



## **Education Training Programme on Peaceful Uses of Chemistry for Youth (Online)**

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

7 April 2022

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Speakers,  
Course Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the launch of this first edition of the “Education Training Programme on the Peaceful Uses of Chemistry”.

At the outset, I would like to extend our special appreciation to the European Union for its generous support of this programme and thank Ambassador Leinonen for his participation today (Many thanks Ambassador for being with us this afternoon).

I also wish to thank our guest speakers, Mr Amos Onchiri of the Kenyan National Disaster Management Unit, Professor Alastair Hay of the University of Leeds, and Dr Rohan Perera, Expert on Chemical Safety and Security, for joining and supporting this event.

Dear Participants,

We live in a time when the ever-accelerating pace of science and technology is ushering in unprecedented opportunities for global peace and development.

Young people are at the forefront of this movement. They are the drivers of innovation in technology. They have the energy and ideas that are leading to ground-breaking research in all scientific disciplines.

I wish to underscore, however, that even though these advances benefit society, they also give rise to new security challenges, particularly in the life sciences.

For instance, everyday across the world many thousands of tons of toxic chemical are produced, transported, stored, traded, and consumed for legitimate peaceful purposes.

Yet, the risk exists that fractions of these substances, if diverted with ill intent, can cause serious harm to people, infrastructure, and the environment.

Further, the potential dangers from accidents can have similar devastating consequences.

Therefore, we must all strive to ensure that science is employed exclusively in the service of humanity and not against it.

The OPCW as the implementing organisation of the Chemical Weapons Convention has been focused on this goal.

The Convention is one of the world's most successful disarmament treaties. With 193 States Parties, the treaty covers 98% of the global population. Today, under the watchful eye of the OPCW, 99% of some 72,000 tonnes of declared chemical weapon stockpiles have been verified as eliminated.

The remainder is on track to be destroyed next year when the United States is expected to complete its stockpile destruction.

The Convention, however, is more than just a disarmament treaty, but is also geared towards preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

It is vital that students and young professional scientists such as yourselves remain aware of the potential misuses of chemistry.

Therefore, this course aims to raise your awareness of chemical safety and security and the importance of ensuring that chemicals are only employed for purposes not prohibited by the Convention.

It is also a valuable moment for you to share your own experiences, as well as to develop professional and academic networks.

In this context, I also welcome the planned launch of the LinkedIn Alumni Network as an outcome of this course.

Dear Participants,

Our journey towards a world free of chemical weapons requires sustained commitment and contributions from stakeholder across the globe, including governments, scientific communities, academia, industry, and civil society.

In this respect, the OPCW's new Centre for Chemistry and Technology, which is under construction, will be integral to our efforts.

Once operational next year, it will bolster the Organisation's ability to provide capacity building in chemical security and expand international cooperation for the peaceful uses of chemistry.

By broader engagement on the implementation of the Convention with all key stakeholders, including youth, we can greatly contribute towards preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

As such, I would like to commend all the participants for your interest and dedication towards the peaceful uses of chemistry.

I wish you every success in your course.

Thank you.

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