



**ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

**"The CWC, implementation and considerations for Africa"**

**International Relations Institute of Cameroon**

**Yaoundé, Cameroon**

**Speech by the Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü**

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*REMARKS AS DELIVERED*

Mr Director Salomon Eheth  
His Excellency Mr. Secretary General  
Excellencies,  
Academic Staff of the Institute  
Dear Students,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you today at this special event on the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) at the International Relations Institute of Cameroon. As the oldest school of diplomacy in sub-Saharan Africa, the Institute has deep roots in the region and a strong reputation for attracting Africa's future foreign policy decision-makers and thinkers. Moreover, its contribution to our understanding of the events and circumstances that shape this part of the southern hemisphere is invaluable.

Students are expected to absorb what they learn here and use it to steer their countries and regions through the trials to come and to grasp astutely the opportunities when they arise. It is also fitting that I am delivering this speech about the implementation of the CWC and its considerations for Africa in Cameroon. As one of the earliest countries on the continent to ratify the Convention, Cameroon has been making great strides towards its full implementation. I commend Cameroon for its adoption of comprehensive CWC national legislation at the end of last year.

Cameroon has not only been implementing the Convention at home, it has also been helping other State Parties from around the region to fulfil their own commitments. As I speak, Cameroon is hosting in cooperation with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) 'The Stakeholders Forum for States Parties in Africa on Adoption of National Implementation Legislation'. This forum aims to assist States Parties that have no legislation to

advance progress towards adoption. Such activities, among many others, support the States Parties of Africa in meeting the requirements of the Convention, as well as in benefitting from opportunities provided by the OPCW in the peaceful use of chemistry.

Chemistry offers humanity the prospect of a better life – more abundant crops, new materials, longer and healthier lives, renewable energies, and a broad spectrum of other commercial uses. The application of chemistry, therefore, has an important role to play in the African continent's attainment of its sustainable development goals. Even in countries with few resources, the responsible use of chemicals can bring about enormous economic returns and vast improvements to human potential. This is well acknowledged across Africa. Rapid growth has occurred in the chemical industries of many countries. Also, the number of regional and national associations designed to promote training and research in this area, such as the Federation of African Societies of Chemistry in Ethiopia and the Pan-African Chemistry Network in Kenya, has increased dramatically.

But with this expansion comes potential risks. While science and technology can improve and enrich life, it also has the capacity to destroy it. Witness the discoveries of the 20th century. Advances in science and technology were also used for the development of weapons of mass destruction. One of the enduring global struggles of the past 100 years has been the sustained efforts to control, limit, or abolish these weapons. 2017 is an important year for us since it marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the legal framework against chemical warfare embodied in the CWC and the foundation of the OPCW. It is an appropriate time to take stock of what we have accomplished and what remains to be done, especially, in the face of new developments and challenges.

The Convention's entry into force in 1997 was a historic moment. It was the first multilateral treaty to ban an entire class of WMDs in a non-discriminatory and verifiable manner under strict and effective international control with concrete time lines. Today, 192 countries are States Parties to the Convention, meaning that 98% of the world's population lives under its protection. Because of the commitment of these States Parties, we are approaching the complete elimination of declared chemical weapons. Nearly 96% of some 72,000 tonnes of declared chemical weapons have been destroyed under the verification of the OPCW. This is an unprecedented achievement. And it was in recognition of these extensive efforts that the Nobel Committee awarded the peace prize to the OPCW in 2013.

Nonetheless, the disarmament work is unfinished. Stockpile destruction of the two largest possessor States, is expected to be completed by the end of this year in Russia and 2023 in the United States. Equally important to chemical disarmament is the complementary objective of ensuring the non-proliferation of chemical weapons. To this end, the OPCW has established a verification regime with a global reach, conducting round-the-year inspections of industrial facilities which produce chemicals of relevance to the Convention. To date, nearly 3500 inspections have been conducted in the chemical industry to ensure that all products and activities are solely for peaceful purposes.

Together with disarmament and non-proliferation, international cooperation represents a crucial component of our work. Assistance and protection is an area of growing interest, especially in

light of the threat of non-state actors using chemical weapons. This alarming and evolving threat of terrorism has led the OPCW to increase its capacity to deliver emergency assistance to States Parties. The OPCW offers, in this area, capacity building and training opportunities for relevant authorities such as civil defence organisations and first responders. Assistance may include the provision of defensive equipment, such as chemical agent detectors, protective clothing, or decontamination equipment. It may also take the form of medical assistance and equipment, including antidotes, or offering of advice on defensive measures. In case of a chemical weapons attack States Parties can also call upon the OPCW's newly established Rapid Response Assistance Mission (RRAM). The RRAM can be deployed at short notice, upon request, to States Parties under chemical terrorist attack.

