

# CWC Review Conference Report

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## The opening day: the Secretary-General and General Debate

The first day of the Third Review Conference for the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) included a visit from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, a day of general debate and a significant decision on participation by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

### **Opening activities**

The Review Conference was opened on Monday morning by Peter Goosen (South Africa), the Chair of the Conference of the States Parties. The Conference then adopted its officers, confirming Ambassador Krzysztof Paturej (Poland) as Chair for the Review Conference and adopted a number of administrative decisions, including two relating to NGOs, see below.

Speeches were given by OPCW Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Foreign Minister of the Netherlands Frans Timmermans, Deputy-Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Luxembourg Jean Asselborn and Ambassador Bhaswati Mukherjee (India), as chair of the Executive Council.

In a wide-ranging speech, the Director-General noted that as the OPCW winds down its destruction-related activities 'a major theme for the Review Conference will be how best the core objectives of the Convention can continue to be effectively served'. Responding to suggestions that the OPCW needs to maintain its knowledge base and expertise which could be dissipated with post-destruction structural changes he proposed the setting up of a training and research centre at the Secretariat. He also said that the OPCW will pay much greater attention to 'tailor-made approaches' to help individual countries implement their Convention obligations 'as a significant number of States Parties still need to take action'.

The Secretary-General noted that as long as chemical weapons exist, so, too, does the risk of their use 'by accident or design' and that 'there are no right hands for the wrong weapons'. He noted that the investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria was the first in the 21st century and indicated that the investigation team was ready to deploy, with an advance party based in Cyprus. Noting the specific task of the CWC to eliminate chemical weapons and prevent them from ever re-emerging, he stressed that the regime also has a broad mission 'to prove that the inhumanity of war can give rise to the humanity of solidarity. To show that the lust for military dominance can be tamed by a love of life. And to demonstrate that the depths of despair caused by chemical weapons can be overcome by international cooperation of the highest order'.

### **General Debate**

Speeches were given in the following order: Iran (on behalf of the non-aligned and China); Ireland (on behalf of the European Union) and Sudan (on behalf of the African Group). After lunch, the statements continued with: Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Iraq, Iran (in a national capacity), India, Norway, Singapore, China, Brazil, Qatar, Pakistan, Malaysia, Cuba, United Arab Emirates, Thailand, Chile, Peru and Sweden. The Chair had indicated that more than 50 States Parties had requested a slot to speak so only roughly a third had given their statements by the end of Monday. Where copies of statements have been provided by those who delivered them, the OPCW will place these on its website <<<http://www.opcw.org>>>.

With the General Debate continuing during Tuesday, it is perhaps too early to try to identify some themes as it there may be an element of chance as to whether the States Parties interested in a particular aspect happened to all speak on one particular day or another. Nevertheless, there were some overarching threads getting significant coverage such as universality, the situation in Syria, destruction issues, the transition to the post-destruction era for the OPCW, national implementation issues (including increasing activities by national authorities), dangers of terrorist use of chemical weapons, advances in science and technology and welcoming the work of the Open-Ended Working Group in the run up to the Conference.

Most States Parties mentioned universality, noting five States had joined the Convention since the last Review Conference bringing the total to 188 with eight states remaining outside of the Convention – Angola, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Egypt, Israel, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria – which were urged to join. Connections were made between the lack of universality and the situation in Syria. Many statements referred to any possible use by chemical weapons by any perpetrator as ‘a reprehensible act’ and there were many expressions of support for the investigation into the allegations of use in the conflict in Syria. No statement suggested the proposed investigation in Syria was not worth carrying out; however, there were some carefully chosen words on the matter. For example, Iran in its national statement supported the investigation ‘based on the Syrian government request’.

There were some notable aspects within certain statements given on Monday. The Iran/non-aligned statement included a proposal for an Action Plan on the full implementation of Article XI with an outline of the plan attached to the statement. China raised the issue of destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on Chinese territory during the Second World War, noting the destruction deadline set under the Convention had not been met. Malaysia raised the issue of the number of seats for the Asian Group on the Executive Council, calling for a review of the allocation of seats as allowed for under the Convention.

### **Decision on NGO participation**

As well as the usual decision on participation of NGOs to attend the Conference, there was an additional decision to amend the Rules of Procedure regarding NGO access. Rule 33 now reads ‘Representatives of non-governmental organisations may attend the plenary sessions of the Conference, and participate in the activities of the review conferences, in accordance with such rules or guidelines as the Conference has approved.’ Annexed to this decision is a set of guidelines on NGO attendance which include an opportunity to address a plenary session, greater access to documents, a modified registration process (taking into account whether individual NGOs had been registered before) and the creation of an ‘NGO Coordinator’ from amongst the NGOs as a focal point for communication with the Secretariat.

### **Side events**

One side event was held on Monday, during the lunch break, in the Ieper Room in the OPCW building. This was an opportunity for authors from three NGOs to talk about recent publications. John Hart and Ralf Trapp (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, <<<http://www.sipri.org>>>) spoke about a new SIPRI Policy Paper ‘The Future of the Chemical Weapons Convention’. Elisande Nexon (Centre d’Etudes de Sécurité Internationale et de Maîtrise des armements, <<<http://www.cesim.fr>>>) spoke about a special issue of the ‘Observatoire de le Non Prolifération’ on the CWC Review Conference. Richard Guthrie (CBW Events) spoke about the ‘Resource Guide for the Third CWC Review Conference’ <<<http://www.cwc2013.info>>> and the daily reports (details below).

*This is the second report from the Third Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention which is being held from 8 to 19 April 2013 in The Hague. They are prepared by Richard Guthrie of CBW Events for the CWC Coalition, a global network of non-governmental groups with an interest in the Convention. The reports are available at <<<http://www.cbw-events.org.uk/cwc-rep.html>>>. The author can be contacted during the Conference on +31 623 426 072 or <<[richard@cbw-events.org.uk](mailto:richard@cbw-events.org.uk)>>.*