

News story: Chemical Weapons Demilitarisation Conference 2018

Speaking at the 21st annual Chemical Weapons Demilitarisation Conference in London, Defence Minister Lord Howe commended the vital work of scientific and technical experts to make the world safe from chemical weapons, while acknowledging the shocking events of the past year, including the use of a chemical weapon in Salisbury, and the continuing use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Defence Minister Lord Howe said:

In an increasingly dangerous world, we cannot allow these abhorrent weapons to spread once more across the globe. We are working with international partners across the world to agree how best to deal with the use of chemical weapons, and to ensure that those who use chemical weapons are held to account, however long this takes.

The destruction of chemical weapons is a high priority under the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The Conference provided an opportunity for experts from all over the world to discuss their progress and co-operation in eliminating chemical weapons, and the technical challenges that remain.

Lord Howe highlighted the success of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), under the leadership of Director General Ahmet Üzümcü, in carrying out successful missions in Syria, in the most challenging operational circumstances in the history of the organisation. He noted also that over 96% of the world's declared chemical weapon stocks had now been destroyed, as verified by inspectors of the Technical Secretariat.

Lord Howe said:

That's a remarkable achievement in anyone's book. No wonder that, under Ambassador Üzümcü's exemplary leadership, the OPCW was rightly recognised by the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015.

Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, said:

We are now moving into the final phase of work to eliminate chemical weapon stockpiles, with over 96% of the world's declared stockpiles now destroyed.

However, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

continues to face serious challenges in achieving its mission “for the sake of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons”.

I welcome the important role that the Chemical Weapons Demilitarisation Conference continues to play in supporting international efforts to destroy chemical weapons, and contributing to our shared goal of a world free of chemical weapon threats.