



ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Ceremony Marking the Completion of the Destruction Process of Libya's Remaining Category 2 Chemical Weapons

**Address by Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, OPCW Director-General
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REMARKS AS DELIVERED

H.E. Dr Katrin Suder, State Secretary of the German Federal Ministry of Defence,
H.E. Mr Mohamed Taha Siala, Foreign Minister of Libya,
Excellencies,
Generals,
Dear colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be in Munster at GEKA mbH for this gathering to commemorate the destruction of Libya's remaining Category 2 chemical weapons. Today's event marks a historic occasion for disarmament and international security. It heralds the end of Libya's chemical demilitarisation process and another step towards fulfilling the core goal of the CWC – the complete and permanent eradication of all chemical weapons. This is a momentous achievement for the State of Libya and the OPCW. It was also timely that this landmark was reached in 2017, the Twentieth Anniversary year of the OPCW.

The removal and destruction of approximately 500 metric tonnes of Libya's Category 2 chemical agents was an extraordinary operation that necessitated agility, creativity, and above all close international cooperation. In fact, the Libya Mission was a prime example of the OPCW's motto—working together for a world free of chemical weapons – in action. Success was dependent on the resolute commitment and proactive efforts of multiple member states. In-kind contributions from Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Malta and the United Kingdom enabled us to carry out the destruction operation within the designated timeframes. The financial contributions received from the United States, Canada, Cyprus, Finland, New Zealand, and Spain, provided for the necessary resources to implement the project and verify the destruction.

Our activities also demonstrated the OPCW's capacity to adapt and respond quickly to unprecedented situations. Indeed, agility was a critical factor in our success. The member states of the OPCW recognised the serious risk of the chemical agents stored at Ruwagha falling into the hands of non-state actors, endangering both Libyan and international security. Acting quickly and decisively was paramount in enabling us to facilitate the removal process. It took a little over seven months from the moment the Government of Libya requested assistance for the removal of its chemical weapons stockpile until the final tank of chemicals arrived in the port of Bremen.

Creative thinking helped overcome significant obstacles. When descriptions of each tank's contents were required for import purposes but samples could not be flown out of Libya, a practical solution was found. The Libyan authorities transported samples to the edge of their territorial waters, where they were transferred to an Italian naval vessel and conveyed to Malta. From there they were flown to The Hague and the United Kingdom for analysis.

Given the numerous risks and uncertainties, this mission could have been a huge challenge. Nonetheless, coordination amongst the member states and the Technical Secretariat ensured that everything proceeded smoothly. In particular, the maritime transport and security assistance provided by the Government of Denmark was integral for moving the chemicals out of Libyan territory swiftly and securely.

It is also important for me to note the absolute dedication and commitment made by the Federal Republic of Germany and the management of GEKA to accomplishing this task within the desired timeframe and in an environmentally safe manner. This was no small feat, as we all know; any disposal operation involving chemical weapons comes with risks and hurdles. Let me take this moment to acknowledge Dr Andres Krüger, technical director of GEKA and his highly skilled staff for realising this undertaking in spite of some technical challenges.

Even though the chemical agents have been eliminated, our work is not finished. Environmental decontamination of the Ruwagha facility still needs to be realised. I welcome therefore the European Union's recent decision to provide funding for the cleaning-up of Libya's destruction and storage sites.

While our mission in Libya was part of the OPCW's mandate to ensure the implementation of the CWC's provisions, it has demonstrated the ability of the Organisation to conduct activities unforeseen by the drafters of the Convention.

Today we celebrate an outstanding accomplishment by the international community that will make a tangible and measureable contribution to global security. This is a triumph of collective action to fulfil the promise of the CWC to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons. It will be a great honour for me, that in a moment, I will present to His Excellency Mr Siala a certificate from the OPCW that recognises his country's important achievement in chemical disarmament. On behalf of the Organisation, I congratulate you and your country for overcoming substantial challenges in order to meet one of the key obligations of the Convention. I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Libyan National Authority, the Member States, my own staff, and all other individuals involved in the Libya Mission. You are among those who can say they have made the world a safer place.

Thank you for your attention.

Now I would like to first invite Dr. Krüger to present to him a medallion of the OPCW. I would now invite Minister Siala to present to him the certificate. Thank you.
