

CWC Review Conference Report

The Committee of the Whole: the second day

The second day of the second week of the Third Review Conference for the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) saw another full day of the Committee of the Whole with Ambassador Sa'ad Al Ali (Iraq) in the Chair. Once again, the Committee met in the Ieper Room in the OPCW Building rather than the main hall in the Convention Centre next door.

The Committee of the Whole continued to meet behind closed doors. The title for their deliberations is 'Preparations for the outcome of the Third Review Conference' which involves preparing a draft of the final document which can then be approved by a plenary session of the Conference.

The Ieper Room is much smaller than the Convention Centre main hall and with so many delegates wishing to participate in proceedings the room is apparently very crowded. Delegates could be seen to take chairs and cushions into the room as all the seating had been used. There were some suggestions that the Committee of the Whole move into the Convention Centre as the facilities there would have been much more comfortable. Counter arguments to this included that the lack of comfort would keep people focused on a prompt solution!

Preparations for the Conference final document

The Committee of the whole continued its run through of the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) consensus paper relatively rapidly, identifying paragraphs that need work and getting delegations interested in the pertinent subject matter to seek a solution. All through the day there were suggestions for variations of text being circulated in draft form and being considered by small huddles of delegates. As the iterations were modified following interactions, these texts for amendments were being collected together but it is not clear when a revised text taking these into account will be circulated to delegates. In other areas where work still needs to be done and where specific text has not yet been put together there is greater clarity on where the common ground may lie. The Chair has requested assistance from a few individuals on particular issues to act as informal facilitators.

Consultations continued on the issue of how to handle the subject of recent developments in Syria and on the political declaration. Most major points relating to the political declaration appear to have been settled with the significant outstanding issue remaining the reference to the situation regarding Syria, an issue which also needs to be resolved for the review section of the final document. The consultations on the political declaration started during the lunch break and continued for some time after the due start time of the Committee of the Whole. Having started late, the Committee of the Whole then met until nearly 7pm, an hour later than they would normally sit until, the last part of which was without interpretation.

Discussions with delegations in the adjacent lounge indicate that the arguments being used in favour of, or in opposition to, any particular points remain consistent with the arguments made in the General Debate and the agenda item 9 plenaries on the review of the operation of the Convention.

While there is much yet to be achieved, there is still time in which to achieve it. At this stage of negotiation of a text there is an element of theatre. Disentangling the realistic expectations from the positioning can be difficult, even for those inside the room.

National papers

A useful source for understanding national positions at any review conference is to examine the working papers submitted by States Parties. Within the CWC Review Conference these are published as 'national papers', a category that also includes speeches made in open session if the speaker requests that their intervention be circulated as an official document of the Conference. The papers listed below are national papers that are, in essence, working papers submitted to the Conference and that have been posted on the OPCW website <<<http://www.opcw.org>>>:

- RC-3/NAT.5 – China, 'Position Paper - Chemical Weapons Abandoned by Japan in China'
- RC-3/NAT.6 – China, 'Position Paper - Article X and XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention'
- RC-3/NAT.7 – Armenia, Belarus, Iran, Russia and South Africa, 'The Geneva Protocol of 1925'
- RC-3/NAT.8 – Iran (on behalf of the NAM CWC States Parties and China), 'Position Paper'.
- RC-3/NAT.9 – Iran, 'Sources of Verification (Public Available Information)'
- RC-3/NAT.10 – Iran, 'Challenge Inspection and Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons'
- RC-3/NAT.11 – Iran, 'Protection and Assistance (Article X)'
- RC-3/NAT.12 – Iran, 'International Cooperation (Article XI)'
- RC-3/NAT.13 – Iran (on behalf of the NAM CWC States Parties and China), 'Proposal for a Plan of Action on the Full Implementation of Article XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention'
- RC-3/NAT.14 – 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'
- RC-3/NAT.15 – Iran, 'Universality'
- RC-3/NAT.20 – Japan, 'Japan's Efforts and the Progress on the Destruction of Abandoned Chemical Weapons in China'

There were many submissions by States Parties to the OEWG preceding the Review Conference that would fall into a similar category as these working papers. Submissions to the OEWG were not publicly posted, however.

Side events

There were no side events held on Tuesday.

This is the eighth 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/cwc-rep.html>>>. The author can be contacted during the Conference on +31 623 426 072 or <<richard@cbw-events.org.uk>>.