

**Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the
States Parties (CSP-26) to the Chemical Weapons Convention
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NGO Statement 4:

Organisational Governance and Evolution within the OPCW

Statement prepared by:¹

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***Chairperson, Director General, Distinguished Delegates, CWC Coalition Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

The Twenty-Sixth Conference of the States Parties is an important opportunity for the 193 Member States of the OPCW to reflect on how the governance of this Organisation can strengthen implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In particular, the progress made in the destruction of declared chemical weapons continues, and States Parties and the Technical Secretariat are to be commended for their continuous efforts in seeking to achieve one of the cornerstone obligations of the Convention.

The Convention's clear emphasis on the need to efficiently, effectively, and safely destroy existing chemical weapons, including those old and abandoned, and to verify their non-production, has led to particular organisational designs and structures that have enabled those tasks to be fulfilled.

While the Convention does not provide a blueprint for organisational structure, it is clear from Article VIII paragraph 37 that the Technical Secretariat shall be functionally responsible for the verification measures entrusted to it by the Convention and other tasks delegated by the policy-making organs. Over time, the policy-making organs, as we have seen in recent years, may delegate new tasks to the Secretariat. Reading this paragraph alongside paragraph 44 of the same Article suggests that organisational form may follow organisational function:

The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity.

Therefore, the Technical Secretariat's structure and the skills and knowledge it employs and retains, can evolve to support the requirements placed upon it by States Parties.

This point becomes salient as we all recognise that the destruction of existing chemical weapons is declining, and that by joining the Convention States Parties commit themselves to undertake *all* of those obligations placed upon them. Each State Party must, as the Preamble

¹ Please note: the following statement is a reflection of the views and opinions of the authors and the co-signers, and does not necessarily reflect the views of all organizations and individuals within the CWC Coalition.

to the Convention makes clear, be “determined for the sake of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons.”

This sentence infers that there is no endpoint to the Convention: States Parties and the Technical Secretariat are required to work together to fulfil the object and purpose of the Convention in perpetuity. To do this, States Parties and the Secretariat will rebalance the emphasis of their obligations, and design and implement new programmes of work to achieve the object and purpose of the Convention.

Indeed, for over a decade now there have been periodic discussions about the future of this Organisation, notably about the gradual transition to a broader focus on the ‘prevention of re-emergence’ of chemical weapons.

In many respects, however, the future of the OPCW is already here.

The work of the OPCW since 2013 has been characterised by new scenarios, significant challenges, and unexpected opportunities. Rather than seeing this as a time of exceptional circumstances it may, in fact, be useful to consider these times as being broadly indicative of post-disarmament organisational contexts. In light of this, we suggest that processes of organisational changing have been underway across the Secretariat.

In this regard, we fully support the facilitation work currently led by Ambassador Dupuy of Uruguay and Ambassador Neuhaus of Australia, and we are heartened to see the renewal of mandates to continue this work. This demonstrates that States Parties and the Technical Secretariat are taking seriously not just the evolution of implementation obligations but also the evolution of the Technical Secretariat to undertake and support such implementation. We recognise that this is precisely what is required if paragraph 44, quoted above, is to be taken seriously: functional rebalancing must be built around a Secretariat that can secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity in undertaking evolving tasks.

This Organisation has a history of drawing on the expertise and experience of civil society to help strengthen the ability of States Parties and the Secretariat to implement the Convention. On matters of organisational governance, including tenure; organisational cultures; organisational changing; inter-secretarial cooperation; gender and geographic balance; and knowledge generation, diffusion, and management, inputs from civil society can be constructive.

We urge States Parties and the Technical Secretariat to embolden their work on organisational governance and to provide opportunities for civil society to feed in and support deliberations.

The organisation of seminar series and workshops, of joint publications, of expert consultations, and of the establishment of a civil society library on the online Catalyst database to allow civil society to submit papers and reports to the OPCW, are all potentially beneficial and straightforward options to allow this Organisation to engage with and benefit from outside expertise.

Increasing the institutional space for stakeholders to support the Organisation is important as the OPCW evolves its major functions and develops and deepens capacities to implement the Convention. As prevention of re-emergence begins to more broadly characterise the OPCW’s

work, civil society stakeholders become key enablers in strengthening norms and policies that ensure the Convention's health and relevance. We invite States Parties and the Technical Secretariat to facilitate a strengthened relationship between civil society and the OPCW.

Finally, the formalisation of the internal governance facilitation process can allow this area to be confirmed as a critical organisational domain integral to organisational security and stability, and which is under regular and routine review. We believe this will give States Parties maximum leverage to ensure the OPCW remains optimally configured to implement the Convention in the future.

We wish you a productive Conference and thank you for your attention. We request that this statement be made part of the official on-line OPCW CSP-26 proceedings.

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***Note:** endorsement by these individuals does not represent endorsement by the organization they are affiliated with.