



**Lecture delivered by Ahmet Üzümcü, OPCW Director-General
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Annyeonghaseyo,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As a long-time diplomat, I am delighted to address you as fellow professionals at the beginning of your careers – all the more because the policies of tomorrow will be shaped by you as future leaders.

This academy has a daunting task before it – to train the next generation of diplomats to deal with the uncertainties of a rapidly changing strategic environment.

Today's challenges – both at the global and regional levels – are certainly formidable and, in some cases, unprecedented. These range from the impact of massive refugee and migration flows, to food security across large parts of our planet – from the effects of climate change, to the grim realities of transnational terrorism.

At the same time, new and emerging security threats are being fuelled by relentless conflicts that are having a profound impact on global strategic environment.

These threats differ markedly from those of the past. They are multifaceted and fluid, and therefore difficult to address. Importantly for all of us, they are affecting human security and prosperity across the globe at a time when our economies are becoming increasingly intertwined.

As a dynamic, outward-looking country, the Republic of Korea is well placed to shape responses to regional and global security challenges. Among these, a first-order priority must be the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Living in the shadow of North Korea's WMDs, your country, more than most, understands the threat posed by such weapons. While Pyongyang has made no explicit claims in this regard, North Korea is suspected of having stockpiles of chemical weapons – contrary to international norms. For its part, the Republic of Korea has played, and continues to play, an

important role in shaping and enforcing these norms under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In my remarks here today, I will share with you some of the experiences of global chemical disarmament – both past and ongoing successes, as well as new and future challenges. I will do so from the perspective of the organisation that was established to oversee this process – the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, or OPCW. I will also try to draw some lessons from this experience in terms of what makes for an effective regime for protecting against weapons of mass destruction – in part based on our recent work in Syria.

Some of the questions that we need to ask ourselves in this regard are:

What measures and approaches have proven successful in the past, and why?

How can we adapt them to ensure that non-proliferation norms remain robust?

And what are the key components of an effective response for addressing emerging challenges to chemical security more broadly?

My objective in all this is to inspire you, as diplomats, to take an active interest in disarmament and non-proliferation policy and practice in your future careers. For tangible outcomes in disarmament and non-proliferation will always be a key baseline for any sustainable security framework.

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Let me start with a brief look at what has contributed to the success of multilateral chemical disarmament to date.

Over the two decades that it has been in force, the Chemical Weapons Convention remains the bedrock of our efforts to rid the world of chemical weapons. And for good reason: implementation of the Convention has rendered remarkable achievements across the globe.

The Chemical Weapons Convention now has 192 States Parties – only four short of full universality. 93% of all declared stockpiles of chemical weapons have so far been destroyed – more than 65,000 metric tonnes in total. The last of our Member States that still possess stocks, the Russian Federation and the United States, are scheduled to complete destruction activities by 2020 and 2023, respectively.

These are, by any measure, singular achievements.

The international community's confidence in these achievements is founded in the integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention and its implementation. At the core of this is a unique combination of provisions that make the Convention what many claim is the most successful disarmament treaty in history.

First of all, the Chemical Weapons Convention is comprehensive in scope. It outlaws not only the use of chemical weapons, but also their development, production, stockpiling and transfer. In short, it is a total ban against an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

Second, it is non-discriminatory in its application and reach. All 192 of our Member States are prevented from possessing or building chemical weapons. And those that do have stockpiles of such weapons are obliged to destroy them within timelines agreed with other Member States.

Third, and most importantly, the Convention is backed up with a stringent verification regime. This regime is based on OPCW inspectors verifying destruction of existing chemical weapons. They also conduct inspections of industrial facilities around the world to make sure their production is exclusively for peaceful purposes.

What this means is that the Convention is much more than a legal norm. It stands for a body of effective multilateral practice based on consensus and concrete action.

The mission to remove and destroy Syria's chemical weapons has provided clear evidence of just how effective this practice can be. Let me give you a snapshot of this mission.

Shortly after Syria declared its intention to join the Chemical Weapons Convention in September 2013, the OPCW seized a rare opportunity to rid the world of a major chemical arsenal.

Before the end of that month, on 27 September, the OPCW's Executive Council had agreed a programme for eliminating that country's chemical weapons programme. Three days later our inspectors were on the ground in Syria making this programme a reality. In joint mission arrangements with the United Nations, we moved quickly to destroy Syria's chemical weapons production capability, and to remove weapon stocks declared by Syria.

