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Secretary-General

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REMEMBRANCE FOR VICTIMS OF CHEMICAL WARFARE 'TIMELY', AS SPECTRE CASTS OMINOUS

SHADOW WITH RECENT ALLEGATIONS OF USE BY SYRIA, SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for the Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare, 29 April 2013:

This annual Day of Remembrance is designated by the international community to remember and pay respects to all victims of chemical warfare.

This year's observance is especially timely, as the spectre of chemical weapons is once again casting its ominous shadow. Recent allegations of the use of these indiscriminate and morally repugnant weapons in Syria serve as a reminder of the continuing vital importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Convention is both practical and aspirational. It provides a framework for implementing chemical weapons disarmament and facilitating the peaceful uses of chemistry. It is also a highly symbolic instrument — representing a determined refusal of States parties to allow the atrocities of the past to be repeated.

At the time of last year's Day of Remembrance, nearly three quarters of declared chemical warfare agents had been verifiably destroyed. This year, the figure stands close to 80 per cent. This continuing progress is a testament to the effectiveness of the Convention and the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

But, as current events attest, we must stay vigilant. The threat of chemical weapons persists and eight States remain outside the Convention. Until the Convention is universal and the last stockpiles have been destroyed, our debt to the victims of chemical warfare will remain unpaid.

On this Remembrance Day, I urge the international community to intensify efforts to rid the world of chemical weapons, along with all other weapons of mass destruction. Let us work together to bring all States under the Convention and promote its full implementation. This is how we can best honour past victims and liberate future generations from the threat of chemical weapons.

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