

Joint Statement on the Role of NGOs in Advancing the CWC in the Next Quarter Century

Statement Organized by the CWC Coalition

Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates of the General Committee,

Before and after the CWC entered into force in 1997, civil society has been a driving force in the campaign to achieve a chemical weapons free world. It is widely recognized that important multilateral treaties and organizations require active involvement by civil society to reach universality, improve national implementation, and promote capacity-building and public awareness at the national and regional levels.

To ensure the effectiveness of the CWC into the next quarter-century, the CWC regime should update and reform its current system for formally engaging civil society in the meetings of the OPCW and CWC.

As stated by Director-General H.E. Fernando Arias, “The civil society community of non-governmental organizations, researchers, scientists, and other relevant stakeholders are essential partners in achieving the OPCW’s mission and raising awareness about the risks posed by certain chemicals.”

According to RC-3/DEC. 2, Amendment of Rule 33 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the States Parties with Respect to Attendance of Non-Governmental Organizations at Meetings of Special Sessions of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, it is agreed that:

“Representatives of non-governmental organisations may attend the plenary sessions of the Conference, and participate in the activities of review conferences, in accordance with such rules or guidelines as the Conference has approved.”

The amended rules/guidelines provide exactly two eligibility criteria for attendance of non-governmental organizations:

1. the NGO has been previously approved, or has been recommended for approval by the General Committee, for attendance of a session of the Conference; and
2. the activities/interests of the NGO [are] demonstrably relevant to the object and purpose of the Convention.

We are deeply concerned that certain NGOs with activities/interests that are demonstrably relevant to the object and purpose of the Convention are rejected by the General Committee. Several of these organizations have been routinely rejected for years.

There is no transparency from the General Committee about why these organizations were rejected. The rejected organizations cover sensitive topics in their work. Nonetheless, their work is relevant to the object and purpose of the CWC, thus satisfying the eligibility criteria. Members

of the General Committee cannot reject an NGO that meets the eligibility criteria on the grounds that they disagree with the opinion of the NGO.

We repeat our request that the General Committee must provide, in writing, an explanation of each decision to reject an NGO. It is important to know on what basis these organizations are being rejected, since they seemingly meet the criteria that can be controlled by the applicant NGO. We will not be able to remedy this issue if we do not know why these organizations are being rejected.

Furthermore, the current NGO application process for the CWC Meetings of States Parties and the Review Conferences is out of step with the general practices of other international WMD treaty conferences.

We recommend that the final conference outcome document includes language regarding the important role of civil society *via-a-vis* and decides in favor of a more transparent and inclusive process for facilitating civil society engagement.

We look forward to working with States Parties, the Review Conference secretariat, and the Director-General on remedies to this issue so that NGOs can continue to play an important role in achieving a world free of chemical weapons in the years ahead. We request that this statement be part of the record of the 5th Review Conference.

List of Endorsers*

Amin Abdula, *Peace Foundation International Cooperation*
Charles Aboagye, *Margliz Foundation*
Dora Abotsi, *Doors NGO*
Runak Asaad, *Peace Foundation International Cooperation*
Tawfiq Asaad, *Peace Foundation International Cooperation*
Hadi Manzo Abdoul Aziz Abdelmajid Azzouzi
Douglas Boateng, *Linx Foundation*
Dr. Michael Crowley
Chimaoge Anita Ezeigwe, *Christian Fellowship and Care Foundation*
Alastair Hay
Paul Ingram
Muhammad Athar Javed
Hazhar Kakayi, *Armiti Organization for Human Rights*
Daryl G. Kimball
Terrance Long, *International Dialogues on Underwater Munitions (IDUM)*
Michael Luhan, Former Head, Media and Public Affairs, OPCW
Stara Mahmood, *Peace Foundation International Cooperation*
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Kathryn Millett
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Paul Walker, *CWC Coalition Chair*
Craig Williams, *Chemical Weapons Convention Coalition*
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Endorsers of original Nov. 9, 2022, statement are indicated in **bold text.*