

## Resolution on the Water Crisis in Gaza

**T**he Malta VIII Conference titled “Frontiers of Science: Research and Education in the Middle East—A Bridge to Peace” took place in the Republic of Malta. From the 10-15 December 2017, one hundred scientists, from 14 Middle East countries, who are committed to using science diplomacy for peace, spent five days collaborating with each other in order to solve regional problems of environmental degradation, water scarcity, chemical and nuclear security, and science and technology education.

This year, the scientists came from Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian Authority, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. The conference has been held every two years since 2003. It has become increasingly difficult to obtain visas for everybody. But once there, the scientists engage with each other and create an atmosphere like a family reunion.

One of the outcomes of the Conference was a resolution written by Israeli and Gazan scientists, calling on the international community to leave politics aside and help solve the humanitarian crisis which stems in large part from the existence of widespread water pollution in Gaza. The resolution reads:

“We are scientists from all over the Middle East that met under the “umbrella” of the “Malta Conferences Foundation -Frontiers of Science Research and Education in the Middle East”. During our meeting, it became apparent that because of lack of suitable drinking water and energy, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is on the edge of becoming a catastrophe. The problem in Gaza is not confined and the bad environmental issue that may arise will affect neighboring countries like Israel and Egypt. For example, the lack of treatment to sewage causes its deposition in the sea and the pollution affects not only Gaza but also people living at the shore in other countries.

We call the international community to establish a task force that will be able to overcome the political difficulties and will enable professional treatment of the water and environment.”

Every Middle East participant voted in favor of the adoption of this resolution.

The Malta Conferences is the only platform where scientists from all over the Middle East can spend five days together, develop collaborations and friendships, which overcome the chasms of distrust and intolerance.

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## The Chemical Weapons Convention: From Disarmament to Sustainable Development

### Peace and security through the destruction of chemical weapons

2017 marked the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The Convention is a unique and powerful disarmament treaty with the aim of completely eliminating chemical weapons from the world. It is comprehensive, prohibiting not only the use of chemical weapons, but also their development, production, stockpiling, transfer and retention. Currently 192 States have committed to eradicating chemical weapons by becoming signatories to the Convention.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was founded in 1997 as the international organisation responsible for overseeing the

implementation of the Convention. Since its entry into force, the OPCW has verified the destruction of more than 95% of the world's declared chemical weapons stockpiles. This contribution to global peace and security was recognized by the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, which awarded the prize to the OPCW in 2013.

To reach its ultimate objective of “working together for a world free of chemical weapons”, the OPCW and its Member States continue to eliminate declared stockpiles of chemical weapons while preventing the re-emergence of these inhuman weapons. This is achieved through a rigorous industry verification regime that ensures chemical production is exclusively for peaceful purposes, and through an international cooperation programme that promotes the peaceful applications of chemistry.

### Promoting chemistry for peace and development

Under Article XI, the Convention provides a solid foundation to foster technological and economic development through promotion of the peaceful applications of chemistry in various areas, including research and exchange of scientific information, technology development, and trade and transfer of chemicals.

The OPCW implements a series of capacity building and support programmes for various stakeholders, including chemical industry, academia and research institutions as well as National Authorities. These programmes, which focus on Member States with developing and transiting economies, are broadly divided into three thematic focus areas: i) Integrated Chemicals Management; ii) Enhancing Laboratory Capabilities; and iii) Promoting Chemical Knowledge.

Programmes in *Integrated Chemicals Management* take a multi-stakeholder approach, involving chemical industry, governmental agencies, academia and other entities. The goal of this work is to promote adoption of sustainable approaches in chemical safety and security, as well as to disseminate best practices of sustainable chemicals management throughout their lifecycle, such as the Responsible Care® programme. Activities in this area include training opportunities, and provide fora for information sharing and discussion among stakeholders.

The main focus of *Enhancing Laboratory Capabilities* programmes is to improve the capacities of Member States in the analysis of chemicals subject to the CWC through training activities oriented towards different proficiency levels and instrumental techniques. This includes providing support to institutes

aspiring to become an OPCW Designated Laboratory, a certification which enables a laboratory to perform sample analyses on behalf of the OPCW. The OPCW Laboratory Twinning initiative provides an opportunity for institutes to partner with more experienced laboratories as they work towards designation status. Laboratory capacities are also enhanced through the Equipment Exchange Programme which facilitates the transfer of equipment between Member States.

Programmes in the area of *Promotion of Chemical Knowledge*, aim to support research and exchange of scientific information. This includes supporting small scale research projects in a wide range of thematic topics such as the destruction and analysis of toxic chemicals, the development of safer chemical processes and products, treatments for victims of chemical exposure, and environmental protection. Dedicated support is also provided for scientists and technical personnel of beneficiary Member States to attend scientific conferences and undertake on-the-job training in laboratories of other Member States.

### Science in context: working with key sectors and stakeholders

In addition to fostering core scientific knowledge, under Article XI of the Convention the OPCW raises awareness on critical issues of responsibility and ethics, education, gender, and safety and security in chemistry. It also encourages scientists to better understand the interconnections between science and other key sectors, and stimulates their active engagement with other stakeholders, including industry and policy makers. To this end, OPCW hosts a yearly workshop on policy and diplomacy for scientists, which provides a platform for young scientists to learn about science-related policies and the work of the international community in the fields of disarmament and chemical safety and security.

### Participation in OPCW programmes and activities

The above-mentioned programmes and activities are open to participation of scientists and institutions from all eligible OPCW Member States. As a normal practice, applications need to be endorsed by the respective National Authority for the CWC.

Detailed information can be obtained from the OPCW website: [www.opcw.org/our-work/international-cooperation/capacity-building-programmes/](http://www.opcw.org/our-work/international-cooperation/capacity-building-programmes/)