

**Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the
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NGO Statement 7:

The Chemical Weapons Convention and National Compliance

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

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) will celebrate the 25th anniversary of its 1997 entry-into-force next year in 2022. The OPCW and the CWC member states have accomplished a great deal in the past quarter century:

- The treaty is almost universal with 193 States Parties today;
- Over 98% of declared chemical weapons stockpiles safely and irreversibly destroyed in eight States Parties under on-site OPCW inspection and verification;
- Almost 2,000 on-site inspections of chemical weapons stockpiles;
- Over 500 on-site inspections of chemical weapons storage facilities;
- Over 200 inspections of old and abandoned chemical weapons sites; and,
- Over 4,000 on-site inspections of industrial facilities, including 1,771 inspections of CWC Schedule 1, 2, and 3 facilities.

These remarkable accomplishments all combine to make the CWC a successful model for complete and verified abolition of a whole class of weapons of mass destruction. Perhaps the CWC's greatest accomplishment is that it demonstrates that all the world's peoples can actually agree on the verifiable elimination of these horrific weapons which have been widely judged inhumane, indiscriminate, and a gross violation of human rights, environmental protection, and laws of war.

But the global taboo against chemical weapons possession, production, and use that the CWC is designed to uphold cannot be taken for granted. The task of achieving compliance with the CWC requires vigilance and persistence.

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.

These last 25 years of treaty implementation have not been simple or easy for many States Parties. The safe demilitarization of dangerous and highly toxic chemicals, stored in rusting and corroding tanks and multiple weapons systems, has been expensive, time-consuming, technically challenging, and politically contentious. Every declared possessor State Party has missed one or more deadlines under the CWC for a variety of reasons – lack of funding, complexity of weapons destruction, local political concern, and environmental and public health oversight and regulations. Fortunately, we are within two years now of the final possessor State Party, the United States, completing its chemical destruction program.

CWC States Parties are under many treaty obligations in order to comply with the CWC. Foremost among these is the ban on chemical weapons use – no State Party is allowed to develop or use banned chemical agents. Article I, “General Obligations,” of the CWC states that “Each State Party to this Convention undertakes never under any circumstances:

- a) To develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons, or transfer, directly or indirectly, chemical weapons to anyone;
- b) To use chemical weapons;
- c) To engage in any military preparations to use chemical weapons;
- d) To assist, encourage or induce, in any way, anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Convention.

And yet we have seen the use of chemical weapons in Syria and Iraq innumerable times over the past decade, and have also seen at least two assassination attempts in the United Kingdom and Russia using an advanced, militarized nerve agent over the past three years. We also have seen the successful assassination in Malaysia of a North Korean citizen with nerve agent.

Holding the line against further chemical weapons use is a core international security interest of all CWC States Parties. Chemical weapons produce horrible effects and the erosion of the global taboo against chemical weapons use can lead to an increase in significant use of weapons of mass destruction, and more widespread death, in the future.

We therefore applaud the establishment and ongoing investigations of the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) into these alleged violations of the CWC with banned chemical agents.

The CWC, and its multilateral implementing agency, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague were established not only to inspect and verify the safe destruction of all chemical weapons stockpiles, but also to enforce the global ban on chemical weapons. Only with the continued, highly qualified inspection and investigation activities of the OPCW Technical Secretariat will the ultimate goal – a world free of chemical weapons – be reached. This also requires all States Parties to fully cooperate with such

inspection requirements and to refrain from undermining the reputation and integrity of their investigations.

CWC compliance also requires that each and every State Party takes all the necessary steps to fully implement their obligations under the Convention. Today only 119 States Parties (62%) have fully implemented the treaty domestically, and another 39 States Parties (20%) have partially implemented treaty obligations. All States Parties should prioritize these efforts so that we can soon achieve 100% national implementation.

Full compliance with treaty obligations by all States Parties, and holding to account those who would use these most horrible and indiscriminate weapons, is essential to maintaining a world free of chemical weapons. Anything less will only undermine and weaken this lofty goal.

Thank you for your attention, and we request that this statement be made part of the official CSP published proceedings.

Statement Co-Signers*:

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