



United Nations Institute of Disarmament Research
Institut des Nations Unies pour la recherche sur le désarmement

Opening Remarks

Ms Kerstin Vignard
Chief of Operations, UNIDIR

at the seminar
“The Chemical Weapons Convention: The New Agenda“

19 February 2013
Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons
The Hague

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to this lunchtime seminar organized by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research to delve a bit deeper into some of the topics covered in a recent issue of our journal *Disarmament Forum*: *Agent of Change: the CW Regime*. I'm Kerstin Vignard, Chief of Operations at UNIDIR and editor in chief of *Disarmament Forum*.

UNIDIR is an autonomous, voluntarily funded, research institute of the United Nations specialized in matters of disarmament and security. Established in 1980, UNIDIR conducts independent analysis on a range of security issues from WMD, to space and cyber security, to conventional weapons and cross-cutting issues such as the humanitarian consequences of weapons use.

While based in Geneva, the Institute has a global reach. I am delighted to be chairing this seminar today in the Hague. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Office of Strategy and Policy for their assistance with and encouragement for this event. We hope that this is just the first of many UNIDIR activities at the OPCW.

Disarmament Forum is the quarterly journal of the Institute. It offers clear, forward-looking and accessible analysis on disarmament and security issues to a worldwide readership comprising disarmament and arms control experts, government officials, diplomats, researchers, academics and students. Each issue focuses on a specific topic related to disarmament and security. At today's event, we are exploring some of the issues addressed in a recent issue of *Disarmament Forum*, dedicated to the future of the CW regime. We hope that this publication serves as a welcome tool for Member States, civil society and all stakeholders in preparation for the upcoming Review Conference.

It will not come as news to you that the chemical weapons regime receives scant attention in comparison to those dealing with other forms of WMD. And yet this fact is somewhat startling, considering that the rate of scientific and technological

advances mean that the CW regime is of more relevance than most people realize—and this relevance will continue to grow. The CW regime must evolve and adapt if it is to remain relevant, yet we know that organizations and treaty regimes are not known for their capacity for rapid response.

So, as the international community prepares for the 2013 CWC Review Conference, we ask ourselves: which approaches will offer the greatest responsiveness to new and yet to be imagined developments? Today we have invited three of the contributing authors to the recent Disarmament Forum issue to address this very question.

I am honoured to be joined here today by three experts who likely need no introduction in the Hague as they have contributed so much to the promotion of a world free of chemical weapons: Dr Paul Walker, Dr Ralf Trapp, and Professor Malcolm Dando. In just a few moments, Dr Walker will set the scene by speaking on the global abolition of chemical weapons. Dr Walker, as many of you know, is program director of the Green Cross Environmental Security and Sustainability Program.

We will then turn to independent international disarmament consultant Dr Ralf Trapp. Dr Trapp will consider how the OPCW is preparing for the transition from a primarily disarmament focused organization to one focused on non-proliferation.

Finally, Professor Dando, Professorial Fellow at the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, will consider the hitherto underutilized contributions that civil scientists might make to the Convention. Following the three presentations the remaining time will be dedicated to Q&A.

**** Presentations by panellists ****

I'm afraid that due to the time, we are forced to bring this panel to a close. I take this opportunity to remind you that in addition to the hard copies of the journal at the back of the room, you can visit our website—www.unidir.org—where you can download the issue in its entirety, consult back issues of the journal, or sign up for notifications of new publications and on-line content.

Also, if you would like to be included on UNIDIR's mailing list, there is a form circulating in the room. You could also leave me your card and I will ensure that you're inscribed.

Lastly, while UNIDIR does not have a permanent presence in the Hague, chemical weapons are an important part of our mandate and we are at the service of Member States. If you would like to discuss your specific research and analysis needs, please don't hesitate to let me know. I would be happy to discuss possibilities for future projects.

On behalf UNIDIR, I'd like to thank our three panellists for sharing their expertise with us today. I would also like to thank the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and express our firm desire to strengthen collaboration between our organizations. Lastly, I thank all of you for coming and for your active participation.