

**Statement by Dr Jean Pascal Zanders,
Chairperson of the OPCW Advisory Board on Education and Outreach,
to the 22nd Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention
The Hague, 30 November 2017**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

2017 has been the second year of work for the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The ABEO held two meetings at the OPCW Headquarters from 14 to 16 March and from 29 to 31 August. Members also participated actively in intersessional virtual sessions to prepare and comment on diverse preparatory documents. They furthermore contributed actively to regional meetings and the 19th Annual Meeting of National Authorities, which was held here in The Hague last week. The ABEO also benefited from substantive input by the permanent observers from the *International Union for Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC)* and the *International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA)*.

2017 is also the year of the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the establishment of the OPCW. Several ABEO Members took the opportunity to design and organise special events at their institute or as part of local commemorations.

In 2016, the ABEO was mainly preoccupied with exploring its mandate, building common understandings of concepts and terms, seeking shared direction for the advice to be handed to the Director-General, as well as offering advice and comment on a wide range of requests by the Technical Secretariat.

This year, the ABEO has focussed on strategic questions concerning the contribution of education and outreach to States Parties and the Technical Secretariat and the ways the insights can be transposed into practical, actionable projects and activities.

The Director-General's request

At the third meeting in March the Director-General of the OPCW Technical Secretariat requested that the ABEO prepare by the end of 2017 a substantial report on the role of education and outreach in the future implementation of the CWC. More specifically, he asked the ABEO to offer recommendations on education and outreach activities by the OPCW as well as States

Parties from the angles of effectiveness, sustainability and cost effectiveness. The report will thus:

- (a) identify best practices and the latest advances in education and outreach theory and practice relevant to education and outreach activities;
- (b) relate the relevant education and outreach theory and practice to the OPCW's mandate and its main areas of work, as the OPCW will move to focus on preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons; and
- (c) develop on this basis a portfolio of specific education and outreach activities and projects that the OPCW, States Parties, and the ABEO and its individual members should pursue as a matter of priority from 2018 onward.

Target audiences

The challenge in the Director-General's request is two-fold. The first aspect is the sheer breadth of the stakeholders concerned.

Clearly the various divisions and branches of the Technical Secretariat can and will benefit from concrete educational and outreach strategies and techniques. Achieving higher proficiency in public diplomacy, strategic communication and interaction with meeting participants; enhancing the train-the-trainer capacities; or optimising internal coordination and/or integrating planning of activities and development of education and outreach tools require a strategic vision on education and outreach, as well as a continuous investment of resources (particularly in view of tenure policy and the high turnover of staff). Yet, achieving greater and longer-lasting impact for their multi-varied activities will ultimately contribute to cost effectiveness.

From an implementation perspective, the CWC also foresees a division of labour between the international level – i.e. that of the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat – and that of the State Party, or more specifically the National Authority. The National Authority consequently occupies a special place with reference to the OPCW's strategic education and outreach goals. On the one hand, it is a recipient of education and outreach activities organised by the Technical Secretariat. On the other hand, it ought to be a focal point and education and outreach organiser for local stakeholders. From a strategic perspective, this implies a dual-track approach. A first set of education and outreach activities seeks to reinforce the National Authority's capacity to fulfil its tasks as defined under the CWC. A second set seeks to reinforce its ability to interact effectively with local stakeholders with a view of conveying to them the necessity of upholding the norm and prohibitions in the CWC as a matter of their routine business. The latter goal is obviously valuable. However, it also contributes to optimising interactions between the National Authority and local stakeholders in terms of data collection and reporting requirements under the CWC. Meeting the education and outreach goals may require the development of specific tools and materials.

The final group of stakeholders is arguably the largest and most diverse. It includes the chemical industry, scientific community, academia, students, educators, policymakers and -shapers, the media, civil society organisations engaged in issues relevant to the CWC, and relevant international and regional organisations. Education and Outreach activities should take the specificities of each constituency in this category into consideration, all the while recognising that promoting interaction among them will enhance appreciation of the different priorities of each constituency in the pursuit of the shared overarching goal of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Sharing experiences and stimulating potential synergies are but two ways of preventing stovepiping or silo thinking.

Identification of target audiences also discerns two distinct levels of engagement, namely the international (global) level and that of the State Party. (In between is the regional level.) The distinction is important for education and outreach from a strategic perspective. Whereas on the international (global) level normative standards derived from the CWC and principles of behaviour can be framed in a general, universal manner, engagement with target audiences on the regional and national levels will need to take regional or local educational and outreach culture—both in terms of communication strategy and the ways in which new information is processed and absorbed—into account. The latter imperative applies both to educational methodologies and the identification of pertinent regional or local contexts for the concrete application of those normative standards and principles.

Theory and practice in education and outreach

Mr Chairperson, identifying target audiences makes little sense without due attention to strategies for education and outreach. With the multitude of constituencies, the optimal educational and outreach processes will vary based on the nature and goals of the event, the composition of the audience, and the societal and cultural contexts. Notwithstanding, there exist certain basic theoretical insights and experiences rooted in practice that can inform any planning, preparation and execution of education and outreach activities.

