



**ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

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*Thematic Workshop on Synergies for Capacity Building under
International Agreements Addressing Chemicals and Waste
Management, 30 March-2 April 2004, Geneva, Switzerland*

Opening Statement

by

*Bijoy Chatterjee
Head*

*International Cooperation Branch
Technical Secretariat of the OPCW*

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Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, I have great pleasure in welcoming you all to this Thematic Workshop on Synergies for Capacity Building under International Agreements Addressing Chemicals and Waste Management. Many of you have travelled over long distances and I am happy to note that we have representatives here today from all corners of the globe.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, which is commonly referred to as the Chemical Weapons Convention, is the world's first disarmament agreement which came into effect in April 1997. The Convention provides for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction within a fixed time frame. It also provides for a verification regime, assistance and protection against the use or threat of use of chemical weapons and international cooperation.

One of the core objectives of the activities taken up OPCW relates to the building of skills and capabilities that are used in the peaceful application of chemistry. A number international cooperation initiatives of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW are, therefore, aimed at the development of national capacities in this area, particularly in countries whose economies are either developing or in transition. The specific programmes under implementation include the Associate Programme, the Laboratory Assistance Programme, the Internship Support Programme, the Conference Support Programme, Programme for Support of Research Projects, the Equipment Exchange Programme and an Analytical Skills Development Programme.

Another core objective relates to the full and effective implementation of the Convention by the Member States. This is realised through the implementation of a number of support programmes aimed at facilitating establishment and effective functioning of National Authorities, adoption of adequate national legislation, bringing relevant chemicals and facilities within the ambit of verification measures and submission of declarations that will ensure that the activities involving toxic chemicals and their precursors are for non-prohibited purposes. The specific

programmes taken up in this area include regional and sub-regional meetings of National Authorities, basic and advanced training courses for National Authorities, and thematic workshops on implementation related issues.

Since by ratifying or acceding to the Chemical Weapons Convention, countries today have given up the right to retaliate in kind to the use or threat of use of chemical weapons, another core area of activity of the OPCW relates to the making available to the Member States, through international cooperation and assistance mechanism, a defined response capability for assistance and protection against chemical weapons. This involves provision of support to the Member States for building their own national capacities for protection, as well as international capacity building for mobilisation and coordination of an international response mechanism. The specific initiatives taken up in this area include provision of expert advice, development and implementation of training modules for protection, and organisation of international assistance courses and exercises.

In implementing all these programmes, the endeavour of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW has been not only to cooperate with the concerned Member States but also to coordinate its efforts with the other international organisations including UN organisations, to the extent feasible.

One concept that has been underlying all these efforts is the need to develop an integrated approach to national capacity building in the area of sound management of chemicals. We are very happy that over the last few years, we have been able to work in close cooperation with UNITAR and other international organisations towards the development of this concept into a practical set of ideas and work programmes which could assist the targeted countries in meeting this objective. In June 1999, a joint thematic workshop on this subject had focussed on the development and strengthening of national legislation and policies for the sound management of chemicals. This was an area which was critical for the national implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In 2001, another joint thematic workshop had focussed on the strengthening of national capacities for chemical analysis and monitoring for the sound management of chemicals. This again was an area which was vital not only for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention but

also for a host of other sectors like environment, agriculture, food, drinking water, consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, and health. In 2002, we were involved with another thematic workshop which focussed on an extremely relevant topic, namely, financial resource mobilisation for the sound management of chemicals. All development projects ultimately translate into financial requirements and unless this essential resource was tied up, no programme for the sound management of chemicals could succeed.

The Technical Secretariat of the OPCW is happy that this theme has now been further extended through the holding of this workshop, the eighth in the series, which addresses the challenges of identifying and implementing the synergies for capacity building under relevant international agreements at the national level. The response received for participation in this workshop has been particularly encouraging, and we are indeed happy that we have been able to sponsor 27 of the participants here today.

We hope the deliberations in the workshop will be a great success.

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