The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention on 29 April 1997 signalled the beginning of an era in which chemical weapons were to be eliminated forever.

To succeed in achieving its ambitious goals, the implementation of the Convention by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons requires the active participation of all its members and the activity of the Technical Secretariat.

After twelve years of operation, the Chemical Weapons Convention is a cornerstone in the construction of a world free of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Its success is due, to a considerable extent, to the continuous development of new rules, decisions, and guidelines making the text – arduously negotiated during the final years of the Cold War – a living instrument aimed at solving the problems of chemical weapons disarmament and non-proliferation in the twenty-first century.

OPCW: The Legal Texts was originally published in April 1999. At that time, the book provided a clear picture of the significant developments registered in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention during the early years of its life. The compilation was well received both by practitioners and academics alike, who found in it a useful tool for understanding the institutions and organs tasked with the interpretation and implementation of the Convention.

The decision-making process that characterises the OPCW is relevant not only for the number of decisions adopted – always by consensus – but, above all, for the balance achieved between the innovation and stability that mark the evolution of a truly multilateral agreement. This new edition includes 130 decisions adopted by the policy-making organs, as well as reports and other texts that testify to the level of activity and the active participation of Member States and other stakeholders in working towards the achievement of the goals of the Convention. The texts also demonstrate how the priorities of the international community have evolved over the last twelve years. Thus, for example, texts included in this volume address the global counter-terrorism efforts, industry participation in the multilateral process, and efforts to achieve universal adherence to the Convention.

A new edition of the book is considered necessary in order better to reflect the continued work of the OPCW in the implementation of the Convention. All relevant decisions and interpretative instruments created by the Organisation since the entry into force of the Convention have been compiled in this volume and, thus, made accessible to a wider public. It is hoped that the book will provide a useful insight for practitioners and academics, as well as for those engaged in the work of other international organisations, into the successful operation of a multilateral instrument. The book is also intended to serve as a source of technical information and guidance for those engaged in the verification and destruction of chemical weapons.

It is worth mentioning that the timing of the publication of the new edition is highly appropriate, as the deadline for destruction approaches, and this volume reflects the accomplishments with a view to achieving full destruction of the world’s chemical weapons stockpiles by April 2012.

The Hague, December 2009

AMBASSADOR ROGELIO PFIERTER
Director-General