With the support of more than 30 of our Member States including the Republic of Korea in an unprecedented international mission, most of these weapons were packaged and shipped out of the country. And within a year, all stocks declared by Syria had been in large part destroyed under the watchful eye of OPCW inspectors

Many factors contributed to the success of this mission, the first being the resilience and relevance of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It provided a ready-made regime for responding to the unanticipated challenge of Syria declaring its chemical weapons programme and seeking assistance for its elimination.

The second factor underlying our success was the degree of support provided by such a large number of countries including the Republic of Korea – both technical and financial – and the universal political support that the mission enjoyed. This made itself felt from the very outset when we were able to stretch the letter of the law of the Convention to allow destruction of these weapons outside Syrian territory. This decision enjoyed the full support of the UN Security Council, when it endorsed the OPCW Executive Council's decision on the elimination programme under its resolution 2118.

A third factor was the degree of technical innovation that made itself felt throughout the mission. This included the United States placing systems on board a large ship to facilitate destruction of most of the weapons at sea, when no-one came forward with a land-based option. It also included overcoming the inaccessibility of certain chemical weapon sites in

Syria, owing to the security situation, by installing GPS-mounted cameras to undertake remote monitoring.

All of these factors attested to the robustness and flexibility of the Chemical Weapons Convention and practices related to its implementation. And they attested to the strength of multilateral solutions when they are backed up by political will and consensus-based decision making.

I might note here that Syria has not been the only case of such effective unity of purpose in response to a major disarmament challenge. The OPCW Executive Council recently responded to a request from Libya to remove and destroy its remaining stocks of precursor chemicals left over from that country's chemical weapons programme. This is a timely decision, which is also endorsed by UNSC, given the uncertain security situation in that country and the environmental hazards posed by these chemicals.

The OPCW has worked with Libya and some other State Parties over the past two months. I am pleased to inform you that all remaining chemical weapons in Libya have now been removed by a Danish Ship to Germany where they will be destroyed at a disposal facility.

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Yet, despite these achievements, we are by no means at the end of the long road towards a world free of chemical weapons.

Even before our removal and destruction mission in Syria was over, allegations of chemical weapons use in that country had begun to surface and, over a short period of time, to increase in frequency. In Iraq, also, there have been persistent reports of ISIS using chemical weapons.

In a broader strategic context, what we are now seeing is the very positive development of states being very unlikely to resort to chemical weapons. But, at the same time, terrorist groups are making no secret of their ambitions to acquire – and to use – such weapons.

Here, again, the OPCW has shown its dexterity and responsiveness. In April 2014, I established a Fact-Finding Mission to look into allegations of chemical attacks in Syria. This mission's initial findings – notably, that chlorine had been used as weapons in several incidents in Syria – were instrumental in galvanising international action.

In August last year, the UN Security Council established an independent Joint Investigative Mission mandated to identify those responsible for such attacks and later for the use of sulfur mustard in Syria, with a view to eventually bringing them to justice. The OPCW has likewise offered extensive technical assistance to the Iraqi Government in its investigations into the use of chemical weapons in the north of the country.

The chemical terrorism threat is not, however, confined to one particular region of the world. It is within our very midst, affecting our populations directly or indirectly, and we must do everything possible to counter it.

This is why the OPCW is working closely with its Member States to instil best practices for enforcing the prohibitions enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention at the national level.

Each of our 192 Member States must be in a position to prosecute its nationals committing chemical weapons offences – whether they act on their territory or outside of the country. This has been the focus of much recent work in the OPCW's Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and its Sub-Working Group.

The global forum that the OPCW provides is ideal for benchmarking in this regard, as well as targeting our training and assistance activities. These are designed to help Member States better implement the Convention – especially where such assistance is needed most.

The OPCW has also worked to enhance coordination with other international organisations in the context of the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force. Its aim is to strengthen prevention and enhance capacity in preparedness and response – work which the OPCW has spearheaded with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The ambitions of terrorists are, nevertheless, part of a much broader, emerging threat underlying the future of chemical security. That is the relative accessibility of the materials and technologies required for making chemical weapons, many of which are freely traded because of their industrial applications. Chlorine is a case in point. It is not banned for the simple reason that it is used for purifying municipal water supplies and bleaching hospitals and households, but it has been also used as a weapon.

On top of this, we must consider the possibility of terrorists attacking chemical industrial facilities. It takes little effort to imagine the impact that such an attack could have, given the scale of damage from industrial accidents, which have occurred over the last few years.

Further afield, rapid advances in science and technology are also posing new challenges by testing our ability to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention. The discovery of new chemical substances and more efficient production technologies could present new dangers, if misused.