When faced with challenges, the Organisation has given a good account of itself. This has been most evident in our work in Syria. In August of 2013, the world witnessed the killing of 1400 innocent civilians in Ghouta - a densely populated suburb of Damascus. They were victims of a deadly attack with the nerve agent Sarin. It is a crime to use chemical weapons; and an atrocity to use it against civilians. The incident created global outrage and a crisis which brought us to the edge of international conflict. A wider war whose outcome was difficult to predict was averted, as Syria joined the Convention after an agreement between the Russian Federation and the United States that was signed in Geneva in September 2013.

This marked a high point in the cooperation between these two major powers in dealing with the conflict in Syria. On 27 September that year, the OPCW Executive Council adopted a decision on the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, which was endorsed by the UN Security Council on the same day. The mission that followed to remove Syria's chemical weapons was unprecedented. It required us to operate in uncertain and risky conditions in an active war zone within a very ambitious time frame.

Although clearly challenging, the mission underscored that with political will and cooperation, the Organisation and the international community are capable of dealing with extraordinary situations. With the support of the UN, the EU and more than 30 States Parties, 1300 metric tonnes of chemical weapons material was removed from Syria and destroyed outside its territory. Within a matter of weeks, the capacity to produce chemical weapons had been rendered unusable.

This was an impressive achievement. Unfortunately, it did not end our work in Syria. In the face of persistent and credible allegations that chlorine had been used in Syria as a chemical weapon, I established a Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in April 2014 to investigate. Since that time, the FFM has examined a significant number of incidents and substantiated several cases of the use of chlorine and sulphur mustard. While the FFM's role is to determine the facts of alleged chemical weapons use, the mandate of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, JIM, goes one step further. The JIM was established through a UN Security Council Resolution to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons which the FFM had established. In this way, the work of the FFM provides the basis for the JIM to identify the perpetrators with the aim of bringing them to justice.

The most recent use of chemical weapons use in Khan Shaykhun in April this year has again shocked the world as reports and images emerged of civilian victims evidently of a toxic substance. The FFM has confirmed this as an attack with Sarin, a nerve agent and category I chemical weapon. With the norms of the Convention accepted globally, we could have hoped and wished that the ugly legacy of use of chemical weapons had been finally buried: that a dark chapter of history had forever closed. But tragically this has not been the case. I strongly condemned the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances. I also urged that the perpetrators of this horrific attack be held accountable for their crimes. In this context the work of the JIM which has the mandate to identify the perpetrators assumes high importance.

These unresolved events in Syria have clearly demonstrated that our collective endeavour to rid the world of chemical weapons will not end with the destruction of declared military stockpiles. Our work will refocus on preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, which also involves the possibly more persistent danger from non-state actors acquiring and employing toxic chemicals. Addressing these problems necessitates dedicated technical, financial, and diplomatic resources and international cooperation. Africa has been the region where the OPCW has most sought to foster such cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

During the twenty years of its existence, the OPCW has strived to maintain close relations with the CWC's African States Parties and to deepen its engagement with them to promote further progress in national implementation. A large part of our work within the continent is underpinned by our association with the African Union. In January 2006, the OPCW and the African Union Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation between the two organisations. Over the ten years that the MoU has been in operation, it has proven to be an effective mechanism for collaboration in areas of mutual interest, particularly through our work with the eight African regional economic communities (RECs).

As the key drivers of regional economic and political integration, our relationship with the RECs has been of great value. Indeed, the establishment of focal points within each regional economic community has fostered closer cooperation in efforts to implement the Convention. Working closely with regional bodies and States Parties is vital to improving capacities to respond to and mitigate the impact of chemical-related incidents. And this has become steadily more urgent as recent events have highlighted.

From its entry into force, the global norm established by the Convention seemed to be an effective bulwark against the use of chemical weapons. Yet, as we have seen in Syria, its core prohibitions are being violated. In the face of new threats, especially terrorism, full implementation of the Convention by all OPCW Member States is critical. The Convention is not an anti-terrorism instrument. However, the enforcement of the Convention's legal framework offers the best defence against this threat.

Accordingly, legislation and enforcement mechanisms are needed at the national level to ensure that national legislation criminalises the development, production, stockpiling and transfer of

chemical weapons. In other words, the effective application of the Convention's provisions under the domestic laws of all 192 of our Member States would help deter and combat acts of chemical terrorism. Africa is no stranger to terrorism and the destruction that it can inflict. Violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram, which respect no borders, present dangers to the whole region. As the chemical industry in Africa increases in scale and sophistication, the potential for non-state actors to gain access to toxic chemicals will grow. For example, the devastation and panic that the release of a toxic chemical used in the industry in a densely populated city could be severe and broadly felt.

