



Day of Remembrance for all victims of chemical warfare

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

The Hague, 27 November 2024

Statement by Christiaan Rebergen, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

On this Day of Remembrance for all victims of chemical warfare, I feel honoured to have been given this opportunity to reflect with you and to pay our respects to the victims.

On behalf of the Netherlands, it is my great honour to address the Conference of States Parties as we remember all victims of chemical warfare. The Netherlands is proud to be the host state of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the most successful disarmament organisation of our era. And we share the satisfaction of all States Parties regarding our joint accomplishments since the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Last year saw a landmark success in the field of disarmament with the achievement of one of the organisation's goals: the completion of the destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles. This marked a unique milestone among disarmament organisations, and one which States Parties rightfully celebrated. Yet we must not lose sight of the OPCW's overall mission: the permanent elimination of chemical weapons.

Despite the successful elimination of all declared stockpiles, the potential continued and renewed use of chemical weapons is a cause of international concern. Recent events have shown that there is a real risk of chemical weapons being used again, and this deserves our full and continuing attention. We cannot let down our guard. The use of chemical weapons must be unequivocally condemned, and will always be unacceptable – regardless of where or

when they are used, who uses them and what the circumstances are. Moreover, the use of chemical weapons constitutes a clear breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which cannot be tolerated. In this regard, recent reports about the use of chemical weapons on the battlefield in Ukraine, which have been confirmed by the Technical Secretariat, are deeply alarming.

By adhering strictly and without compromise to the global norm against the use of chemical weapons, not only do we protect our nations and citizens against chemical weapons attacks in the future, we also honour those who have been the victims of the use of these heinous weapons in the past.

Today we remember and pay our respects to the victims of chemical weapons, who suffered unimaginable horrors. As Member States of the OPCW, it is our solemn duty to ensure that no one is ever a victim of chemical weapons again.