Continuing advances in cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and related fields are providing a fundamental scientific understanding of how people, from infants through adults, learn and what this implies for the most effective approaches to education and training. One of the major implications of this research is that '*active learning*' methods, as opposed to traditional, lecture-based instruction in which students are passive recipients, are best suited to supporting this process of construction. The biggest change from traditional education and training is to put the learner rather than the instructor at the centre of all activities. This learner-focussed approach can be applied in the classroom, the laboratory, or the field.

Those among you who participated in the Annual Meeting of National Authorities last week will have experienced '*active learning*' first hand. Professor Alastair Hay, ABEO member and

recipient of the OPCW-The Hague Award in 2015, had the opportunity to talk to the delegates about education and outreach and the ABEO's forthcoming report. Now, as you all surely will agree, discussing theory can be a dull business at the best of times. So, Alastair Hay applied interactive teaching approaches to familiarise the audience with the theory and explain how some teaching material on OPCW's website can be used. Pawns on a chessboard and Chinese herbal products will now have different associations for many National Authority delegates as a result. By forgoing the lectern and opting for the conference floor, Professor Hay engaged participants in conversation. In the more traditional approach, he would have just talked at them. From what I have heard, the audience appreciated the session very much.

Last Monday, the first day of the Conference of States Parties, ABEO organised an 'active learning' session for the civil society organisations member of the CWC Coalition. Professor Alastair Hay guided participants through the exercise. For the ABEO the exercise was instructive. First, ABEO reports had already pointed to the importance of awareness of the audience's cultural background regarding teaching and learning when designing education and outreach activities. Participants from different regions responded differently to the stimuli. For example, some participants instantly associated a given setting with a specific culture and seemed unable to shed that impression for the purposes of the exercise. Second, people were quite comfortable to discuss CW-related issues within the broad contours of their own professional community but had no experience of interaction with people outside their community. Yet, they recognised that gaining the additional insights was a good learning experience that tended to broaden their own views. Still, that process might require additional educational stimulation as it seemed unlikely to happen of the participants' own volition. A final element that came to the fore was that the mix of different languages raised significant barriers to participation, even if interpretation was available, as it prevented participants from stepping back from their personal experiences. At different stages of the exercise that personal narrative remained unvaried.

There are many teaching strategies that support active learning, such as in-class problem solving, case studies, role-playing and other simulations and exercises, and learning from original investigations, such as in the laboratory. The theory and practice are thus as potentially relevant to OPCW's extensive capacity-building programs as they are to the materials and methods for its engagement with the academic community. This growing body of knowledge and experience provides lessons for how the OPCW can support education and outreach that is appropriate for different national and regional experiences with chemical weapons and disarmament.

How to go about it

Mr Chairperson, I have already mentioned the many different types of stakeholder communities and the cultural diversity in education and outreach strategies. Notwithstanding, the ABEO

attempts to answer a series of questions that, taken together, provide the basis for a strategic and sustainable portfolio of education and outreach activities for each group of stakeholder communities.

The four core questions that require an answer when preparing an educational or outreach activity are:

- (a) **Who are they?** In other words, what is the scope of the sector, and who are the key actors in it?
- (b) **Why is it important to engage a particular stakeholder?** This question requires the OPCW to consider the reasons for engaging with a stakeholder.
- (c) **Why would this stakeholder engage with the CWC and chemical disarmament?** For the OPCW this translates into the ‘how’ question. Drawing on the insights of research on education and outreach, how would the meeting convener frame chemical disarmament and the challenge of preventing re-emergence of chemical weapons so as to make the issues relevant and engaging for each of the stakeholders, including key groups within them; and
- (d) **Which messages should be delivered?** This question follows from the previous one and the answers will necessarily be highly context dependent. The ABEO is considering certain specific messages for use with each of the stakeholder groups.

Conclusion

Mr Chairperson, time is unfortunately too short to discuss the various dimensions of the ABEO’s reflection on the possible roles of education and outreach in furthering the OPCW’s goals. I have given you and the delegates a flavour – hopefully a rich one – of current thinking within the ABEO.

Early next year, the substantive report requested by the Director-General will become available to the States Parties and I am sure that we shall have interesting discussions on the findings and recommendations. Which, of course, I hope we can organise in the form of ‘active learning’.

Making education and outreach an integral part of the implementation of the Convention will require a more strategic and sustained approach to existing activities, as well as the identification of additional ones. Implementing actions effectively will require enhancing the capacity of the Technical Secretariat and the National Authorities by drawing on the insights of education and outreach theory mentioned earlier. This will be a long-term effort – wholesale transformation in the current complex political environment and constrained financial circumstances is simply not feasible. A more incremental approach that permits the Technical Secretariat as well as National Authorities to experiment and adapt projects as they learn what works best in particular circumstances is more likely to be sustainable.

By way of conclusion I wish to thank on behalf of the Board Members all States Parties that have recognised the work of the ABEO and support its goal of promoting substantive interaction between the OPCW and its many stakeholder constituencies with a view of safeguarding the world from a re-emergence of chemical weapons.

I request that this statement is considered as an official document of the Conference and be published on the OPCW public website.

I thank you.