



Opening Remarks by the OPCW Director-General, at the Tenth Session of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach

As delivered on 9 February 2021, The Hague, Netherlands

Members of the Advisory Board,
Distinguished observers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Tenth Session of the OPCW Advisory Board on Education and Outreach.

The first thing I wish to do is to thank Dr Jo Husbands and Professor Adriana Bernacchi for their dedicated work as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Board in 2020 under challenging circumstances, very well known by all of us.

I wish to welcome the incoming Chairperson, Dr Johannes Weinig, and the Vice-Chairperson Mr Shahab Ud Din. I am confident that the Board will continue to provide its expert advice and assistance under your able leadership.

Three weeks ago, I had the opportunity to discuss with Dr Weinig and Mr Ud Din, the Board's priorities for this year. Of course, it took me only a second to say yes to the proposal to be here today with you for the opening of the 10th session of the ABEO.

Because we are living in a time when we have to be together supporting each other, to face the difficulties you are very well aware of. During this time of the pandemic we all have learned to develop the activities online. That is why, now more than ever, enhancing the OPCW's e-learning programme will continue to be an important priority.

I am sure that the experience we have accumulated in the use of new technologies for online meetings will be extremely useful for the e-learning programmes. Thanks to these activities, we will be better positioned to reach relevant stakeholders. Using this modality, it will provide them with information and regular updates about the OPCW's critical work and enduring mission.

The Temporary Working Group on e-learning will play a significant role in this regard. Professor Hernandez Rizzardini is the Chair of this group. He knows well that the current international environment has accelerated the digitalisation of societies. And e-learning provides a unique opportunity to spread knowledge and skills across geographical boundaries. I look forward to the Temporary Working Group providing us with expert advice and concrete recommendations on how to continue to adapt and develop our e-learning portfolio.

A major priority for 2021 will be the future Centre for Chemistry and Technology, or ChemTech Centre, which among other things will greatly support our education and outreach efforts. The ChemTech Centre will increase the OPCW's capabilities in several fields and the goal is to become a centre of excellence in research, training and chemical knowledge in

general. It will serve not only as a repository of knowledge but also it will contribute to the dissemination, exchange and acquisition of expertise and skills.

The construction of the ChemTech Centre has a budget of 33.5 million euros, funded exclusively by voluntary contributions. To date, over 33.4 million euros has been contributed or pledged from 46 States Parties, the European Union, and other donors. The project is scheduled to be completed towards the end of 2022 or the beginning of 2023.

It is expected that the ChemTech Centre will greatly benefit from the expertise and knowledge of the Board. Targeting academia, civil society and young professionals, among others, will be key to amplify its impact.

Allow me to mention, also as a priority, our continued need to raise awareness about chemical safety and security, including its environmental dimension. This is an essential subject and I am counting on the Board's role in further developing the Organisation's role in this regard.

In terms of future composition of the Board, at the end of 2021, seven Board members will have served their second term. The call to nominate new members to serve on the Board has been circulated to Member States on 18th January. For the first time, States Parties will be invited to put forward two nominees, out of which one should be a woman, in the interest of promoting gender balance. I am confident that we will receive a diverse list of highly qualified candidates who would enrich the Board's expertise.

In closing, I wish you every success in this meeting and I look forward to reading your Session report.

Thank you.
