



## **Remarks by the Director-General of the OPCW, Fernando Arias, at 22nd International Chemical Weapons Demilitarisation Conference (CWD)**

**As delivered on 23 May 2019, London, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

Minister of State for Defence Lord Howe,  
Director of DSTL Mr. Gary Aitkenhead,  
Deputy Under Secretary of Defense of the United States of America Mr. Alan Shaffer,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I commend and thank the UK Ministry of Defence and the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) for organising this annual conference, and keeping up an invaluable tradition, which is an important contribution to the success of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We stand at a crossroads.

Today, nearer to the goal of the complete elimination of declared stockpiles, we are overtaken by a daunting realisation. Old threats have resurfaced. New ones have emerged.

Nearly 97% (or 68,318 metric tonnes) of declared Category 1 chemical weapons have been destroyed. Ninety-seven chemical weapons production facilities have either been destroyed or converted for peaceful purposes.

Of the eight chemical weapons possessor States, seven have completed their stockpile destruction.

The United States plans to complete the remaining 7.8% of its declared Category 1 chemical weapons stockpiles not later than 2023. I was in Colorado visiting the destruction facility of Pueblo one month ago. My impression cannot be better about what is being done there.

In Ruwagha, Libya, clean-up operations are under way.

Around 53,000 chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on China's territory (ACW) have been destroyed while an estimated 330,000 ACW items are awaiting excavation and recovery.

Since 1997, some 3,500 industry inspections and more than 3,200 chemical weapons related inspections have been carried out.

These are some of the most quantifiable outputs of our work.

Additionally, we are an Organisation that reinforces its security function by applying an inclusive philosophy of offering international assistance and cooperation.

Thousands of individuals all over the world have benefited from our capacity building programmes. The United Kingdom has generously supported such activities.

The challenges to the Convention's integrity now come from varied and insidious sources. Its continuing relevance to our goal of a world free from the threat of chemical weapons requires a significant shift in our approach. Until recently, we were talking about future priorities – all of them are now immediate priorities.

Because the OPCW also embodies a commitment to ensure that chemical weapons never re-emerge.

Last year, a chemical weapon was used in Salisbury, in this very country. Five individuals were poisoned, one of whom fatally.

Following the incident in Salisbury, the Government of the United Kingdom requested the OPCW to provide technical assistance to objectively verify and confirm the use of an unusual nerve agent. The OPCW collected its own samples, which were independently analysed by the OPCW designated laboratories.

In a very short time, the OPCW was able to confirm the findings of the United Kingdom, providing objective and scientifically robust facts for States Parties to consider in their assessments.

Paradoxically, while the resulting contamination both in Salisbury and Amesbury was locally contained, thanks notably to the formidable efforts of the local first responders, the incident garnered significant public attention worldwide.

For years now, the message from the OPCW has been that progress in science and technology, while potentially beneficial with adequate control measures, is a source of great concern. As we now know, with only extremely small amounts of certain very toxic chemicals, immense damage can be inflicted.

Together, we must face the risks, reduce the possibility of certain chemicals falling into the wrong hands, and reinforce the inspection regimes, so that ultimately everyone can benefit from a safe and secure environment.

Advances in science and technology inevitably impact upon the Convention's verification regime.

Chemistry, chemical technology and engineering have transformed the global chemical industry and continue to bring major changes.

The ability to detect the emergence of new chemicals and to establish their relevance to the Convention is critical. The development of new techniques and methods has also blurred the old distinctions that separated outputs of chemistry and biology. This opens up possibilities to produce potentially dangerous chemicals on the basis of biologically mediated processes, evading the OPCW verification net.

We maintain a positive cooperation with the chemical industry, with a healthy dialogue and mutual confidence.

The industry understands that trust and security enable a healthy business environment.

Major advancements and growth in the industry have occurred since the Convention entered into force.

States Parties need to objectively review these developments.

The industry verification regime can benefit significantly from adjustments in the number and focus of inspections. A better-tuned risk-based inspections regime is important given the very large number of facilities that are declared to the OPCW.

Depending on the preference of our States Parties, our industry inspections can also serve to contribute to productive exchanges between OPCW experts and the hosts. I have in mind issues of increasing concern relating, for example, to environmental standards.

