

# OPCW is the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize winner†

## Another Nobel Prize to chemists!

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Norwegian committee for awarding Nobel Peace Prize announced in Oslo at the beginning of October that 2013 Nobel Peace Prize winner is the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The prize is 1.25 million of US dollars (eight million euros). OPCW, a worldwide organization with its headquarters in The Hague, has since 1997 been committed to combating the use of chemical weapons and implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) from year 1992. The full title is the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, hereinafter referred to as “the Convention”. The Convention is part of global agreement on the prohibition of weapons for mass destruction. OPCW (hereinafter referred to as “the Organization”) gathers 190 membering countries, i.e. 98 % of mankind. On Monday, October 14, 2013 Syria became the 190th member. This means that almost all members of the United Nations Organization accepted the Convention! This Convention has been best accepted worldwide, even if compared to conventions on biological or nuclear weapons. This is understandable because what mankind – from all weapons of mass destruction – dreads the most is the use of chemical weapons. Compared to other weapons, chemical weapons are relatively available and inexpensive so that fear of its use for, e.g. terrorist purposes, is quite comprehensible. The Organization’s activities are important and extensive. According to its announcements, 71,373 tons of chemical weapons has been stocked/declared worldwide, while 58,172 tons have in the meantime been destructed. Among countries that have the largest quantities of chemical weapons are the USA and Russia. These two countries possess 95 % of all stocks of chemical weapons in the world and therefore get most objections for failing to destroy all their stocks by the end of April 2012 as planned. Still, 82 % of all chemical weapon stocks worldwide have been destroyed so far. These results are real, verified and significant. However, India, Iraq, Libya and Albania also have chemical weapons.

Recent situation\*\* in Syria has obviously “catalysed” the awarding of this Nobel Prize to OPCW whose 16-year activities have almost been unknown to a wider public, even to chemists!

OPCW’s activities were somehow carried out silently, but their results are major and important. The Organization has assembled almost all countries in the world; so far six countries have not ratified the Convention, i.e. Angola, Egypt, North Korea, South Sudan, Israel and Myanmar (they all signed the Convention in 1993). After endorsement of the Convention in 1992, its signing began in 1993 but the Convention entered into force in 1997 after its ratification by most membering countries. OPCW began its activities in the same year when it was established on the basis of the Convention. Today, OPCW has about 500 employees and the chief executive officer is a Turk Ahmet Üzümcü.

Here it should be emphasized that the Republic of Croatia was among the first to sign and ratify the Convention (in 1993 and 1995, respectively). Croatia has from the first day of OPCW establishment engaged in application of the Convention in the country and considerably contributed to operations of OPCW and its bodies. In line with the Convention’s requirements, Croatia has established a national commission composed of experts for chemical weapons and protection against such weapons: representatives of the ministry of economy, defence, police, higher education institutions and institutes. This commission coordinates activities of all Croatian institutions obliged to implement the Convention. This primarily involves annual declarations on production of chemicals used as components of chemical weapons, including data on production of all chemicals in industry that could be used in preparation of poison gases / chemical weapons. It is also obligatory for Croatia to accept the Organization’s inspections of such industrial sites\*\*\*; there have been several such inspections so far. Croatia has also taken active part in activities of OPCW conferences and organized seminars, exercises, con-

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\*\*It is known that 1400 people died in Syria near Damascus after sarin was used in August 2013. Syria and rebels accuse each others for that attack.

\*\*\*OPCW has so far carried out 5286 inspections at 228 sites where poison gases, i.e. chemical weapons, were stocked and at 1905 industrial facilities on the territory of 86 membering countries (since April 1997). There are 4913 sites worldwide that are subject to inspection.

gresses and other meetings in collaboration with OPCW.

Croatian experts participate also as members of the International Scientific Council of the Organization\*\*\*\* (a body of 25 members that surveys scientific results in the field of chemistry and their possible influence on application of the Convention), of the Protection Network and others. Further information on the Convention and Croatian activities and collaboration with OPCW can be found in an article by I. Jukić, published in the journal *Chemistry in Industry*. The article was written on the occasion of the Organization's 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Incidentally, the journal *Chemistry in Industry* has also published other articles that may be helpful to readers in finding detailed information. Articles by J. Matousek on chemical disarmament and problems related to the Convention application and the role of chemical engineers and scientists in application of the Convention should also be mentioned. I may also recom-

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\*\*\*\*D. Škare was a member and secretary of the Croatian National Authority, which is responsible for the implementation of CWC in Croatia, 1997–2003. Within OPCW he was very active member of Croatia Delegation at few OPCW Conferences (every year held in the Haag). Also, he was a member of Scientific Advisory Board of the OPCW, 2005–2007 and 2008–2010 and Member of the Protection Network of the OPCW, 2000–2007, and again from 2008–2014. It should be noted that he was Chairman of the IUPAC / OPCW International Workshop, The Impact of Advances in Science in Technology on the Chemical Weapons Convention, held in Zagreb, Croatia, April 22–25, 2007. Last but not least he served as an UN inspector for chemical weapons in Baghdad, just before Iraq war, 2002–2003.

mend an article by Graham Pearson on significance of applying the basic criteria of the Convention.

We should also point out the collaboration of Croatian Society of Chemical Engineers (HDKI) with OPCW, reflected in almost habitual support to the Society meetings but also in participation of Croatian experts – HDKI members – in the Organization's bodies.

It is evident that chemists, chemical engineers and scientists from Croatia have given their contribution to 2013 Nobel Prize for peace! It seems to me that we could all be proud of that. Finally, here is an interesting piece of information – all Nobel Prizes are awarded during a ceremony in Stockholm, on December 10, while the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded on the same day in Oslo, on death anniversary of A. Nobel.

## References

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