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[Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict](#) NEW DELHI, INDIA

Presentation to 23rd CWC Conference of States Parties (CSP)  
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons  
The Hague, The Netherlands, November 23, 2018

Mr Chairman, Director-General, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's an honour to be present at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of States Parties (CSP-23) and the 4th Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Positively speaking, the Chemical Weapons Convention with over two decades of its existence has achieved more success than setbacks. We have two very promising figures to boast, one is that approximately 98% of the World population is now living under the protection of the Convention and over 96% of the World's declared chemical weapons stockpiles have been safely destroyed under the watchful eye of the OPCW. There are of course more to accomplish in future.

**Mr Chairman,**

Amid substantial success and achievements, however, the Convention and the OPCW have been facing numerous challenges. Briefly I would like to highlight two events this year that remain at the centre of debate here and beyond these walls. This April, the conflict zones of Syria has witnessed yet another round of chemical weapon attacks in Douma that led to over 50 deaths and scores of injuries. The investigations so far to the two affected Sites (Saada bakery on Omar Ibn Al-Khattab street and the Martyrs' Square) have concluded that various chlorinated organic chemicals were found along with explosive residues.

Similarly, the events in Salisbury and Amesbury in the United Kingdom earlier this year brought us to another grave concern of tactical chemical weapon stockpile and use against vulnerable targets in

secured civilian environment. While accusations and counteraccusations continue over the use of the so-called 'Novice' CW agents, the perpetrators are still roaming free, safe and beyond the grasp of international community, perhaps due to State support and perhaps looking for their next targets.

**Mr Chairman,**

I would like to draw your attention towards the threat emanating from jihadist terrorist groups that remains as grave as earlier. Though 2018 has not witnessed any chemical or biological use by terrorist groups, their propaganda machineries are working over time to spread materials related to CBW terror. Pleased to share this information here that in July 2018, the pro- Islamic State (DAESH), Al-Abd al-Faqir (AF) media group which is notorious for producing graphic videos of hypothetical jihadist attacks against Western countries, has released a video depicting an imaginary biological terror attack. It also urged the so-called lone wolf extremists to strike terror in the West. This 5-minute audio-visual titled "Bio Terror" interestingly incites bio attacks in the West in retaliation for the indiscriminate chemical attacks on Muslim countries by Western states. While it accuses Nation States of using chemical weapons, the video justifies its call acknowledging that while Islam prohibits mass casualty attacks, exceptions are made when repelling aggression and reciprocity.

The looming dangers posed by these Jihadi extremist groups and from rouge and insincere Nation States remain unchanged and are virtually posing new challenges every year for the OPCW and international community in general. The need of the time is sincerity and political will among major world powers to work together towards complete elimination of chemical weapons.

**Mr Chairman,**

I would like to take this opportunity to state that my organisation Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict based in New Delhi, India continues to carry out research advocacy and publishing towards better dissemination of information on subjects relating to arms control and non-proliferation issues along with topics broadly come

under conflict and counterterrorism. This year, we have published few briefs and papers on CBRN issues, for example a policy paper on the threat perception and peaceful application of Ricin and a brief marking 23 years of the Sarin gas attack in Tokyo and how Japan resolutely took definitive actions against the perpetrators of the subway chemical event this July. We have also produced a report on the March 2018 Salisbury poisoning events and how this toxic mystery deepens amid blatant denial and blame gaming.

As always, we are focused to continue our endeavours to undertake similar activities for better information dissemination within the larger strategic community and for the benefit of general readers.

**Mr Chairman,**

We are pleased to be associated with the CWC Coalition and my special congratulations to Dr Paul Walker for leading the Coalition as a growing and cohesive unit that has vowed to offer invaluable contributions for accomplishment of the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention and to better supplement the efforts of the OPCW to fulfil its vision of a world free of chemical weapons. On behalf of my organization, I thank the OPCW and the CWC Coalition for this opportunity to speak at the plenary meeting.

Thank you, Mr Chairman, and I wish for this statement to be made part of the final CSP record and posted on the external server and website.