
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

UN Committee Assignment Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Professor Larrinaga January 16, 2017 Course: Model United Nations History The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is an autonomous international organisation that came into force in 1997. Although the organisation originated fairly recently, talks on the prohibition of chemical weapons have been taking place since the 19th century. Prior to World War I, three agreements had been drafted regarding a restriction on the use of chemical weapons in warfare. Unfortunately, these measures were violated over the course of First World War.

Following the atrocious events that took place during this time, the 1925 Geneva Protocol was adopted with the aim of prohibiting certain methods of warfare, including chemical weapons. Subsequently, the international community would realize the importance of not only banning chemical weapons from being used during warfare, but also implementing measures regarding the development and stockpiling of these weapons. The Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee (ENDC), taking place in 1968, involved talks on chemical and biological weapons, leading to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) coming into force in 1975. While this Convention represented great progress towards the prohibition of chemical weapons, the talks following the BWC were specifically targeted towards an international agreement regarding the prohibition of chemical weapons. These talks became even more important when it was announced, in the following years, that Iraq had been using chemical weapons during the war against Iran.

Following a spurt of motivation from the international community, including the United States and Soviet Russia, the talks on prohibition of chemical weapons that had taken place at the Conference on Disarmament crystalized into the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1992. The signatory States to the CWC also approved of the Paris Resolution, creating the Preparatory Commission, which would be paving the way for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The Preparatory Commission existed from the Paris Resolution up until the coming into force of the CWC in 1997, which also marked the official beginnings of the OPCW. Purpose and Mandate The purpose of the OPCW is simple and straightforward: eliminating chemical weapons. Specifically, it functions with the mandate to “implement the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in order to achieve the OPCW’s vision of a world that is free of chemical weapons and of the threat of their use, and in which cooperation in chemistry for peaceful purposes for all is fostered” (<https://www.opcw.org/about-opcw/mission/>). In order

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to fulfil this mandate, the OPCW works in many different areas. – the first of these areas is demilitarisation. The OPCW works to ensure the destruction of already existing chemical weapons stockpiles.

The destruction of these weapons is a hefty process, because the OPCW wants to ensure that the mechanism used to destroy the chemical weapons has the minimum negative effect on the population as well as the environment. - The second area of OPCW's mandate is to work to limit and halt the proliferation of chemical weapons. This means that the State-parties to the CWC are not permitted to develop or use chemical weapons at any given moment, unless it is for the purposes allowed in the Convention and within the States' jurisdiction. In order to ensure the compliance with these obligations, the OPCW has a verification process that allows them to monitor each States' chemical activity. In cases of non-compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, OPCW has the mandate to take action against the offending state and report on the violations to the larger international community (Background guide).

Moreover, in the case of any related threats that "pose a threat to international peace and security", OPCW has a responsibility to inform the UN (Background guide). - Their third area of OPCW's mandate is to assist and protect Member States who have been affected by chemical weapons. There are resources available to the OPCW to achieve this goal, such as the Voluntary Fund for Assistance.

With these resources, the OPCW is able to provide assistance to victims of chemical weapons, as well as train its Member States so they are well equipped in case of chemical outburst. - The fourth aspect of OPCW's mandate is to reinforce international cooperation, to promote progress and development in the field of "chemistry for peaceful purposes" (<https://www.opcw.org/about-opcw/mission/>). They function as a catalyst for discussion on the threat of chemical weapons, their development, and possible solutions (Background guide). - The fifth aspect of their mandate is to promote effective implementation for member-States. This is achieved through the OPCW providing advice and support to Member States to help them implement the provisions of the Convention. - Lastly, the final aspect of their mandate is to work toward universal adherence to the Convention. Their vision is defined as "the multilateral character of the CWC and the equal application of the CWC to all States parties" (Background guide). The aim of this objective is to promote greater international cooperation, ultimately leading to greater security. Jurisdiction, and Goals for the Future OPCW's jurisdiction extends to its to approximately 98% of the global population (Background guide). The only states that are not member of OPCW are _____. Furthermore, OPCW jurisdiction extends to "facilitat[ing], approv[ing...], and verify[ing] agreements between States parties and OPCW; inspect[ing] chemical weapon production, storage, and destruction facilities; and resolv[ing] complaints of non-compliance" (Background guide). The ultimate goal for the future of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is eliminate all chemical weapons from the world and a

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complete halt on the creation and proliferation of chemical weapons (Background guide).

