



Virtual Conference on Chemistry and its Applications

Remarks by the Deputy Director-General of the OPCW, Ms Odette Melono

9-13 August 2021

Conference Delegates,

I thank the conference organizers for inviting me to address you at this Virtual Conference on Chemistry and its Applications.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, where I serve as the Deputy Director-General, has participated in this event for several years now and is happy to continue its support.

OPCW staff as well as members of the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board will make contributions to the conference this year as they have in years past.

The Virtual Conference on Chemistry and its Applications provides an excellent forum for scientists and researchers from around the world to share their current work and scientific results across a range of chemistry topics.

I note with particular interest the theme of this year's conference: Chemical Sciences for the New Decade; and its relevance to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

I would like to give you all an update on one of the major projects the OPCW has been working on to continue to be ready to meet our objectives as an organization but to also be prepared for future challenges.

But first, let me provide you with an overview of how the OPCW, through the programmes of its Technical Secretariat, contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals within the context of our work promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry.

Through its almost universal membership (193 Member States), the OPCW has global influence and impact in promoting effective cooperation among a number of stakeholders towards the achievement of global peace and security.

Some of the core objectives of the OPCW such as demilitarisation, non-proliferation, assistance and protection and international cooperation, are in line with the aims of sustainable development.

In particular, to promote national implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and to ensure achievement of its core objectives at national, regional and global levels, the OPCW is running a wide spectrum of capacity building programmes and promotes cooperation among stakeholders in legal, scientific, military, law enforcement and other spheres.

For example, the programmes under assistance and protection and international cooperation are specifically targeting the OPCW Member States whose economies are either developing or in transition.

In this context, in 2007 the OPCW established the “Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention” (the Africa Programme), which focuses on activities to respond to the specific needs of the African Member States.

Now in its Fifth Phase, the Africa Programme focuses on enhancing the African States Parties’ capabilities using a robust results-based approach.

The eight objectives in this current phase are:

- Advancing national implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in Africa.
- Enhancing the effectiveness of the African CWC National Authorities
- Strengthening controls over cross-border transfers of toxic chemicals to prevent access to such chemicals, including by non-State actors, for purposes prohibited under the Convention.
- Enhancing protection and response capabilities against chemical incidents and attacks.
- Advancing chemical safety and security culture, standards, and practices in Africa.
- Strengthening the capabilities of chemical laboratories in Africa.
- Promoting knowledge of peaceful chemistry and its exchange in Africa.
- Fostering Programme visibility, stakeholder engagement, and partnerships.

A great deal of synergies with the Sustainable development Goals comes from the TS programmes in the framework of the implementation of Article XI of the Chemical Weapons convention which provides for promotion of the peaceful uses of chemistry and aims at the technological and economic development of the Member States.

In addition, the Technical Secretariat holds numerous workshops on chemical safety and security and the peaceful uses of chemistry.

There is also an OPCW Women in chemistry initiative that promotes women chemists in their professional field, particularly from countries with developing economies.

Lastly, the OPCW is very active in providing grants for research projects that promote the peaceful uses of chemistry.

Including our work in developing The Hague Ethical Guidelines, and ongoing work by the OPCW’s Scientific Advisory Board and Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, the OPCW has made and continues to make significant contributions to a number of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The other topic I’d like to discuss with you today is the OPCW’s project to upgrade its Laboratory and Equipment Store into a brand new, state-of-the-art Centre for Chemistry and Technology, or ChemTech Centre.

The ChemTech Centre will be a recognised leader in research, analysis, training, and capacity building.

It will be a flagship for the OPCW and its broader community and will significantly enhance the capabilities and standing of the OPCW as the global leader in the effort to rid the world of chemical weapons.

The planning for this project began 4 years ago and I am pleased to share with you some important milestones.

On 14 April, the tender for the main construction company was successfully completed.

Construction activities on site began in June, with the ground excavation and work on the foundation starting this month.

The funding target for the construction of the ChemTech Centre has now also been met, with over EUR 33.65 million contributed or pledged from 48 countries, the European Union, and other donors.

I would like to express my appreciation to all the donors, whose contributions have enabled this significant achievement

The ChemTech Centre Trust Fund remains open for further contributions, which we have started receiving, and which will be devoted to equipment and programmes.

The Trust Fund will provide extra assurances for the successful completion of the project, and for international cooperation programmes to be carried out at the Centre as soon as the building is operational.

The Secretariat is analysing which activities can be delivered at the ChemTech Centre that will enhance and support full implementation of the Convention.

In this regard, we have been undertaking consultations with States Parties and regional groups to hear and incorporate their priorities into the activities to be offered at the Centre.

This input is critical to ensuring that a list of well-defined programmes for the Centre is ready as soon as its construction is completed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is exciting to see the continued enthusiasm and vigor in the sharing of knowledge relating to chemistry and its research despite the global challenges the pandemic brought over the last 18 months.

I salute you in your continued dedication to the peaceful uses of chemistry and the UN Sustainable Development Goals and wish you an excellent conference.
