

EC-106 – item 13 “Follow up to the Review Conferences”

Engagement with civil society

*Report of the co-chairs of the informal consultations on engagement with civil society,
the Permanent Representatives of Costa Rica and Germany,
Ambassadors Arnoldo Brenes Castro and Thomas Schieb*

Members of this Council, since the last oral report, delivered by the co-chairs at EC-105 in March, the informal consultations on engagement with civil society have steadily progressed.

The consultation process so far has confirmed that States Parties very much appreciate interaction with civil-society actors as well as their contributions to the work of the OPCW and to the implementation of the CWC in general. The view expressed by many is that the OPCW should benefit as much as possible from the exchange with civil-society organisations (CSOs), including academia and the chemical industry, especially in view of current challenges like the possible re-emergence of chemical weapons and the rapidly advancing developments in science and technology.

The input external experts provided to the important workshop on AI, organised by the TS in April, is just one small case in point.

Since the March EC, we have conducted two rounds of consultations. At the meeting in May, the TS presented the results of a survey it had conducted among civil-society actors. In light of the findings, States Parties discussed the areas that would be particularly suitable for an intensified exchange, and they looked at best practices from other international organisations. The survey also showed that there is a certain imbalance in terms of the engagement of civil society from different regions. Consequently, States Parties shared ideas on how to improve outreach to and engage civil-society stakeholders from the regions in question.

The meeting in June focused on the issue of accreditation of CSOs to the sessions of the CSP, the objective being to identify possibilities to streamline the accreditation process and make it more transparent and efficient, not least in order to ease the administrative burden on the TS and facilitate the work of the General Committee.

In particular, there seems to be consensus about setting clearer timelines for those CSOs applying for accreditation. As to the question of vetting the respective CSOs, a number of suggestions were made on how to improve the procedure. Also, a significant number of States Parties held the opinion that the reasons for rejecting an application should be given in an appropriate manner. The discussion on the accreditation procedure has only started, and there is still a lot of work to be done.

Looking ahead, we would like to briefly highlight the following:

- In light of the discussions on accreditation, the Technical Secretariat is assisting the co-chairs in preparing a paper that will form the basis for our exchange at the next round of consultations on 18 July.
- After concluding the discussion on the accreditation procedure, we intend to focus attention on the role of the chemical industry and the scientific community as well as

on the issue of a more structured interaction with CSOs in the intersessional periods. We appreciate the willingness of the Chairpersons of the SAB and the ABEO to participate in the consultations. We will also intensify our exchange with the CSOs, including the CWC Coalition.

As we have said before, the idea is to present the results of this consultation process to CSP-29. In the meantime, we will keep the EC informed about the ongoing work.

We would like to thank States Parties for their active engagement and their very valuable contributions. We encourage them to keep on sharing ideas, and we are optimistic that we will continue working in a constructive and forward-looking spirit.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Technical Secretariat for the outstanding efforts and contributions it is making to this process.