



## **Opening Remarks by the OPCW Deputy Director-General at the Discussion Panel “Being the only one”**

**As delivered on 11 February 2020, The Hague, Netherlands**

Distinguished guests,  
Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for coming to this important discussion panel. I warmly welcome our panellists: Ms Ana Cristina Rodriguez Pineda, the Chef de Cabinet to the Office of the President of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals; Ms Hoe Chee Chua, the Head of the OPCW Laboratory, and Mr. Osvaldo Zavala Giler, Head of Office to the United Nations at the International Criminal Court.

It is a great honour to open this event, which is taking place on the International Day for Women and Girls in Science. This is the final event in the Gender Training Programme. This initiative has helped staff members of organisations around The Hague to understand how to integrate gender perspectives into their working lives.

Today’s panel explores the theme “Being the only one”. The purpose of our interaction is to meaningfully reflect on the nexus between gender and leadership, especially in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Women are under-represented in these fields, not just as professionals, but also as students seeking the higher reaches of scientific education. While gender inequality in the sciences varies from region to region, the lack of opportunity is unfortunately an experience lived by women worldwide. As a result, the world is not harnessing the full potential of our available workforce. We miss out on leveraging the full measure of human knowledge and learning capacity.

To fix this problem we must build a culture of respect for diversity, gender balance in leadership, and fair workplaces. Progress is being made. For instance, in 2018, for the first time the Nobel Prizes for Chemistry and Physics were awarded to two women. However, there is still much room for improvement to encourage and enable more women and girls to take up leadership positions in the sciences.

As a technical organisation closely associated with the scientific community, these issues are a key concern for the OPCW. Indeed, in order to fulfil our motto of “working together for a world free of chemical weapons” it is essential that we create an inclusive organisation. And under the International Gender Champions initiative we have established gender focal points throughout the Secretariat. This year, we achieved gender parity in our senior management structure.

We continue to make progress towards our goal of increasing the number of women working for our organisation. These actions ensure that there is a space at the decision-making table for everyone and assist in attracting the best talent in a diverse and egalitarian environment. To address the complex challenges of today and tomorrow, strengthening the voices of women in leadership is not simply desirable, but necessary.

I thank you for your attention. Unfortunately, I am not able to stay for the panel discussion, but I wish you a pleasant and fruitful discussion on this important topic.

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