



The centenary of Spiez Laboratory

Bern, 23 October 2025 – Speech of Dr Daniel Noort

Check against delivery

Distinguished attendants,

On behalf of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, I am honoured to address you on the occasion of the celebration of the centenary of the Spiez Laboratory.

Throughout its one hundred years of existence, Spiez Laboratory has achieved amazing results, and as a technical centre of excellence contributed immensely to international security, arms control and non-proliferation.

As Head of the OPCW Laboratory, I cannot stress enough how much we have benefitted from our partnership since entry-into-force of the Convention.

I would like to highlight three areas in which I believe Spiez Laboratory absolutely excels, and where our cooperation has been particularly important.

The first is its status as Designated Laboratory for environmental samples.

The network of Designated Laboratories is a crucial asset for the OPCW and is vital to the verification regime. Before 2013, the network had never been utilized for its purpose under the Convention. However, from 2013 onwards, many incidents involving use, or allegations of use, of chemical weapons have occurred. As a consequence, numerous samples have been sent out to the network since then. Although the destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles was completed in 2023, we still need to call upon our network of Designated Laboratories on a regular basis. This is necessary not least as a consequence of the emerging risks and challenges the OPCW faces, which underlines the crucial role of a strong and well-functioning network of laboratories for the Convention.

Today, the network consists of 32 laboratories from 24 States Parties, including 29 designated for environmental sample analysis, and 19 designated for biomedical sample analysis.

Since 1996, the proficiency testing scheme has been instrumental in ensuring that these Designated Laboratories meet the high standards of the Convention. From 1996 onwards, Spiez Laboratory has consistently scored the maximum A-score, except on two occasions. It was never temporarily suspended from authentic sample analysis, and it never lost its designation status. With this incredible score, Spiez Laboratory is truly one of our top laboratories. I know from my own experience that maintaining such a designation status is a significant achievement, which needs continuous scientific input and financial support.



A second area I would like to highlight is Spiez Laboratory's crucial contribution to the OPCW Central Analytical Database, the so-called OCAD. The OCAD is a pivotal instrument in OPCW's verification regime. It is remarkable that more than half of the analytical data in the most recent OCAD version originates from Spiez Laboratory. Expanding the OCAD and maintaining the high quality of its data is one of the elements that upholds the integrity of our verification activities. The assurance we provide to all States Parties of global adherence to the Convention thus depends on it. The fact that the OCAD is approved by the Executive Council also means that it is formally accepted by the States Parties – which is increasingly important as the threats and challenges to the Convention grow.

The third area I wish to touch upon is a more comprehensive one. Spiez Laboratory has been, and continues to be, a very active supporter of the OPCW in other areas of work as well. Spiez Laboratory assists the Secretariat on a regular basis with evaluation of reports from Proficiency Tests and with ensuring that suitable samples are available for the Proficiency Tests. Spiez Laboratory is also generous in the support and advice given to aspirant laboratories and newly qualified Designated Laboratories. It freely makes its expertise available to the OPCW for the analysis of authentic samples and is an unfailing source of advice and encouragement to the OPCW Laboratory. It is therefore no surprise that Spiez Laboratory received The Hague Award in 2023 for its role in advancing international peace and security.

I wish to thank Spiez Laboratory once more for their ongoing strong cooperation with the Secretariat. The Secretariat aims to further enhance this cooperation through the organisation's Centre for Chemistry and Technology, which was inaugurated in 2023. Partnerships like these are invaluable for ensuring that the OPCW can continue to deliver the highest quality analytical work for the States Parties and remain at the forefront of science and technology. This is a necessity for being successful in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

In conclusion, let me congratulate Spiez Laboratory once again with one hundred years of achievements. From the OPCW side we look forward to working together for the next one hundred years.

Thank you for your attention.