



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Remarks by Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü

Closing Ceremony of the Associate Programme, OPCW, The Hague

2 October 2015

**Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Participants in the Associate Programme,
Dear colleagues and friends,**

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to this ceremony marking the successful conclusion of the OPCW Associate Programme 2015.

This year, the programme accommodated 31 participants from 29 Member States.

The OPCW Associate Programme continues to evolve as a leading international cooperation programme in the field of chemistry for peaceful purposes.

Since the Programme's inception, 392 participants from 116 Member States have been trained under its auspices – including from two Member States represented this year for the first time, Hungary and Saudi Arabia.

The programme has a broad scope, drawing together participants from industry, academic institutions and government agencies.

A key aspect of the programme is the support our Associates are able to provide to their National Authorities when they return home from The Hague.

The feedback we have received, including through the Programme's Alumni Association, shows that Associates are in touch with their National Authorities and are actively assisting in the implementation of the Convention.

It is a source of considerable satisfaction to see that knowledge gained from the course is being used in very practical ways.

Given that many participants come from academia means that such knowledge is also being passed on to students, thus contributing to the education and outreach objectives of the Convention.

This year's ten-week programme not only familiarised participants with the various aspects of the Convention and the activities of the OPCW – it also helped them to develop the skills necessary to operate in a modern chemistry environment.

Crucial elements in all of this were academic training, hands-on industrial exposure at modern chemical plants, visits to specialised institutions, work on research projects, role plays, and group discussions.

The special segment on chemical safety and security was added to the curriculum in response to a need assessment we conducted last year, especially for Member States with developing economies and economies in transition.

As part of this new segment, a special module was designed and delivered by the Technical University of Delft in coordination with VAPRO, the training institution of the Association of the Dutch Chemical Industry (VNCI).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A programme as complex as this one is the product of the effort of many individuals and institutions. I would like to formally acknowledge all the numerous individuals, universities, chemical industries and associations who have assisted us with the organisation of the Associate Programme 2015.

In particular, let me mention the invaluable support of the European Chemical Industry Council, the World Customs Organisation, the European Chemicals Agency, the European Chemical Industry Council, the European Association of Chemical Distributors, the Dutch Customs, the City and Port of Rotterdam, the Rotterdam Investment Agency and the Delft University of Technology.

I would like also to thank the University of Surrey for, again, running two parallel courses to allow us to accommodate such a large number of participants.

Eleven Member States also generously offered a total of 17 placements for the industry segment – Brazil, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka and Spain.

In the case of Brazil and Sri Lanka, this was the first time that we had participants placed in these countries – indeed, the first time in the GRULAC region based on an offer from the Brazilian company Suatrans.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge presentations made by the Permanent Representative of Germany, Ambassador Israng, and by Major Evandro Nogueira, Coordinator of the National Authority of Brazil.

It is now up to the National Authorities of our Associates to take advantage of their trained participants in their countries, to raise awareness and to support the implementation of the Convention.

This year, in order to further facilitate dissemination of the Programme's benefits and to maximise its impact, we are taking the initiative to communicate the dissemination plans designed by each participant to his or her National Authority.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Alumni Network of the Associate Programme, which was set up in 2012, has proven to be a valuable tool in facilitating exchanges of views, scientific information,

experiences, and ideas with regard to the programme and, more generally, chemistry for peaceful purposes.

Two annual virtual meetings of the Alumni Association were successfully conducted in 2013 and 2014.

The first was on “Lessons learned and way forward”; the second on “Addressing future challenges”.

In addition to rich and insightful discussion, these meetings generated useful recommendations on how to further develop the programme to help it have a deeper impact at the national level, including through modifications to the training curriculum.

The next meeting of the Association is scheduled to take place from 14 to 21 November 2015.

We look forward to hearing of your contributions as the newest group of associates.

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In conclusion, I would like to express my warm congratulations to you, the Associates, who have made this programme such a great success.

Despite the hectic schedule, and the heavy course work, you have more than fulfilled our expectations.

Your willingness to learn and exemplary teamwork have amply demonstrated your professionalism and commitment.

Your group represents a unique mix of scientists, chemical engineers and technological specialists.

You are now better aware of the Convention’s obligations and can contribute to its effective implementation in your home countries.

It is our strong hope that you do so with drive and energy.

For this is an important endeavour for furthering the cause of global peace, security and prosperity, as you have learnt here.

An endeavour in which the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW stands ready to assist you along every step of the way.

With that, I wish you every success.

Thank you for your attention.