



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

OPCW Day 2016 – Chemical Safety and Security in a Technologically Evolving World

Closing Remarks by Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü

OPCW Headquarters, The Hague, the Netherlands

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REMARKS AS DELIVERED

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have come to the end of the OPCW Day 2016 conference on *Chemical Safety and Security in a Technologically Evolving World*.

I hope you will agree that this event has been both timely, and relevant.

Our discussions have scoped out a very broad range of complex challenges and new opportunities underlying our efforts to ensure chemistry is always used for peaceful purposes.

Let me sketch out just a few of the main themes and issues that captured our attention over the past three days.

As to be expected, a good majority of discussions focused on the future of our efforts to realise a safer, peaceful world, a world free from chemical weapons. Some panels delved into the technology the OPCW has at its disposal, stimulating good dialogue on whether our know-how and equipment is fit for our current and future purpose. This is particularly relevant when we consider the work of our inspectors in non-permissive environments. In such situations, our ability to deploy quickly and investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons by non-state actors requires innovative approaches and applications of new technology.

During these discussions, it has become clear that many of the issues that are not typically associated with our work may have some interfaces with the OPCW agenda. Take climate change, for instance. Whether we consider the economic, regulatory or industrial aspects of

chemicals, it is clear that our world will be impacted, perhaps significantly, by changing patterns in our climate.

The past few days of discussions offered a moment to reflect, and react, to our growing focus on chemical safety and security.

Some panels signalled the importance of balancing stringent regulation with fostering self-commitment among States Parties and individuals tasked with implementing the Convention. This thread of discussion underscored the importance of education, particularly in shaping university curricula to motivate the solely peaceful use of chemistry.

Several additional panels brought in topics such as the rising profile of green chemistry in our work, the role of forensics in future incidents involving chemical weapons, and the latest innovations in cyber-security, which is of paramount importance to many of our States Parties.

But just as important as *what* we have discussed has been *how* we have discussed these issues. We have deepened and expanded our networks, not only among peers, but also between scientists and policy-makers, between industry representatives and civil society. These networks will play an increasingly vital role. For in a globalising world, as was clear from our discussions, security is no longer the sole prerogative of governments.

All of us have a role to play in preventing chemical weapons from re-emerging.

In this regard, I was especially pleased that OPCW Day attracted partners from a significant number of other international and regional organisations, and further incorporated views from industry. In a shifting strategic landscape, we cannot afford to be complacent about the risks of chemistry being misused. We have seen only too clearly that, while we have achieved much in chemical disarmament, our future successes will depend on meeting new challenges in new ways.

The words of the great scientist Marie Curie should guide us in this respect: “*One never notices what has been done; one can only see what remains to be done.*”

Now, on the eve of the complete destruction of all chemical weapons, the task before us is to make sure such weapons never return. This is, of course, a much more complex task than what we have focused on to date. But it is a task that has become all the more urgent, as access to materials, technologies and know-how continues to increase, and as the threat of terrorism looms ever larger.

To this end, we need to innovate, not only in terms of the application of new technologies to monitoring and verification, but also how we secure more proactive engagement by a broader community of stakeholders.

This event has been a vital investment in habits of consultation and collaboration to this end. For its part, the OPCW stands ready to continue to foster such habits. I hope that we have set the scene for the celebration next year of the twentieth anniversary of the global chemical weapons ban becoming a reality. This will be an occasion for showcasing the ongoing relevance and responsiveness of the OPCW in a technologically evolving world.

In closing, let me thank our speakers for bringing their insights to bear on the challenges we face.

The keynote speakers were generous in sharing their perspectives and thoughts for a safe world with us. I would also like to acknowledge exhibitors for bringing a very practical perspective to some of the issues we have discussed. And I take this opportunity to thank participants in the poster competition and to, once again, congratulate the winners. Finally, let me thank all those in the Secretariat who worked so hard to make this event the success that it was.

With that, I close this conference and wish you fruitful ongoing cooperation in ensuring chemistry always serves the goals of peace and security.

Thank you.