In the context of industry inspections, there are of course matters that can also be taken up separately, such as those related to the protection and preservation of the environment.

The OPCW Laboratory is being upgraded with the construction of a new building that will become the future OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology.

States Parties have contributed generously towards this undertaking. The United Kingdom has pledged no less than 1 million pounds, which I deeply appreciate.

The Centre will increase the analytical capabilities of the Organisation. It will also help Member States through capacity building and will open up possibilities for joint research in areas relevant to the Convention.

The Salisbury incident underscored our need for enhanced skills, training and sophisticated equipment. Extremely dangerous chemical nerve agents, outside the scope of the OPCW verification regime, were used.

The OPCW has moved to plug this loophole by recommending the inclusion of two additional families of chemicals into Schedule 1, a list containing the most dangerous chemicals subject to verification under the Convention. The Conference of the States Parties will consider these recommendations later this year.

Another source of concern is riot control agents.

They are necessary, but at the same time potentially dangerous.

Their use for domestic law-enforcement purposes is legal under the Convention. But the types and quantities used must be consistent with such purposes.

Although Member States have the obligation to declare their stocks of riot control agents, there are no routine inspections available to verify these stocks.

As a result, the well-known principle in the field of international disarmament, which has been so well accepted – “Trust but Verify” – cannot be fully implemented in this case.

The new scientific discoveries related to central nervous system acting chemicals are very worrying; that is why I refer to the riot control agents.

I am raising this issue in here before you today because I consider it to be of great importance and I hope that the Member States will be active in finding solutions.

On the legal front, it is critical that all our States Parties establish effective legal measures. Domestic structures to administer them are also crucial. The existence of laws and their enforcement are essential in denying terrorists access to dangerous materials.

Although the domestic implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention has continually improved, more needs to be done. Presently, 38 States Parties have not yet adopted any national legislation to implement the Convention.

The Organisation has progressively clarified and crafted its role in the context of global anti-terrorism.

In October 2017, the OPCW's Executive Council adopted a decision entitled "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors".

We seek to broaden our ongoing cooperation with such entities as the UN Security Council's 1540 Committee and the UN Office of Counter Terrorism. Activities of the Organisation in this important area are guided by the work of the OPCW's Open-ended Working Group on Terrorism.

The establishment of an OPCW Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM), to assist States Parties that are victims of an attack, is a concrete manifestation of the substantive steps that have been taken for the benefit of our States Parties.

In Syria, we conducted a successful disarmament mission. Yet, there emerged persistent and credible allegations that chlorine was being used in Syria as a chemical weapon.

A Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) was established in April 2014 to investigate such allegations.

Since that time, the FFM has substantiated several cases of the use of toxic chemicals and chemical weapons.

The United Nations Security Council decided in August 2015 to take these inquiries a step further. It established an OPCW-UN Joint Investigative mechanism (JIM) to attribute responsibility for the crimes committed in Syria.

The mechanism identified State elements and terrorists as perpetrators.

The mandate of the JIM ended in November 2017, when the proposal to renew it was vetoed in the Security Council.

In June last year, the Conference of the States Parties authorised the OPCW to include in the results of its investigations information that would help identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

To that effect, an Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) has been set up. The recruitment process for all team members has been completed. The team has already commenced its activities.

It is also worth mentioning that the June 2018 decision also enables the Organisation to assist, upon request, States Parties in their investigations into the use of chemical weapons, should this happen on their own territories.

To summarise, we have been working with limited resources while dealing with issues with a global reach and impact. In order to face the new and emerging complex issues, we will need additional resources, both human and financial.

In fact, in the 22 years of its operation, the OPCW has served with the smallest possible budget from all well-known international organisations.

I can assure you that it has been very challenging to do the many positive things this Organisation has done, with so little money.

The OPCW depends on its success on the goodwill and support of its States Parties. What has been achieved through the Convention is unprecedented.

Today's threats cannot be contained within politically defined geographical boundaries.

We all have to view the Chemical Weapons Convention as a future imperative; not as a historical chapter that closes with the elimination of the last of the declared chemical weapons.

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