All of this points to the fact that existing measures and tools for guarding against such a contingency must be constantly adapted, if they are to remain effective in changing circumstances.

To do this well, it is vital that those of us engaged in disarmament and non-proliferation draw on the widest possible sources of knowledge and expertise. For what we are increasingly seeing is that security is no longer the sole prerogative of governments. Scientists, researchers and industry representatives must play a more active role in not only informing the work of policy-makers, but also devising solutions they can implement themselves to protect against the misuse of chemistry.

The OPCW is an ideal platform for extending our reach to this end. As we shift the focus of our activities away from destruction of existing weapons to preventing new ones from being built, we are expanding our collaboration with science and industry. This will require us to be more imaginative, and demanding, with regard to our traditional partners.

Certainly, the OPCW has a long history of close collaboration with science and industry – and for good reason. Such collaboration was instrumental in establishing the robust verification regime that allows us to ensure our Member States are in compliance with their obligations. But, twenty years on, it is time for us to make scientists, industry representatives and civil society more active partners in our collective endeavour to rid the world of chemical weapons.

The OPCW Scientific Advisory Board, which has long been a valuable asset for sourcing independent expert advice, has laid out some important groundwork in this respect. On its recommendation, the OPCW recently established an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach to help us broaden our community of stakeholders through new engagement strategies and tools.

We have also established consultative mechanisms with industry associations to look at how we can expand our cooperation beyond compliance with the Convention to enhancing chemical safety and security across the globe. This is clearly in the interests of business no less than governments. We saw in the case of the Syria mission how the private sector can play a role. In the wake of a tender process, two companies – one in Finland and another in the United States of America – were selected to dispose of some of the chemicals declared by Syria. In doing so, they set an encouraging precedent for engaging commercial structures in achieving disarmament objectives.

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What you can see from all this is that the task of disarmament and non-proliferation does not belong to diplomats alone. But diplomats nonetheless remain the glue that holds this structure together. For however much we need to engage a broader set of experts to make our solutions more durable, governments still hold sway in pushing through solutions.

In particular, political will remains the single-most important ingredient in effective multilateral solutions for dealing with weapons of mass destruction. It was vital for obtaining the comprehensive norm that we did in the form of the Chemical Weapons Convention two decades ago. And it was equally vital for disposing of Syria's chemical weapons in such a short timeframe in what were extremely challenging circumstances. Diplomats have had, and will continue to have, a vital role in mustering this political will – and in applying it.

By the same token, they will also have to continue to apply their tradecraft to other, no less challenging problems. I mentioned earlier that the Convention is only four members short of complete universality. We must do everything in our power to bring the remaining countries on board – Egypt, Israel, South Sudan and North Korea.

North Korea presents a particular challenge, since we have so far not been successful in engaging that country's officials at any level. We cannot afford to fail in this endeavour, for the stakes are simply too high, given the threat posed by North Korea's WMD capabilities. No country can claim the de facto status of a chemical weapons state by ignoring the global norm that the Chemical Weapons Convention has become. And no country should be in any doubt about the taboo that is firmly attached to these barbarous weapons.

At the same time, in light of the nature of some of the newer challenges I have outlined here, diplomats will need to develop broader sets of skills. In the realm of disarmament and non-proliferation, they will especially need to become better versed in the technical issues that inform effective solutions. For it is up to people like us to negotiate such solutions and turn them into workable international norms.

To do this well in our inter-connected world means becoming more science-literate and being able to hold experts to account to properly explain their inputs. Given their role in negotiations, diplomats have a fundamental responsibility to understand, and engage in, the dynamic interplay between well-reasoned science and sound policy-making. They must guard the Convention against potential loopholes, and other adverse impacts that may undermine its credibility and effectiveness in the future. And they must facilitate practical habits and an enduring spirit of international collaboration that can spur action in national contexts.

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So, in closing, this is my appeal to you.

In embarking on your careers, or re-assessing the direction of your careers, always strive to accommodate a broader understanding of the role and functions of diplomacy. For those of you who will engage on multilateral disarmament, you will, of course, continue to have a frontline role.

But advice informing the negotiations you will participate in will become increasingly contestable because of the much broader range of stakeholders involved. This makes the business of multilateral diplomacy much harder than it already is. Yet it also, ultimately, renders better informed and therefore more durable solutions to new and emerging challenges.

I am sure that most of you here will have the opportunity to contribute to such solutions in the course of your careers. I wish you every success in this venture.

Thank you.
Kamsahamnida.
Happy Chuseok.