

CSP-30 NGO Joint Statement

Engaging Public Health Organizations to Achieve the CWC Goals

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Mr. Chairman, Director-General, Distinguished Delegates, Civil Society Colleagues:

Public health institutions, government bodies, and civil society organizations all play important roles in advancing the OPCW's goal of a world free of chemical weapons. Civil society organizations—including public health associations and professionals—recognise that effective partnerships across society are essential. Engagement with industry and businesses, faith-based groups, academic institutions, the media, and government agencies strengthens education, outreach, and other public-health functions that help mitigate the risks posed by chemical weapons.

Every State Party has a governmental public health authority, and roughly two-thirds also have a public health civil society organization. Well-resourced public health systems can support full implementation of the Convention in a transparent, science-based, and community-inclusive manner.

The public health community globally can assist with the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention to ensure that:

- 1) There is planning and training for emergency preparedness at the local, regional and country level in all countries;
- 2) All weapons, agents, and stockpiles (including those buried or dumped at sea) are eliminated in an environmentally safe manner;

- 3) There is adequate education and outreach to all populations in ways that acknowledge the local culture and context;
- 4) There is support for comprehensive public health registries and surveillance systems (that monitor releases, injuries, and behavioral health disorders) that can be used to assess and monitor the impact of chemical releases (from buried or sea-dumped chemical weapons and industrial sites) in the future;
- 5) Research is supported on the long-term physical and psychological impact of chemical weapons and toxic chemicals as well as the best methods for their elimination as related to human and animal health;
- 6) Adequate health care, mental health, and other social supports are provided to those injured by the use of chemical weapons.

All of these public health activities are reflected in the essential services and core functions of public health entities at every level of government, as well as in the Global Charter for Public Health, developed by the World Federation of Public Health Associations in collaboration with the World Health Organization.

The public health community recognises that environmental health, mental health services, and the prevention of chemical threats are central public health responsibilities, and that eliminating chemical weapons is an important social, political, and economic determinant of health.

Public health entities can also work with Responsible Care, a programme of the International Council of Chemical Associations active in more than 70 countries, to promote safe chemical management.

Public health systems at local, state, regional, and national levels are committed to improving population health through science-based approaches with a focus on equity and social justice. These activities require sustained support, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

Civil society urges the OPCW:

(1) To work more closely with the World Health Organization and its regional agencies to support training and build capacity for engaging public health in implementing the Convention within national authorities.

(2) To encourage State Parties to collaborate with their National Authorities and public health entities in their countries to implement the next phase of the Convention.

(3) To recommend that the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach and the Scientific Advisory Board fully incorporate the concerns and priorities of the public health community into their plans and deliberations.