

Director-General's Talking Points

City Hall, 15 April 2013

- I am honoured to be at the City Hall to inaugurate, together with Mayor van Aartsen, this exhibition connected with the 15th anniversary of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The commemoration was ushered in with the flag hoisting on the Buitenhof bridge in August last year. This was followed by high level commemorative events here and New York and the Hague Week on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation in early September.
- Today, as we close the chapter on 15th year in the City Hall, States Parties are gathered in the Hague for the Third Review Conference to open a new one in the life of our Organisation.
- Activities associated with the 15th Anniversary received the strong and active support of the city of The Hague. I once again express my deep appreciation to the Mayor, for his personal involvement which ensured that the events were not just successful but memorable.
- What better anchor to our work than a city which has reliably shouldered the cause of peace and that of justice for so many decades.
- The OPCW found its home in the city that gave birth to the first organized expression against chemical weapons at the Hague Peace Conference of 1899. A hundred years of patient and persistent

diplomacy, repeated carnages with chemical weapons, set-backs and successes; the story of the chemical weapons ban confirms the chequered nature of human history. But in the end we got it right.

- Today, we can all be proud of what has been accomplished.
- States Parties to the CWC have stood resolute in their commitment to the ideal of a world free of chemical weapons, and have worked towards it in the true spirit of multilateralism. Today, nearly 80% of all declared chemical weapons have been destroyed, and we are rapidly moving towards global zero on an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. The Convention is now the united voice of 188 States, and represents an almost universal consensus.
- This prohibition has become a unique instrument of international law, and is of exceptional import to the history of disarmament. The Convention is a living document being implemented under comprehensive international oversight. The OPCW continues to stand in its service.
- We work with States Parties and relevant stakeholders in implementing the Convention in a concrete and effective way. And we stand in defence of the world against a cruel enemy, by ensuring a readiness to deal with the possibility if it should again rear its head.
- The fact that the threat of chemical warfare has receded in the international system is due to this strong legal and ethical norm against it. The Convention represents our collective abhorrence, as

the international community, of poison as a means of war. It represents an ideal and a norm we seek to preserve for all future generations.

- Even as we are confronted with new developments, and emergent situations like the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria, at the close of 15 fruitful years of the operation of this international ban, we reflect upon our past with both satisfaction and hope. In inaugurating this exhibition, I invite the people of The Hague to acquaint themselves with the story of the ban on chemical weapons. It is among the proudest legacies of your city.