



## **Opening Remarks by the OPCW Director-General at the Twelfth Session of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach**

**As delivered on 8 February 2022, The Hague, Netherlands**

Distinguished Members of the Advisory Board and Observers,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Twelfth Session of the OPCW Advisory Board on Education and Outreach. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Chairperson, Dr Hans Georg Weinig, for his leadership of the Board in 2021. I would also like to welcome the eleven new members of the Board.

Since last year the composition of the ABEO has changed significantly. The last call for nominations for the Board invited States Parties for the first time to nominate two candidates being one of them female. This new approach has proven to be successful. Today 7 out of 15 members of the Board are female. Together with this, the Board's geographically diverse membership and wide variety of expertise and backgrounds, will benefit its work.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you are aware, the Organisation is close to achieving the goal of eliminating all declared chemical weapons stockpiles. To date, the OPCW has verified the destruction of 99% of all declared chemical weapons. However, the OPCW's mission is far from over.

The Organisation is already evolving and adapting to face new challenges arising from progress in science and technology, as well as from a shifting global security landscape. Notably the use of chemical weapons in some States Parties over the course of the past decade, demonstrates that our mandate is open-ended. Similarly, the risk of toxic chemicals falling into the wrong hands to cause harm, strengthens this point.

To address the existing and emerging challenges, the Centre for Chemistry and Technology, or ChemTech Centre, will continue to be a major priority for the Organisation. It is scheduled to become operational in 2023 and it will greatly support, among other activities, our education and outreach efforts. The ChemTech Centre will foster the acquisition, exchange, and spread of expertise and skills to deal with all kinds of chemical weapons threats.

Engaging with external audiences, such as academia, civil society, and young professionals, will be important. In this respect, raising awareness of the OPCW and its mission, will continue to be a focus of the Secretariat's outreach efforts. I am confident that the Advisory Board will assist us in connecting with these different audiences, in the relevant fields for this purpose.

E-learning is an increasingly relevant means for better reaching such groups. I am therefore pleased that, in 2021, the ABEO Temporary Working Group on e-Learning, under the guidance of Professor Hernandez Rizzardini, prepared a final report on improving the Secretariat's e-Learning portfolio. The experts on e-learning provided recommendations for the Secretariat, which are currently being assessed internally.

The recommendation to create an e-learning content pack for universities is an excellent one. Such a pack will serve as an international educational resource on chemical-weapons related knowledge. We will rely on the ABEO to support our efforts to make this content pack engaging, interactive, and widely used in all regions.

Likewise, the Board will play an important role in creating and disseminating education and outreach tools and materials that the Secretariat will offer to National Authorities. Greater engagement with these key stakeholders will support the implementation of the Convention in all regions.

Turning now to human resource management, it is crucial for the OPCW's performance that we attract and retain a highly qualified and diverse workforce. However, the number of job applications from some regions remains low. Enlarging the pool of candidates applying for positions at the Organisation is necessary, particularly from certain regions. You will be informed about this, in more detail, during your meeting.

Finally, the report on the operations of the Advisory Board from 2019 to 2021 will be submitted to the upcoming Executive Council for its consideration. In the period covered by the report, important milestones have been achieved by the Board. Last year, it adopted the Strategic Plan of the ABEO and submitted the final report of the Temporary Working Group on e-Learning. As such, I encourage the Board this year to continue these efforts for the benefit of the Organisation.

I wish you every success in this meeting and I look forward to reading the report of the Twelfth Session.

Thank you.

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