



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

**Remarks by Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü
Closing Ceremony of Maradykovsky Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility
Kirov Oblast, Russian Federation
30 October 2015**

REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Your Excellencies, Mr Babich [Envoy of the President to the Volga Federal District and Head of the State Commission on Chemical Weapons Disarmament],
Mr Belykh [Governor of the Kirov Oblast],
Mr Ryabkov [Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs],
Ambassador Shulgin [Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OPCW],
Mr Kalamonov [Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade],
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to participate in today's event, for this is a rare occasion.

For centuries, we have gone to great lengths to make weapons of war, and to maximize their lethality.

For the last hundred years, chemical weapons have cast a deadly shadow over conflicts across the globe. Their use on a massive scale in World War I took the lives of 100,000 – and injured a million more by war's end. And as we have seen recently in Syria and Iraq, chemical weapons have continued to claim victims well into the twenty-first century.

The horrific impact of such weapons throughout the Iran-Iraq War rallied the international community to prohibit their development and use.

In 1997, after nearly two decades of negotiations, a bright new chapter in the dark and tragic history of chemical weapons was written, when the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force.

Among multilateral arms control and disarmament treaties, the Convention stands without rival in its scope, its daring, and its success.

It is a treaty that not only bans the manufacture and use of these barbaric weapons, but also holds its members to account for their total elimination.

Here, today, we commemorate a unique achievement.

For all too rarely in human history have we acted to destroy the weapons that have the power to destroy us.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, we mark the closure of the Maradykovsky Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility.

This milestone comes in quick succession with the closure of three other destruction facilities this year – at Leonidovka, Pochep and Shchuchye.

Large stocks of mustard, nerve agents, and other chemical weapons, among the most deadly substances ever created, have been destroyed at these facilities. Over 26,000 metric tonnes of these chemical weapons – equivalent in weight to more than 130 Tsar Bells at the Kremlin – have been neutralised at these four sites.

These achievements demonstrate Russia's firm resolve to put an end to its chemical weapons legacy.

I commend those who have served at these facilities, and those who continue to work at the Kizner facility, for the process to eliminate chemical weapons is highly complex and often hazardous.

To meet the many challenges of destruction, the Russian Federation has set and observed appropriate standards for the protection of people and the environment throughout these operations.

Adhering to such standards has, at times, delayed results.

But as the great Lev Tolstoy reminds us, "The two most powerful warriors are patience – and time."

The OPCW, in its role of verifying destruction, has enjoyed a good level of cooperation with Russian authorities and specialists throughout the lifecycle of these four facilities.

I would like to note my particular appreciation to Mr Mikhail Babich, Chairman of the State Commission on Chemical Disarmament, for his tireless efforts towards completing the destruction of the Russian Federation's stockpile. I also wish to recognize the unstinting efforts of General Kholstov and General Kapashin in this regard.

I further acknowledge the financial, in-kind and technical contributions made to this operation by a number of OPCW Member States, some of which are represented here today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The legacy of the Russian Federation's chemical weapons destruction programme will be judged favourably by history.

It is a legacy that marks tangible achievement in the annals of chemical disarmament.

And it is a legacy that demonstrates how political will can rid the world of some of the most deadly weapons ever created.

Through the efforts of the Government of the Russian Federation to dismantle its chemical weapons stockpile, the international community has been assured that the lethal stocks of nerve agent that were present here will never be used as a weapon of war.

Two years ago, the OPCW was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons.

The many who served within the Russian Federation's chemical disarmament programme have an important stake in this award. For your contribution to this effort validates in a practical way the noble aims of the Convention.

And it will be judged as a permanent and lasting contribution to international peace and security.

Thank you.

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