



**For Immediate Release**

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## **OPCW and African Union Mark 20 Years of Working Together for a World Free of Chemical Weapons**

THE HAGUE, Netherlands / ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia — 28 April 2017—The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) marks its 20th Anniversary on 29 April 2017. A solemn Commemorative Ceremony was held in The Hague on 26 April to observe this milestone, with broad representation from African Union (AU) Member States.

Fifty-two Members of the African Union comprise over one-quarter of the 192 States Parties committed to the Convention. As such, the African Union is an essential partner for the OPCW in achieving the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention and improving regional and global chemical security. A Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 2006, has laid the foundation for effective national implementation of the CWC, and has increased the participation by African Member States in the OPCW's international cooperation programmes.

In appreciation for the partnership between the OPCW and the AU, the Director-General of the OPCW, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü stated, "The on-going collaboration between the OPCW and African Union is an important mechanism for achieving peace and security on the continent, as well as contributing to the fulfilment of the African Union's goal of establishing a chemical weapons-free zone in Africa".

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, stressed that the Chemical Weapons Convention remains a critical pillar of the international security architecture. He further expressed his appreciation of the OPCW's flagship Africa Programme, which has been building capacity in the region to assist States Parties with economic and technological development, as well as helping to attain common goals in the field of peace, security and disarmament.

Despite the global progress in eliminating declared chemical weapons, the threat of their use remains real. The OPCW and the African Union strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances.

## **Background**

As the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW oversees the global endeavour to permanently and verifiably eliminate chemical weapons. Since the Convention's entry into force in 1997 – and with its 192 States Parties – it is the most successful disarmament treaty eliminating an entire class of weapons of mass destruction.

To date, nearly 95 per cent of all chemical weapon stockpiles declared by possessor States have been destroyed under OPCW verification. For its extensive efforts in eliminating chemical weapons, the OPCW received the 2013 Nobel Prize for Peace.

## **More Information**

[OPCW Fact Sheets](#)

## **Media Inquiries**

OPCW Public Affairs  
Johan de Wittlaan 32, 2517 JR  
The Hague, The Netherlands  
+31 70 416 32 42

[public.affairs@opcw.org](mailto:public.affairs@opcw.org)

[www.opcw.org](http://www.opcw.org)

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Peace and Security

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