



**OPCW**

**Conference of the States Parties**

Third Review Conference  
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**LITHUANIA, POLAND, BULGARIA, AND LUXEMBOURG**

**BROADENING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON SEA-DUMPED CHEMICAL WEAPONS AND PROMOTING THE OPCW AS A FORUM FOR VOLUNTARY COOPERATION ON THIS ISSUE**

1. Dumping of chemical weapons has been reportedly carried out around the globe, with considerable amounts in the areas of the Atlantic Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, the North Sea, and the Baltic Sea. The Baltic is among the most affected seas of the world. Intensive exploitation of resources and other human activities in combination with natural processes pose certain risks to the security of the environment of oceans and seas with reported dumping of chemical weapons.
2. Many States, international organisations, non-governmental organisations and experts have been engaged to promote the development of international cooperation, and exchange of experience and practical knowledge on sea-dumped chemical weapons, including their safe disposal.
3. The OPCW may offer its good services by providing a venue for voluntary cooperation among the governments, relevant industries, academia and the NGO community, on the issues related to sea-dumped chemical weapons.

**The recent international efforts on sea-dumped chemical weapons**

4. The knowledge and understanding about the possible threats resulting from sea-dumped chemical weapons have been increasing over the last several years. Greater awareness of the past disposal of chemical weapons at sea has motivated growing concern among the governments and public about potential risks to human health, safety, and the marine environment. There are growing concerns about the negative impact on economic activities in territorial/international waters “polluted” with dumped chemical weapons.
5. In 2010, under Lithuania’s initiative, the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session adopted by consensus the resolution “Cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea”. This has been achieved with a very good cooperation among all United Nations Member States and remarkable input by the scientific community and civil society, including the International Scientific Advisory Board on Sea-Dumped Chemical Weapons and the International Dialogue on Underwater Munitions. The core objective of the resolution is to encourage States, and international and regional organisations to keep under observation this global issue, voluntarily share relevant information on this matter, and strengthen



international efforts in raising awareness in order to create a safer, cleaner and sustainable environment for all of us. The resolution also invites the Secretary-General to seek the views of United Nations Member States, and relevant regional and international organisations on matters related to the environmental effects of waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea. These views will be circulated to the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session in 2013.

6. The resolution of the United Nations General Assembly has prompted further interest to promote dialogue and broader engagement on the issues of sea-dumped chemical weapons within international and regional fora and frameworks, including exchange of information, best practises and technologies.

### **The OPCW as a venue for voluntary cooperation on sea-dumped chemical weapons**

7. The international organisations should become partners in dealing with the sea-dumped chemical weapons. They could assist in addressing the risks which research activities and international exchanges identified with respect to sea-dumped chemical weapons, including risk of exposure to dumped chemical agents (e.g. fishing crews, washed ashore contents on beaches), and risk of increased contamination of sea organisms, caused by possible access to chemical weapons dumped in water depths. The international organisations could support improving national capabilities for response in the case of incidents involving sea-dumped chemical weapons.
8. The topic of sea-dumped chemical weapons is not new at the OPCW. The First Conference of the States Parties took a decision on declarations related to sea-dumped chemical weapons. Several events on sea-dumped chemical weapons were attended by the OPCW representatives, during which concrete requests and proposals on how to engage the OPCW more actively in the domain of dumped chemical weapons were raised. Concern on this issue was also expressed in the recommendations of the Advisory Panel on Future OPCW Priorities (agreed upon unanimously by the members of the Panel on 15 July 2011). In addition there were side events and informal consultations organised at the OPCW. All these events confirmed a growing understanding of engaging international potential and interest of the international organisations, including the OPCW.
9. The Chemical Weapons Convention does not cover the chemical weapons dumped at sea before 1985. At the same time, the Convention leaves for the Member States the decision whether they declare sea-dumped chemical weapons to the OPCW. These provisions do not preclude the OPCW from taking a more active stance as a venue for voluntary discussions and cooperation between OPCW Member States, the Technical Secretariat, and related international organisations, industries and NGOs, on the issue of sea-dumped chemical weapons. In accordance with Article VIII(1) of the Convention, the OPCW provides a forum for consultation and cooperation among States Parties on issues related to chemical weapons.
10. Within the proposed platform the following measures could be developed and implemented on a voluntary basis:
  - (a) Supporting the implementation of the United Nations General Assembly resolution “Cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of

environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea“;

- (b) Sharing information on the disposal of sea-dumped chemical weapons;
- (c) Continuing activities to inform the public of the possible hazards of coming into contact with sea-dumped chemical weapons, and continuing efforts to identify appropriate actions to mitigate such hazards if contact does occur;
- (d) Developing and spreading materials for maritime industries to educate about the potential hazards of sea-dumped chemical weapons. These materials could include safety guidelines in the event that sea-dumped chemical weapons are accidentally retrieved from the seabed.

**Proposals for the draft language in the Final Report of the Third Review Conference**

- 11. The Third Review Conference welcomes the United Nations General Assembly resolution “Cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea“, adopted at its sixty-fifth session by consensus, and invites Member States to support its implementation.
- 12. The Third Review Conference welcomes the development of the OPCW as a venue for voluntary sharing of information, and raising awareness and cooperation among the States Parties, academia, the relevant industries and NGOs.

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