction of declared chemical weapons provides the basis of confidence in the effectiveness of the Treaty, but it has also been the most resource demanding. 71 percent of the declared chemical weapons stockpile has already been destroyed. It will not be long before the remainder has also been eliminated. The Russian Federation and the United States of America, as the two largest possessor States, are making steady progress towards the complete destruction of their respective stockpiles.
8. Even if these two countries miss the final extended deadline set in the Convention for 29 of April 2012, a decision by the Conference of States Parties will allow both of them to fulfil their obligations with enhanced confidence-building measures and increased transparency.
9. As we can now anticipate the complete elimination of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons, the future of the OPCW will demand unremitting efforts to ensure that chemical weapons never re-emerge. To achieve this goal we are increasing our efforts in four areas, namely: enhancing the industry verification regime; assisting States Parties in the effective implementation of the

Convention; promoting universality; and deepening our international cooperation programmes.

10. With regard to industry verification, the Organisation has conducted around 2100 inspections in over 80 countries around the world. States Parties have decided to increase the number of inspections at chemical production facilities to ensure that they remain dedicated to peaceful purposes.
11. A complement to on site verification of industry is the need for higher vigilance and for State Parties to enact and enforce effective controls covering the manufacture, transfer, and use of dual use materials. This would enhance national capacities for preventing, detecting and responding to theft, sabotage, and unauthorised access and transfer of chemical materials. Both Governments and the chemical industry need to work together towards this common goal, which we are ready to support.
12. Effective national implementation of the Convention remains crucial to ensure that the prohibitions of the Convention agreed by States Parties will apply to all their citizens universally. Through regional meetings, internships, mentoring programmes, training and drafting

sessions, among other activities, the Organisation helps States Parties fulfil their obligation to implement the Convention. This is one of the best ways to ensure that chemical weapons are never again used against a population.

13. Even though there are only 8 countries remaining outside the Convention, namely Angola, Egypt, Somalia, Israel, Syria, Myanmar, North Korea, and South Sudan, the Organisation continues to work towards universality of the CWC. The Convention offers both a security guarantee and 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 bound by this norm promotes both regional and global security.
14. By joining the Convention, States Parties renounce any chemical weapons option. In return, each State Party has the right to request the OPCW or other Member State for assistance and protection against the use, or threat of use, of chemical weapons. Such assistance may include provision of defensive equipment such as chemical agent detectors, protective clothing,

decontamination equipment, medical help and equipment including antidotes, and advice on defensive measures.

15. At the same time, all States Parties have the obligation to provide assistance through the OPCW by choosing one or more of three options: to contribute financially to the Voluntary Fund for Assistance, to conclude an agreement with the OPCW specifying the kind of assistance they would be able to deliver on request, or simply to declare the kind of assistance which they would be able to provide in response to an appeal by the OPCW. The continued participation of Member States and their contributions are essential for providing effective assistance and protection to States Parties.
16. In our efforts to strengthen the Convention as a permanent barrier against chemical weapons, we are also enhancing our engagement with other stakeholders such as the global chemical industry, the scientific and academic communities, civil society and most importantly the United Nations and its institutions.
17. The OPCW and the United Nations share common goals in terms of promoting international peace and security under the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

18. Through the Relationship Agreement established between the OPCW and the United Nations, the Convention envisages close cooperation between the OPCW and the United Nations and, if so requested, the OPCW can be called upon to put its resources at the disposal of the Secretary-General.
  
19. Although the OPCW is not an anti-terrorism agency, the comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons that it is mandated to promote strengthens our ability to deal with the issue of global terrorism. OPCW's role and contribution in this respect accords entirely with the objectives of the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 1540. The Organisation's role is also clearly recognised in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006.
  
20. In the context of the continued collaboration with the United Nation, the OPCW plans to convene this year a high level meeting scheduled to take place at the UN Headquarters within the framework of the 67<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly. This will be yet another occasion to reaffirm the shared values of the two organisations.



21. In the field of public diplomacy we are redoubling our effort with the aim of increasing recognition of the OPCW's achievements in order to engender greater confidence in multilateralism and international cooperation as a means to achieve global peace and security.
  
22. In 2013, OPCW Member States will meet for the third time in the framework of a Conference to review the operation of the Convention. This Conference will be an opportunity both to look into the past to evaluate the achievements of the Organisation and to look forward to decide on its future priorities. This will be a challenging but necessary exercise to ensure that the OPCW remains a relevant disarmament organisation capable of adjusting to the challenges of the XXI Century.

Dear participants,

23. Your keen interest in our work is most welcome. It signifies your awareness of and support for the work of the OPCW. In today's interdependent world, collaboration and cooperation are vital for the advancement of common objectives. Over the years, the Lions Club International and the United Nations have worked together on

various important humanitarian endeavours that have made a positive impact worldwide. In this way, they have contributed to our shared goals of peace and security for the benefit of humankind.

24. I have briefly outlined the essence of our progress and our future challenges. Over the course of the day, you will have the opportunity to learn more about the Convention and the OPCW in greater detail.
  
25. Allow me to conclude by once again thanking you all for your presence. I wish you a productive day at the OPCW.

Thank you.