

**ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN****THE OPCW FUTURE****Introduction**

1. More than twenty years following the establishment of the OPCW in 1997, its achievements through immense efforts and endeavours in universal chemical disarmament are acknowledged throughout the world. The Noble Prize awarded to the Organisation in 2013 indicates that the achievements towards a world free from chemical weapons are well recognized.
2. Putting forth the idea of the OPCW future for deliberations in 2011 was based on the assumption that the deadline set for the destruction of chemical weapons in 2012 would be met. However, given the US plan for completing the destruction of its chemical weapons only in 2023, this issue is still premature. The establishment of an Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW in 2016 and the interaction opportunity for discussing and negotiating the future of the Organisation was helpful. However, given the fact that the Convention's deadline has already been postponed twice, for any tangible discussion and decision on OPCW future, the Conference of States parties should wait till 2023. The existence of chemical weapons outside of the CWC, particularly in the hands of the Zionist regime of Israel, with dark history of aggressions and occupation would add to such hesitation. While the OPCW with 193 members has managed to ensure security for more than ninety per cent of the world population against chemical weapons which constitute one group of WMDs, its mere existence, in other words the quality of its presence and the role played thereby in international security system is a matter of grave concern and requires particular attention.
3. It is noteworthy to say that the CWC is an evolved heritage of an international process started two centuries ago in shape of unilateral and bilateral political statements denouncing chemical weapons and manifesting reluctance towards using them. Clearly, given the legal weight of such statements and particularly their non-binding nature, they were ignored on different occasions.
4. Strategic importance of conclusion of the CWC is highlighted when the status of WMDs existence in the world and its role in creating strategic parity among various international actors was considered. It is known that, contrary to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (the NPT), the CWC is a non-discriminatory treaty which does not divide its parties to the "have" and "have not" and all States Parties must be non-possessors.



5. With regard to economic and technological development issues connected to the CWC, one could refer to an outstanding characteristic i.e. international cooperation and technical assistance in this regard among the States Parties were strengthened by the Convention.
6. Since the beginning of Geneva talks, the developing countries insisted that a delicate balance between the requirements and obligations must be established in order to persuade states to join the Convention and therefor, paving the way for the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Their endeavours resulted in accommodating Articles X and XI regarding economic and technological development and assistance in case of a chemical attack or threat. The developing countries considered Articles X and XI of the Convention as weights to balance against obligations set forth therein.

The OPCW Response to New Challenges

7. A little while after the entry into force of the Convention considering new developments in political, security, scientific and organizational arenas and given the lessons learned from the Convention implementation, also to make some efforts for the betterment of the OPCW function, there were ideas elsewhere of the necessity of it being aligned with new developments.

(a) Scientific and Technological Advancements

It is generally believed that having access to chemical and biological weapons is easier than accessing nuclear armaments. Progress in science and technology along with having access to the internet and scientific resources make this access much easier.

However, it should be noted that though scientific logic and modern technologies could not be denied, one is to assert that the CWC is not a mere scientific mechanism. In fact, the Convention is the result of a diplomatic agreement containing political, security and economic observations insisted by a variety of states which should not necessarily go ahead with scientific and technological logics. For instance, certain states could assert that only a limited part of scientific and technological achievements is sufficient for ensuring their national security.

(b) Inter-Organizational Cooperation

In recent years the OPCW has tended to disseminate information and promote awareness on its activities. Firstly, it is said that despite the burden of a huge job on its shoulders, the Organisation is still unknown even for certain officials in different states and the public are not well aware of its activities because of their specialized nature. Secondly, given the sophisticated security environment of the world today, and application of emerging theories, to take advantage of the possible synergy among sister organizations as there are several for the OPCW, promotion of inter-organizational cooperation needs to be placed on agenda. However, in all cases certain States Parties have criticized such initiatives which could impair the Organization's field of mission and as a result its independence through indulging in overlaps.

(c) The OPCW in the Future

As mentioned above, with the imminent completion of chemical weapons destruction verified by the OPCW, *raison d'être* for the Organisation to continue to the future with its present structure and budget is questioned. Given the various opinions expressed in this regard, different options could be imagined for its future. A part of its structure and budget should be mitigated if the Organisation intends to remove disarmament from its objectives, and an inevitable result of this, would be losing the institutional capacity and organizational memory related to the destruction of chemical weapons and overseeing the destruction process. However, this is only the façade. In principle, bypassing disarmament and focusing on non-re-emergence of new chemical weapons of course require more sufficient budget and a greater structure to boost inspections which under recent circumstances and with the reluctance shown by the States Parties to increase the budget of OPCW, seems to be is an impossible task too.

Thus, what is possible and essential, is to opt for an intermediate way so that the Organization would not forget about its principle and fundamental objectives. As still there are states not parties to the Convention who possess chemical weapons and if they possibly choose to accede to the Convention their future membership requires utilizing expert capability of monitoring their disarmament; let alone the jeopardy of terrorists having access to chemical weapons resulting in endurance and intensification of chemical weapons danger which necessitates the Organization's disarmament approach to be continued. Furthermore, the Organization would not turn to a non-proliferation approach with focusing on prevention of chemical weapons re-emergence.

Last but not the least, the decision adopted by a poor majority (82 out of 193 SPs) in the Fourth Special CSP is a real trap for the smooth, apolitical and professional functioning of the OPCW. As the function of attribution will immediately encounter the OPCW with divergent approaches that put its independence and professional approach at jeopardy. That is why some observers have warned about possible countdown of the OPCW lifetime.

Therefore, let's allow the OPCW continue its successful story without politicization of its mandate. Let's work together for a world free of chemical weapons and in an environment of mutual understanding and cooperation.

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