

Chemical Disarmament

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ABOLISHING CHEMICAL WEAPONS GLOBALLY:
SUCCESSIONS AND CHALLENGES

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CHEMICAL INDUSTRY'S RESPONSIBLE CARE
PROGRAMME

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Responsible Care, with some successes being achieved. In 2007, the Russian Chemists Union joined the Responsible Care initiative and an aspirant to join the Charter is the newly formed Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA). The GPCA has an extensive membership base throughout the chemicals sector in the Middle East.

Over the past two years, the Charter has been circulated and publicised among the industry and its stakeholders. It has also been analysed and reviewed by associations and their member companies,

Abolishing Chemical Weapons Globally: Successes and Challenges - An NGO Perspective

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The successful, verified elimination of some 40% of the six declared chemical weapons stockpiles in the first 11 years of the Chemical Weapons Convention represents a major achievement for the treaty regime and its implementing body, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The primary goal of the Convention - the total elimination of existing chemical weapons stockpiles - is well on the way to being met in the foreseeable future.



Of the current 184 States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, six countries have declared chemical weapons stockpiles. Two of these, the United States and the Russian Federation, possessed about 94% of the total declared stockpiles of 71,315 metric tonnes (MT). The remaining four declared possessor States - Albania, India, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and another country which has requested anonymity - held some 4,200 MT.

Over the past 11 and one half years, about 40% of these enormous and deadly arsenals - 28,575 MT - have been eliminated. The U.S., which has been actively demilitarising its chemical weapons arsenal for some 18 years now, has destroyed over 16,000 MT of which some 1,435 MT were destroyed at the first chemical weapons incinerator on Johnston Atoll before the 1997 CWC entry into force (EIF). Since then the U.S. has destroyed an additional 14,567 MT through both incineration and neutralisation at seven of its nine declared stockpile sites. Johnston Atoll completed incinerator operations in 2000, and two other sites - Aberdeen, Maryland and Newport, Indiana - have also now completed their neutralisation operations. Four incinerators continue to operate, while two neutralisation facilities remain in early construction.

Russia has neutralised over 11,000 MT - about 29% of its stockpile - since its first chemical weapons destruction facility (CWDF) began operating in late 2002 at Gorny in the Saratov Oblast. The Gorny facility finished its neutralisation process in 2005, and two additional facilities at Kambarka in the Udmurt Republic and at Maradykovsky in the Kirov Oblast are currently neutralising lewisite and nerve agents respectively. This leaves four additional Russian sites currently in various phases of construction.

generating a lot of activity at all levels. The Charter stresses the need for all associated companies to provide the essential resources and the manpower to support and nurture the implementation of industry's signature performance initiative, Responsible Care.

The implementation of Responsible Care by companies and their subsidiaries around the world and the extension of this initiative in new sectors and countries will contribute to achieving the aims of the CWC.

The first country to finish its demilitarisation programme was Albania, which incinerated its relatively small stockpile of 16 MT during the first six months of 2007. Libya has not yet begun the destruction of some 23 MT of mustard agent but successfully eliminated its unfilled munitions bodies - 3,563 aerial bombs - in 2004. India declared a chemical weapons stockpile of over 1,000 MT and had successfully incinerated some 97% of this by mid-2008.

The successful, verified elimination of some 40% of the six declared chemical weapons stockpiles in the first 11 years of the Chemical Weapons Convention represents a major achievement for the treaty regime and its implementing body, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The primary goal of the Convention - the total elimination of existing chemical weapons stockpiles - is well on the way to being met in the foreseeable future. The sizeable tonnage eliminated to date includes almost three million munitions and containers filled with deadly chemical agents which could theoretically have proliferated into dangerous hands. Also not to be overlooked is the destruction or conversion to date of 61 of 65 former chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared in 12 countries; the institutionalisation of on-site verification activities by the OPCW, which has conducted almost 3,400 inspections in 81 countries; and the fact that all declared chemical weapons stockpiles have been fully inventoried by the OPCW, something that was dangerously absent a decade ago.

