



### **Keynote address**

**High-level event on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention**

*A Quarter Century of the CWC: Achievements and Challenges*

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Virtual  
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H.E. Secretary of State Baumann,

Director-General Arias,

Ambassador Üzümcü,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to thank the Competence Network CBWNet and the German Federal Foreign Office for organizing this high-level event on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

At the quarter of a century mark, few instruments deserve as much praise as the CWC. Adopted at the UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva after 12 hard years of negotiations, the CWC has been a bastion of the disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

Its many successes – including near universality with 193 States Parties and the destruction of 99% of the world's declared chemical weapons stockpiles – are a testament to the world's determination to eliminate these dreadful weapons and the efficacy of the CWC and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in achieving those goals.

The CWC has demonstrated the tangible security benefits that multilateral disarmament instruments provide. It is inarguable that the world is a safer place because of the Convention.

However, the re-emergence of these weapons of terror is one of the most worrying developments in international security. The use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, Malaysia, Iraq, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation has threatened the norms embedded in the Convention and profoundly damaged disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

The heinous consequences of the use of these weapons have been compounded by divisions and tensions over how to ensure the integrity of the norm against chemical weapons. This in turn has

created significant difficulties in holding accountable the perpetrators of their use. This is not a situation the international community should allow to persist.

Secretary-General Guterres has repeatedly stressed that the use of chemical weapons anywhere by anyone, and under any circumstances, is unacceptable and has urged the international community to act. Yet, the Security Council has not fulfilled its responsibility to hold accountable the perpetrators of these atrocious acts.

It is alarming that more than a century after the end of World War I and despite the adoption of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997, the use of chemical weapons continues to recur.

The pursuit of the elimination of chemical weapons requires a cooperative approach and the United Nations and the OPCW Secretariat have a longstanding partnership working to achieve this goal. This partnership was made official by the relationship agreement concluded in 2000. It codified our fruitful cooperation and the establishment of good working relations.

The close cooperation between the United Nations and the OPCW and the mutually reinforcing nature of our work was exemplified by the United Nations Investigation into the Allegation of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic (so-called “Sellström Investigation”), the OPCW-UN Joint Mission and the work of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

In that spirit, let me take this opportunity to thank Director-General Fernando Arias and Ambassador Ahmet Üzümzü for their years of dedicated service to the OPCW and for their strong support to the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The norm against chemical weapons has been subjected to repeated and fundamental challenges, driven by the lack of strict compliance by some, a deteriorating international security environment, the rise of dangerous non-state actors capable of acquiring and using chemical weapons, and developments in science and technology.

The international community must act together to shore up the norm against the use of chemical weapons, to hold to account anyone who would stoop to using them and to revive the global regime.

An immediate challenge facing the health of the CWC is the use, with impunity, of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in Syria's initial and subsequent declarations to the OPCW must be resolved. The Syrian Arab Republic must also allow immediate and unfettered access for the OPCW Secretariat. Without the Syrian Arab Republic cooperation, the international community cannot have confidence that Syria is abiding by its commitments.

I welcome the on-going work of the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team, the Fact-Finding Mission, as well as the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team. The impartial and professional work of these bodies is crucial to re-establishing the taboo against the use of chemical weapons and bringing to justice the perpetrators of chemical weapons use.

If we fail to both identify the perpetrators of chemical weapon attacks and hold them accountable, we will further damage the norm against the use of chemical weapons. Such profound violations of international law cannot continue to go unaddressed and unresolved.

As we have seen in the past years, chemical weapons are not confined to one region and the potential for chemical weapons to become a weapon of terror and intimidation must cease.

All States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention must strictly abide by their obligations under that treaty and renewed efforts must be made to universalize the Convention.

Going forward, we need to preserve the integrity of the Convention and of the OPCW Technical Secretariat work. Challenges to the OPCW's technical authority could undermine the entire disarmament and non-proliferation regime. I take this opportunity to reiterate my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity, and independence of the work of the OPCW.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The use of chemical weapons is a grave violation of international law and an affront to our shared humanity. Vigilance is required to ensure that these awful weapons are eliminated once and for all.

The identification of those responsible for the use of chemicals weapons is not the ultimate objective. There is a step beyond that, wherein those who are responsible for the use chemical weapons are then held accountable.

In facing the growing challenges posed by chemical weapons in this century, I assure you that the UN will continue working with the OPCW Secretariat and all Member States to forge an ever-stronger collaboration to restore the taboo against chemical weapons. Let us use this anniversary to reaffirm our support for the Chemical Weapons Convention and its essential work to build a safer, more secure world for all. Together, let us work harder, until we can finally consign those dreadful weapons to the pages of history.

I wish you all a successful and productive event.

I thank you very much for your attention.