By 2017, “approximately 95% of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons[have been] destroyed, and a Nobel Peace Prize awarded to OPCW in 2013 for its efforts to eliminate chemical weapons” (Background guide). OPCW While its primary goal is to eliminate chemical weapons, it also works to adapt to emerging security threats that include the use of chemical weapons in terrorist attacks. Function Within the United Nations System In order to understand the OPCW’s role in the international community, we must comprehend how this organisation functions within the United Nations (UN) system.

The OPCW is over and above all an independent international organisation, that is mandated to ensure the application of the CWC. With that being said, the OPCW maintains a close and important partnership with the United Nations. This was notably expressed by former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, when he stated that: “The OPCW is a good friend and partner of the United Nations. As chemical weapons continue to pose a grave risk, cooperation between our two organizations has deepened enormously in recent years.”

Moreover, this close partnership implies that the OPCW closely works with the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council in most severe cases. OPCW is made up of three subsidiary bodies; the Conference of States Parties, the Executive Council, and the Technical Secretariat (Background guide). The Conference of States Parties is responsible for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Background guide). It provides oversight of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and monitors compliance of the treaty. Moreover, it “oversees the activities of the Executive Council and Secretariat”.

Additionally, it approves the budget and elects the Executive Council (Background guide). The Executive Council has the mandate to “promote the effective implementation of, and compliance with, the CWC” (Background guide). Moreover, it approves “agreements between States parties and the OPCW for implementation and verification activities [...] and oversees disputes of on-compliance by ordering States parties to remedy a situation within a given time period” (Background guide). Lastly, the Technical Secretariat is responsible for managing the daily administrative process of the OPCW, including but not limited to “day-to-day communications between OPCW and Member States, public relations, drafting budgets and reports, and negotiating verification agreements with Member States, and conducting on-site inspections of chemical weapon storage and destruction facilities” (Background guide).

Membership and Voting Procedures

All State parties to the CWC are automatically members of the OPCW. This is guaranteed as per article VIII (2) of the Convention. In order to become a State party to the Convention, said State must ratify or become a party through accession. Once it officially became a Member, the

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States' membership is unlimited in duration. Each Member State has one vote during the OPCW Conferences. Key resolutions and decisions - Georgia The OPCW was founded upon the convention on the Prohibition of the development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and Their Destruction, adopted in 1992 (Background guide). Under this convention, member states had obligations never "(a)

To develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons, or transfer, directly or indirectly, chemical weapons to anyone; (b) To use chemical weapons; (c) To engage in any military preparations to use chemical weapons; (d) To assist, encourage or induce, in any way, anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Convention (https://www.opcw.org/fileadmin/OPCW/CWC/CWC_en.pdf). Additionally, member states are obligated to destroy any existing stockpiles of chemical weapons and in its territory, whether or not they were produced by that state (https://www.opcw.org/fileadmin/OPCW/CWC/CWC_en.pdf). This Chemical Weapons Treaty forms the foundation upon which IOCW sits and is the most key resolution in the organization's history.

Another important resolution was settled in September 2001 with the United Nations (UN) General Assembly resolution 55/283, which laid out the relationship and mandate of the OPCW, and how it would report to the General Assembly. Additionally, this resolution on focused on how OPCW would ensure equitable representation. Main Dynamics Sweden has been a Member State of the OPCW since it's genesis, and has been actively contributing to the organisation ever since. From a historical perspective, Sweden played a big role in the stages leading to the creation of the OPCW. In 1968, Sweden's influence led to the adoption of chemical as well as biological weapons on the Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee's agenda. These multilateral talks led to the drafting of the Biological Weapons Convention and paved the way for the Chemical Weapons Convention.

More recently, the OPCW has been actively researching and playing a disarmament role in the Syrian civil war. Following the 2013 chemical attacks that took place in Syria, the OPCW and the UN teamed up in order to manage the chemical warfare that was taking place in Syria, which was in violation of the CWC. Together, these organizations put in place a Joint Mission, aiming to investigate the chemical attacks in Syria, as well as destroy all their stockpiles. The OPCW-UN Joint Mission started in 2013 and successfully came to an end in 2014. This was a major success for both organizations, considering the short length of the mission and the tremendous support it drew from the international community. Sweden expressed their support for this mission and also contributed with resources such as transport aircraft units to assist the OPCW-UN Joint Mission on the ground.

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Additionally, Sweden also provided financial and technical support to the OPCW-UN Joint Investigatory Mechanism, also working on the Syrian chemical weapons. The OPCW's past and current significant work has earned the organization the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize.

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