And yet, in spite of all its important successes over the past decade, the OPCW still faces formidable challenges for completing its primary goal of complete global elimination of chemical weapons. Five of these interrelated challenges, amongst many others, are noted below.

Meeting CWC deadlines

The CWC established four deadlines for destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles based on the April 1997 EIF date: 1) 1% by April 2000, 2) 20% by 2002, 3) 45% by 2004, and 4) 100% by 2007, or 10 years after EIF. The treaty also allows for extensions of up to five years to be granted by the OPCW Executive Council. The negotiators of the CWC no doubt felt that this 15-20 year time-frame would be more than adequate for possessor States to eliminate their stockpiles (2-5 years prior to EIF, 10 years for destruction, and another five years of extensions). But they failed to fully understand the technical, financial and political complexities of chemical weapons demilitarisation.

No possessor State has or will meet all of its initial CWC deadlines. Albania, the first to eliminate its CW stockpile, missed its April 2007 deadline by about two months due primarily to unpredicted technical equipment failures. The United States, which has successfully eliminated the most tonnage to date, met its 1% and 20% deadlines in 2000 and 2002; but its 45% deadline, which it met in 2007, was extended three years. And, although it received the maximum five-year extension from the OPCW for its 100% deadline, the U.S. announced in 2006 that it would not be able to complete its demilitarisation programme by 2012. [2]

Russia, which holds the largest CW stockpile, only met its 1% and 20% deadlines in 2003 and 2007 after three- and five-year extensions. Its 45% deadline has been extended more than five years to December 2009, while its 100% deadline has been extended to April 2012. Although Russia publicly declares that it will meet these deadlines, many informed observers are sceptical that this is realistic. India has received a two-year extension for the 100% deadline until April 2009 and appears likely to meet this. If Libya is to reach its extended deadline of December 2010, it must begin destruction activities soon.

While it is disappointing that demilitarisation programmes have been so delayed, far beyond predictions of both CWC negotiators and national programme implementers, it is reassuring that no possessor State appears to lack the political will to complete its demilitarisation programme. The challenge for the OPCW and States Parties will be how best to deal with deadline violations, especially in 2012 when both the U.S. and Russia may be in violation of their final deadline. The OPCW Executive Council, when faced with Albania's violation last year, did not overreact and threaten Albania with serious sanctions; rather, it acknowledged the violation and requested regular reports on further progress. And this "management and oversight" approach is likely the best way to handle the 2012 dilemma. As the OPCW Director-General stated at the April 2008 Second Review Conference, "States Parties might wish to consider the option of calling for a Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to review the matter objectively and to decide on a course of action that best serves the long-term interests of both the Convention and the

OPCW." [3]

Paying for demilitarisation

Neither the CWC's negotiators nor national programme implementers had much sense of total costs for the demilitarisation efforts a decade or more ago. The U.S. first estimated the cost of its programme 20 years ago at US\$2 billion; this has now escalated to over US\$35 billion. Russia first spoke of a US\$3 billion programme 10 years ago; this is now estimated at over US\$8 billion. The financial burden of these programmes is part of the reason for delay by both the U.S. and Russia. While the U.S. is spending some US\$1.5 billion annually on its demilitarisation programme, this is still insufficient to meet CWC deadlines and national schedules. Although an accelerated programme was recommended by Congress after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, the U.S. Defense Department rejected the increased costs and thereby delayed the programme well beyond the 2012 CWC deadline.

When considering treaty ratification in the mid-1990s, Russia emphasised the fact that it would find it difficult to meet programmatic costs in the midst of its historic socio-economic transformation. For this reason a dozen or more foreign countries, as members of the G-8 Global Partnership, have pledged support to Russia for destroying its CW stockpiles. The U.S. has already appropriated over US\$1 billion for CW demilitarisation in Russia as part of its Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) programme while Germany, Canada and the United Kingdom, amongst other donor nations, have likewise committed at least US\$700 million in support.

