

STATEMENT BY ANDORRA, AUSTRALIA, CANADA, IRELAND, THE NETHERLANDS, NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY, SWITZERLAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM CONCERNING ACCREDITATION OF NGOS FOR THE CSP-22

1. Mr Chair, I wish to put on record the concern of Andorra, Australia, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland and United Kingdom about the accreditation process for NGOs to attend this important Conference of the States Parties.
2. The 2013 Review Conference agreed to open the annual Conference of the States Parties to civil society groups. This important decision is undermined by the refusal to accredit NGOs based purely on the anonymous objections of a small number of States Parties, none of whom provided reasons for their position.
3. In order to enhance the global fight against chemical weapons and foster a culture of responsibility, we need to engage a wide range of stakeholders. As the OPCW's work shifts from stockpile destruction to preventing re-emergence of chemical weapons, its activities will require as wide a network of partners as possible, and an extended community of advocates for the Chemical Weapons Convention. This silencing of voices is counter-productive and goes against the OPCW's values of openness and transparency – values which are fundamental to addressing current and future challenges and to achieve our common goal of a world free of chemical weapons. NGOs play an important role in addressing these challenges and giving their representatives a voice will enhance their sense of ownership.
4. In our view, the exclusion of Human Rights Watch in particular, an ECOSOC-accredited NGO, serves only to damage the reputation of this Conference and the OPCW. We should be a leading example in the promotion of transparency in international organisations, not an agent of regression.
5. Mr Chair, I ask that this statement be made an official document of the Conference and published on the external server and the public website of the OPCW.