As such, it is a key focus of our efforts around the continent to ensure all States Parties are equipped with not just national legislation for implementing the provisions of the Convention, but the right legislation. This has been one of the objectives of the OPCW's Africa Programme, the main framework through which the Organisation is providing support to African States Parties. To date 49% of African States Parties have adopted comprehensive Convention legislation. It is significant to note, however, that of the States Parties that have not enacted or only have legislation that includes partial measures for implementing the CWC, 21 have developed comprehensive draft national legislation, which are awaiting adoption and enforcement.

We assist our States Parties in this crucial area through training programmes, information exchange, and capacity-building activities. These are designed to promote best practices in legal processes and enforcement. The OPCW reviews drafts of implementing legislation to ensure that they meet the requirements of the Convention. Notwithstanding these activities of the OPCW, legislation alone will not guarantee the prevention of the misuse of toxic chemicals by non-state actors. As another objective of the Organisation, we have focused on, is strengthening national capacity for controlling the transfer of dual use chemicals.

In this context, the OPCW organised this year a train-the-trainer course to bolster customs authorities in Nigeria and Malawi concerning Convention-related matters. Rather than providing training to individual customs officials, the aim of these courses has been to promote capacity-building by assisting institutions to teach their own personnel. Through this support, both countries gained practical experience in the use of the Convention's customs e-learning modules developed by the OPCW in cooperation with the World Customs Organisation. Assistance and protection against chemical attack is another area where the OPCW is working to enhance the capabilities of the CWC States Parties in Africa. This year the Organisation will arrange, with the support of the governments of the Czech Republic, Uganda and the United Kingdom, an operational training programme in Jinja, Uganda for members of the East African Community (EAC). The objective of this programme is to develop among first-responders, the emergency response skills, necessary to handle chemical incidents or attacks. It builds on the success of the 2016 pilot programme, which was facilitated by instructors from the Czech Republic and the UK using OPCW training material. It is important to point out that all the trainers in this year's programme were participants in the original one.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The OPCW recognises that its efforts to assist the implementation of the CWC in Africa must be persistent and focused on promoting ownership among the States Parties of the Convention.

Capacity-building in this respect will remain a priority area. The fourth phase of the Africa Programme, which began earlier this year and which will run until the end of 2019, will continue to be the primary framework for our activities. I would like to highlight two activities of the current phase of the Africa Programme where the OPCW has continued to improve its approach from previous years to better meet the needs of African States Parties.

Firstly, the ‘national protection programme’, which is comprised of a range of prevention and response measures at the national and regional level. In cooperation with Burkina Faso, the OPCW helped identify the relevant national agencies for developing its own protection programme as well as assessed training institutions that might host future regional training related to emergency response to chemical attack or incidents. The OPCW has started working more closely with relevant Regional Economic Communities to make sure its capacity building efforts are meeting their needs. Already, this approach has resulted in the OPCW receiving positive responses from some States Parties in the East Africa Community, the Economic Community of West African States, and the Southern Africa Development Community. This is a programme we are considering to extend beyond Africa in other regions across the globe.

Secondly, the Secretariat's approach to enhancing the laboratory capacity across Africa. We are currently preparing a programme to assist African laboratories build their technical capacity to analyse Convention-relevant chemical agents. Currently, there are 19 Designated Laboratories across the world that are certified by the OPCW to analyse samples collected during the Organisation’s inspections. There is not such a laboratory in Africa. While cultivating an OPCW Designated Laboratory in Africa may be a long-term goal, there is certainly great value in enhancing the analytical capability of laboratories across the continent. These capabilities help States Parties identify chemical agents, support monitoring activities, bolster the enforcement of Convention obligations. They also promote the peaceful uses of chemistry. This year alone 42 African scientists received training to improve their skills in analytical chemistry and learned about advanced techniques for the analysis of Convention-related chemicals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I travel to my office each day in The Hague I pass a statue of Nelson Mandela. As we contemplate where we have come from, where we are, and where we need to go in terms of treaty implementation, his words best capture this particular moment “When the water starts boiling it is foolish to turn off the heat.” The African States Parties to the CWC have made great progress in moving toward fully complying with the provisions of the Convention. Momentum has been created, we need to move forward even faster. I ask the students to think innovatively about how Africa can bolster its institutions to respond to the unique and real dangers posed by chemical weapons as well as to contemplate the manner in which the peaceful use of chemicals can be maximised within the parameters of the CWC. In a region that is filled with so much potential, your ideas will help guide the future course of events and ensure enduring security in a chemical weapon-free Africa for your generation and the future ones.

Thank you.

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