Yet the funding for both the U.S. and Russian programmes still remains inadequate. Russia only began serious funding of its own programme about five years ago, and the U.S. has refused to provide additional support to Russia over the past two years. A recent U.S. Army report on funding and schedule also indicates that the U.S. could accelerate its demilitarisation efforts with some US\$200 million in additional annual funding now. [4]

Both the U.S. and Russia must provide sufficient funding for their individual programmes in order to help meet their legally binding deadlines under the CWC. Director-General Pfirter re-emphasised this point this past April before the Second Review Conference: "The two countries concerned, surely, on their part, need to ensure the timely commissioning of all necessary destruction sites and the timely allocation of the required resources." [5]

And regardless of current East-West politics and perceptions, all members of the G-8 Global Partnership must likewise continue to help Russia eliminate its dangerous stockpiles in a timely and safe manner. These stockpiles must be eliminated not only for Russian and U.S. security, but for the sake of global security.

Finishing the job

One of the major issues in chemical weapons

destruction programmes has been to define the “end point of destruction”, that is, at what point a deadly agent is irreversibly destroyed. This is the point at which the OPCW may credit the possessor State with destruction. This can be a highly technical and esoteric discussion about percentages of precursor chemicals remaining in neutralised agent (what Russia calls “reaction mass”) or degrees of deformation of metal munitions bodies. But the bottom line is that chemical agents and weapons must be destroyed so that no harmful agent remains, and there is no possibility of back-engineering the agent and weapon.

In the United States the CW agents, weapons and all related parts (“dunnage”) have been incinerated in multiple furnaces or destroyed in a two-stage neutralisation process which includes either bio-treatment or incineration in the second stage. This has left no doubt about the end-point of destruction and the OPCW has credited the U.S. with destruction after the final processing stage. Russia, on the other hand, has undertaken a single-stage neutralisation process for lewisite, mustard, and lewisite-mustard mixtures at Gorny and Kambarka, and for nerve agents at Maradykovsky. Although Russia has just recently begun incinerating the reaction mass and mutilating the aerial bombs at Maradykovsky, the OPCW has agreed to credit Russia with destruction after the first stage.

It will be important for all possessor States to fully complete their destruction processes in all stages, as well as provide for safe closure and cleanup of contaminated CW destruction facilities, if these commendable and historic demilitarisation efforts are to be fully successful.

Protecting public health and the environment

Article IV of the CWC requires that each “State Party, during the transportation, sampling, storage and destruction of chemical weapons” must provide “the highest priority to ensuring the safety of people and to protecting the environment.” Director-General Pfirter has also emphasised the critical need for protecting populations and the environment during demilitarisation operations in many of his recent public statements.

While possessor States have committed to atmospheric monitoring, emergency warning systems, emergency planning and evacuation procedures, and enhanced medical and public health services in stockpile regions, there have been instances of much less than full preparedness and ideal protection for local populations and on-site workers. Fortunately, no major accidents or injuries have yet been reported at any operating destruction facility, and it will be incumbent on all possessor States, regardless of CWC deadlines, to continue to fully protect people and the environment.

Ensuring transparency and stakeholder involvement

The process for securing and destroying a whole

category of weapons of mass destruction has been very contentious and time-consuming in both Russia and the United States. Regions, states, communities, and families have understandably been very concerned over potential public health, environmental and safety impacts, while programme managers have faced unpredictable delays with legal entanglements, regulatory oversight and public demonstrations. While everyone is committed to eliminating the threat of chemical warfare, terrorist attacks and stockpile leaks and accidents in a timely and efficient way, this takes place best through extensive public outreach, transparency and involvement activities. Building consensus usually takes time up front, but saves much difficulty later on in the process.

In conclusion, one must first re-emphasise the tremendous success of the first 11 years of the international Chemical Weapons Convention and its implementing agency, the OPCW in The Hague. The verified elimination of enormous and dangerous chemical weapons stockpiles and production facilities, along with the implementation of a global inspection regime, sets a historic precedent for multilateral arms control and disarmament regimes. It will truly make chemical weapons taboo in international politics, and will no doubt encourage expansion of the arms control and inspection regimes for nuclear, biological, and perhaps even conventional weapons.

