

CWC Review Conference Report

The Committee of the Whole: Thursday night into Friday morning

The penultimate day of the Third Review Conference for the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) saw the proceedings go on late into the early hours of Friday morning with agreement reached on the text for a draft final document apart from one remaining issue – the use of toxic chemicals in law enforcement – and a question of how Syria should be referred to in part B of the text.

Earlier in the day the Credentials Committee provided a first report which notes that 129 States Parties had attended the Review Conference. Of these, 109 had full credentials already submitted and accepted.

The Committee of the Whole

Three sessions of the Committee of the Whole were timetabled for Thursday instead of the usual two. The sessions were scheduled for 9.30-12.30, 14.00-17.00 and 18.30-21.30. Normally the sessions are 10.00-13.00 and 15.00-18.00.

The Committee of the Whole started roughly on time with Ambassador Sa'ad Al Ali (Iraq) in the Chair and examined the composite text that had been distributed on Wednesday afternoon, making relatively slow progress. The afternoon meeting ran for four hours in what seemed to be an attempt to maintain what little momentum there was, but several key paragraphs containing disagreements were skipped with the intention of returning to them later, raising concerns that there might not be enough time. Interpretation services stopped about three hours into the meeting. The meeting broke shortly after 18.00 and the evening session started half an hour later, pausing only for a short comfort break around 22.30, but was making little visible progress and mostly revisiting previously aired debating points. Some delegations started having pizzas and other fast food delivered to the OPCW building to keep themselves going. This clearly had some effect as the rate of progress increased as the night wore on.

The Committee of the Whole concluded its proceedings for the day at 02.55 with the last issue under consideration being that of toxic chemicals for law enforcement. This was carried over into consultations to start at 10am Friday with the aim of being ready for a plenary meeting to adopt the report in the afternoon. Some delegations wanted to insert references to the situation in Syria in part B and this was yet to be negotiated but may be based on the language discussed for part A (see below).

The political declaration

The political declaration (part A of the final document) had been finalized other than two paragraphs relating to recent developments in Syria. Consultations on these two paragraphs started in parallel with the meeting of the Committee of the Whole from 21.45 and continued until just before midnight, producing drafts that satisfied some concerns but which other delegations regarded as not sufficient yet perhaps all that was possible.

The situation in Syria remains the predominant issue that could cause a significant hindrance to the adoption of a final document. The final decision on what is said about Syria

resides in capitals and in many cases with officials who do not normally deal with the CWC. How rapidly some of these officials can respond to the needs of the Review Conference and how much flexibility they can display might have more influence on the outcome of the Review Conference than anything said or done in The Hague.

Structure of the draft final document

The structure of the draft final document as tentatively agreed by the Committee of the Whole at the end of Thursday's proceedings is as follows:

- Part A: Political Declaration
- Part B: Review of the operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention as provided for in paragraph 22 of Article VIII, taking into account any relevant scientific and technological developments
 - The role of the Chemical Weapons Convention in enhancing international peace and security and in achieving the objectives as set forth in the preamble of the Convention
 - Ensuring the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention
 - General obligations and declarations related thereto
 - Reports by the Director-General on destruction-related issues
 - Destruction of chemical weapons, including implementation of the Conference of the States Parties and Executive Council decisions on destruction-related issues
 - Destruction or conversion of chemical weapons production facilities
 - Verification activities of the OPCW
 - Activities not prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention
 - National implementation measures
 - Consultations, cooperation, and fact-finding
 - Assistance and protection against chemical weapons
 - Economic and technological development
 - Articles XII to XV and final clauses
 - The protection of confidential information
 - The general functioning of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

National papers

Two further working papers have been published:

- RC-3/NAT.39 – Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, 'The Role of the OPCW Central Analytical Database in Ensuring Efficient On-Site Verification'
- RC-3/NAT.40 – Kenya, Poland and the Netherlands, 'Promoting the OPCW as a Platform for Voluntary Cooperation in Chemical Safety and Security - Developing and Sustaining a Programme on Chemical Safety and Security in Chemical Activities in Kenya'

Side events

There were no side events held on Thursday

Please note: there will be an additional CWC Review Conference Report covering the final day of the Conference. This will be published early next week and will be posted on the web at the location given in the text below.

This is the tenth 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>>.