

FOREWORD

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Ten years ago, my predecessor Rogelio Pfirter wrote a preface for this journal's predecessor, the *Verification Yearbook*. He outlined the main requirements for an effective verification regime: that it should be technically sound, effective and efficient, and non-discriminatory. He underlined the need for universality, if the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is to achieve its goals. And he emphasised the unique spirit of cooperation and consensus that defined the CWC.

Rogelio Pfirter's words ring as true now as they did then, and they continue to faithfully describe the CWC's successes and what the OPCW, as its implementing body, seeks to achieve. But it is worth casting a backward glance to see how much has changed for the CWC and the OPCW since 2004, and how our verification regime has successfully weathered these changes. Over that time, the CWC has grown from 164 states parties to 190 today. In 2004, 12 per cent of globally declared chemical weapons had been destroyed under strict OPCW verification; now, that figure is over 86 per cent. In the first seven years of the OPCW's existence until 2004, the organisation conducted around 700 inspections in industrial facilities around the world; since then, we have carried out over 2000 more inspections.

Over the same period the global taboo against the use of chemical weapons has grown ever stronger. At no time has this been more forcefully acknowledged than in the international reaction to the chemical attacks in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta in August 2013. Those horrific attacks led to a series of extraordinary events, including the accession of Syria to the CWC, and the unprecedented mission to remove and destroy its chemical weapons. The fact that these developments took place in the midst of a civil war and in an extremely short timeframe attests to the strength of the international community's determination to seize a rare opportunity to destroy a major arsenal of a weapon of mass destruction, and to further entrench the norm against chemical weapons that the CWC enshrined almost 20 years ago. But it also confirmed that the OPCW — through its particular expertise and experience and, on this occasion, in partnership with the United Nations — was uniquely placed to meet the challenge of eliminating Syria's chemical weapons.

We are continuing to reflect on our experiences in Syria and to learn from them in order to better position the organisation for similar challenges in the future. Certainly, in the course of this mission, we have shown — through our contingency planning, our

fully subscribed funding and technical assistance base, our well-coordinated partnerships, our technical innovations and our effective public-private initiatives—that the OPCW has an important role to play in confronting some of the defining security issues of our times. The award of the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize to the OPCW recognised this record of achievement and spurred us on to achieve even greater successes.

This year, 100 years after the first large-scale attacks with chemical weapons near Leper in April 1915, is one of deep significance for the OPCW. Although our organisation is only 17 years old, the legacy on which it builds can be traced back to much earlier efforts to control chemical weapons, both before and after the worst excesses of World War I, and it is the memory of the victims of chemical weapons over the last century that will continue to inspire our work. Implementing the CWC's verification regime is the core task of the OPCW, and in the next few years we will have completed the most visible part of that task: getting rid of the world's declared stockpiles of chemical weapons. But, importantly, the work of making those disarmament gains permanent will continue.

The industry verification system which the OPCW oversees is the most comprehensive in the history of multilateral disarmament and arms control, and it lies at the very heart of our non-proliferation mandate. Its record of success stands on its own, but we cannot afford to be complacent about its ability to detect and respond to future threats. The globalisation of the chemical industry, the rapid development of digital communications, and advances in science and technology are all strategic challenges which the OPCW must address in order to safeguard the trust and confidence in the CWC's verification regime that we have worked so hard to build. The work of universalising the treaty must continue, for it is only through universal adherence that the CWC's vision of a world free of chemical weapons will be realised. And threats posed by terrorist groups, which the verification system was not specifically designed to deal with, cannot be ignored.

These are all significant challenges, but I believe that we can, for the most part, turn them into opportunities. The reason for my optimism is that the Chemical Weapons Convention is a comprehensive and holistic regime that draws its strength from multiple stakeholders. Scientists and industry representatives have been active in the life of the CWC from the very beginning of negotiations on its scope and text. We must continue to draw on their experience and expertise in order to safeguard the gains we have made and to shape our future agenda. Equally, we must continue to enhance collaboration with our states parties, and empower those with economies in transition, to realise the promise of the peaceful uses of modern science, including by making our laboratory facilities available to scientists from around the world.

The unique sense of partnership with which the CWC is imbued will continue to inspire us to explore new ways of implementing our mandate. Our aim is to build on a 17-year record of success by increasing our efficiency and broadening our reach. This not only means staying abreast of scientific and technological advances that may test available mechanisms for implementing the Convention. It also requires us to ensure that we are engaging with all those who have a stake in our mission and making our goal a commonly held one. For that reason, our education and outreach efforts will take on a new dimension and urgency in the post-destruction phase. The OPCW will work to expand and diversify cooperation with science and industry to ensure we are always achieving best practice for our gold-standard verification regime.

To this end, we are working now to bolster our links with regional and international organisations, as well as chemical industry associations, the private sector, academia, and civil society. We will look to make the best possible use of advances in communications technologies to enhance and future-proof our verification system. In doing so, we will work hand-in-hand with our states parties. This will include exploring how technological advances could potentially help the organisation and states parties to further improve our ability to track exports of dual-use goods and materials, to ensure that these goods go where they are supposed to go, and are used for purposes they are intended to be used for. We will continue to modernise our systems of communication with our states parties, including through the roll-out of our new Secure Information Exchange system, which allows the near real-time exchange of confidential verification-related information between states parties and the Technical Secretariat. Through this work, we can realise other benefits, such as helping to prevent non-state actors from gaining access to dual-use materials and know-how.

Strengthening our links with other international organisations will be crucial as we look to the future. The United Nations is central in this regard, whether in partnership on the ground in Syria, or in our broader, mutually reinforcing efforts to promote disarmament. We are likewise engaging regional organisations to use their forums and networks for raising awareness of the goals of the CWC, including in advancing universality. Our interaction with specialised international agencies is usefully identifying areas of overlap that enhance chemical security, ranging from addressing transnational crime and terrorism, to building capacity for chemical emergency response. Finally, we are working with other arms control treaty organisations to exchange best practices in areas ranging from dual-use challenges to verification methods. Institutional cooperation is the bedrock of the broader stakeholder engagement on which the OPCW prides itself.

As we adapt to respond to these challenges, with an increasing focus on the OPCW's non-proliferation mandate over coming years, it is vitally important that the organisation

remains the pre-eminent international repository of expertise on chemical weapons. This will be crucial for allowing us not only to deal with legacy chemical weapons, such as those that continue to be found in the sea or on the former battlefields of Europe and Asia, but also to respond, as the CWC mandates, should chemical weapons ever be used again. We will equally draw on this unique technical expertise—built and maintained through our core verification work, whether in the field or in our laboratory—to render assistance to our states parties as they continue to implement the CWC in the years ahead.

To be able to deliver in all of these areas, the OPCW must constantly ensure that its resources—both human and material—are fit for purpose and able to deal with the exigencies of our mandate. The shift in the organisation’s focus over the next few years, as well as the strategic challenges I have described above, will necessitate a close re-evaluation of how we deploy those resources to maximise the value we provide to our states parties and to international security as a whole. That process is now well underway.

The success of the OPCW over its 17-year history has been something of a poster-child for verification in multilateral disarmament and arms control. The challenge for us now is to build on this success through collaboration, innovation and leadership. I am confident that the strength and diversity of our partnerships within an ever broadening community of stakeholders will help us source new and better solutions to new and existing challenges. At the same time, the OPCW will continue to be a leader in sharing its considerable knowledge and experience in this vital area of disarmament and non-proliferation. Our common aim must be to ensure that all disarmament efforts can make a durable contribution to global peace and security.

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