



The Hague

Mayor

### Statement on the occasion of the Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare

No one visiting Huis Doorn, the stately country house not far from Utrecht where the former German Emperor, Wilhelm II, spent the last 20 years of his life in exile, will get to see it. It's kept in the attic storerooms, together with the many uniforms, sabres and other belongings of the last German monarch. Neatly packed in its original box, wrapped in tissue paper and only to be handled with gloves: the gas mask issued to Wilhelm by the Dutch government in 1939. Which at that time, like many others, also seriously considered the possible use of chemical weapons in the event of war.

What a bitter irony this gas mask represents, with its crumbling, pale green rubber and large, eerily empty eyeglasses. Intended for the man in whose name more than two million German soldiers lost their lives. The man in whose name, from the spring of 1915, chemical weapons were deployed for the first time in history near the Belgian town of Ypres.

A peace conference had been planned for that same year here in The Hague which, of course, did not go ahead. It would have been the third of its kind since 1899 which, 125 years ago, marked the start of The Hague's evolution into the international city of peace and justice.

The arrival of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in 1997 provided a major new impetus for that development. That the OPCW is based here fills us with pride. May the remembrance of the victims of chemical weapons continue to urge The Hague to do everything in its power as a city to promote peace and justice on this earth.



Jan van Zanen  
Mayor of The Hague