



**ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

**Twenty-Sixth Session of the Scientific Advisory Board**

**Remarks by the Director-General**

**OPCW Headquarters**

**16 October 2017**

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*REMARKS AS DELIVERED*

Mr Chairperson,  
Distinguished members of the Scientific Advisory Board,  
Dear colleagues,

I am very pleased to welcome you to the 26th Session of the Scientific Advisory Board.

This session is being held immediately after the completion of the scientific review workshop series that you initiated in 2016. It also devotes time to the drafting of the SAB's report to the Fourth Review Conference and marks a transition point in your contribution to the review process.

This session's report will be the 10th produced by the SAB within the past 18 months, which is an impressive output of work. I commend Dr Timperley and Mr Chang for their leadership in guiding the Board through such a substantive undertaking, and for their commitment to engaging with the States Parties.

Our need for scientific literacy in the implementation of the Convention Weapons Convention (CWC) has never been greater. The Board continues to provide objective and independent technical guidance which has ensured our ability to keep pace with rapid technological change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since your last session, we have reached a major milestone in the achievement of the goals of the CWC. In September, the Russian Federation announced the completion of its demilitarization process, which amounted to the destruction of 39,967 metric tons of chemical warfare agent. Currently, 96.3% of declared chemical weapons stockpiles have been destroyed.

Yet, as we reflect on the incredible progress that has been made over the past 20 years to reach such a milestone, it is clear that threats from chemical weapons remain and our work is far from complete.

Moving forward, our successes may no longer be measured in weapons destroyed, but instead in weapons prevented from being developed. This task will be elusive and difficult to measure.

World events have confronted the OPCW with new and unexpected challenges. To prevent re-

emergence and ensure the Convention remains a permanent barrier against chemical weapons, requires multifaceted and innovative approaches.

Underpinning our needs is sound and robust science. The provision of reliable scientific and technical findings is a vital part of our work in verification, particularly in contingency operations. These findings must stand on their technical merit, be objective and accurate, and incontrovertible.

Our scientific skills must continually evolve, and I thank the Board for its guidance and support in maintaining high levels of scientific integrity. The OPCW Laboratory has initiated a biomedical proficiency testing programme and is currently preparing for a second protein biotoxin exercise. The OPCW inspectorate has drawn upon lessons learned from contingency operations and the SAB recommendations for its training exercises. Additionally, we have initiated a project to expand and upgrade the OPCW Laboratory to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology. This will augment a range of existing analytical and research capabilities, as well as obtain us new ones.

The science itself will not provide a solution to political issues, but it can usefully supply informative inputs that enable decision-makers to more effectively address technical dimensions within the issues they face.

For this reason, science and technology must remain a priority in our work.

Distinguished Board members,

The field of chemistry is in a state of continual change, producing extraordinary intellectual growth and significant socioeconomic impacts, both positive and negative. Chemistry sits at the forefront of a trend towards convergence in the scientific disciplines. This blurring of lines in the fields of science enables innovation and discovery, which is further strengthened through national and international scientific collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Our States Parties often focus on the challenges arising from the rapid advancement in science and technology, and view convergence with uncertainty due to its implications. Yet many of the immediate challenges we face do not relate to emerging technologies. A pertinent example would be the difficulty of post-event sampling and analysis to verify chlorine exposure.

Bearing this in mind, we need practical considerations on new scientific developments which make available innovative approaches to technology advancement and application.

The Temporary Working Group (TWG) on Investigative Science and Technology will provide important practical considerations on a number of currently challenging areas. The members of the TWG have been appointed and are now in the capable hands of its chair, Dr Veronica Borrett. I look forward to the outcomes of their first meeting in February 2018.

New advances in chemistry are increasingly enabled by ideas and tools originating from sectors outside the discipline. I am pleased that this principle has helped guide your workshop initiative. It is a solid example of the value of international scientific collaboration, bringing together nearly 160 individuals from 40 States Parties with expertise in chemistry, the life sciences, engineering, and beyond to participate in the scientific review process. The four workshops, covering chemical forensics, medical countermeasures, innovative technologies, and chemical production and discovery have generated rich insights to inform the report to the Fourth Review Conference.

Turning to the report, our States Parties require practical advice on how to consider the implications of technological change. At the same time, your findings and advice may serve to challenge

assumptions and spark new ideas that benefit all; even when associated recommendations may not be accepted. With this view, I encourage you to be forward thinking, innovative, and bold as you draft this report.

The value of the report and its advice is the independent expert voice the SAB provides.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Just as science is dynamic and continues to move forward in new and unexpected ways, so too is today's security environment, bringing us unanticipated situations and new trials.

This is a time that requires diligence and support to uphold the norms of the Convention – a time to recognise that in the face of turbulence, there are also opportunities.

Expert advice is necessary to help us see and consider the merits of these opportunities.

Your contributions to the Board ensure that the OPCW remains a fit-for-purpose organisation in its mission to eliminate the scourge of chemical weapons.

Before closing, let me take this opportunity to welcome the three new members of the Board: Ms Hoe Chee Chua of Singapore, Dr Khaldoun Bachari of Algeria, and Dr Maciej Sliwakowski of Poland. The knowledge and experience you bring to the Board, like those before you, strengthens our capabilities.

I also wish to thank the four members for whom this session marks the conclusion of their tenure.

Dr Augustin Baulig of France who co-organised the workshop on medical countermeasures in 2016, Professor Roberto Martinez-Álvarez of Spain who served as chair of the TWG on verification, Dr Koji Takeuchi of Japan, and Professor Ferruccio Trifiró of Italy. Your contributions to the work of the Board and especially the TWGs have strengthened the infusion of scientific advice into the decision making process. Your commitment to the norms and objectives of the Convention remind us of the crucial role that science plays in supporting chemical disarmament. I wish you continued success.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you a very productive 26th Session.

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