And yet much still remains to be done to fully implement the Convention. As discussed above, we need to keep our eyes on the prize: a global verified abolition regime, which includes the safe and sound elimination of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles; the accession to the CWC of 11 more countries, some of whom are suspected of harbouring CW stockpiles, in order to establish a truly universal treaty; the long-term inspection of commercial and military chemical facilities to preclude any possibility of breakout; the support of all States Parties of the OPCW, including national implementation, timely payment of annual organisational dues, and pro-active participation in the annual Conference of States Parties; and strong encouragement by the OPCW and States Parties for active involvement by civil society, including non-governmental organizations and chemical industry. It will take the whole global community to fully realise the dream of a chemical weapons-free world.

Footnotes

[1] U.S. national affiliate of Green Cross International founded by Mikhail Gorbachev.

[2] Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld wrote Congress on 10 April 2006 stating that the U.S. destruction programme would not finish by 2012. “I have determined that the United States will not be able to meet even the extended destruction deadline. Current estimates indicate approximately 66 percent of the declared chemical weapons stockpile will be destroyed by April 2012.” More recently, the U.S. Senate has drafted

legislation for Fiscal Year 2008 which obligates the U.S. to finishing by 2017, six years ahead of the Army-projected date of 2023.

[3] OPCW, Opening Statement by the Director-General to the Second Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, RC-2/DG.2, The Hague, April 7, 2008, p. 6.

[4] U.S. Department of Defense, Semi-Annual Report

to Congress, Washington DC, June 2008. This report promised a full assessment of schedule and costs for US chemical weapons destruction in a February 2009 report.

[5] OPCW, Opening Statement by the Director-General to the Second Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, RC-2/DG.2, The Hague, April 7, 2008, p. 6.

OFFICIAL VISITS

Visits by the OPCW Director-General (3 June-24 September 2008)

Belgrade, Serbia, 3 June 2008

The OPCW Director-General visited Serbia on 3 June 2008, where he opened the Seventh Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Eastern Europe in Belgrade. While there the Director-General met with H.E. Mr Radojko Bogojevic, the State Secretary of Foreign Affairs; H.E. Mr Saša Dragin, Minister of Environment Protection; H.E. Mr Dušan Spasojevic, State Secretary, Ministry of Defence; H.E. Mr Feodor Starcevic, Assistant Minister for Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Ambassador Bratislav Djordjevic, Head of the National Authority of Serbia.

Penza Region, Russian Federation, 17-18 June 2008

The Director-General paid an official visit to the Russian Federation on 17 and 18 June 2008 to attend the official event marking the commencement of the new Leonidovka chemical weapons destruction facility in the Penza region. During the visit, the Director-General met with Mr Victor Kholstov, Deputy Director of the Federal Industry Agency, Head of the Russian Chemical Weapons Destruction Program, and General Valery Kapashin, Head of the Federal Department for the Safe Storage and Disposal of Chemical Weapons.

Paris, France, 19 June 2008

The Director-General visited Paris on 19 June 2008 to address a seminar on "Middle East Security and Weapons of Mass Destruction Non Proliferation/Disarmament" organised by the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS).

Rome, Italy, 21 June 2008

The Director-General visited Rome on 21 June 2008 to deliver an address to the 25th International Workshop on Global Security. The event was organised by the Centre for Strategic Decision Research.

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 22-23 July 2008

The Director-General visited Buenos Aires on 22 and 23 July 2008 where he addressed the regional meeting of representatives of national authorities and parliaments in Latin America and the Caribbean. During his visit the Director-General met with Ambassador Victorio Taccetti, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Argentina; Ambassador Raúl Ricardes, General Director for Multilateral Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Argentina; and the Hon. Luis Francisco Cigognia, Chairman of the Justice Committee of Argentina's Chamber of Representatives.

Paris, France, 24 September 2008

The Director-General addressed a basic course for personnel of national authorities involved in implementing the CWC that was jointly organised by France's National Authority and the OPCW at the Training Centre for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in Paris. He thanked the government of France for its excellent preparations and the French presidency of the EU for providing another opportunity to further its collaboration with the Technical Secretariat. He also held discussions with high-level officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence, who assured him of France's continued strong support for the CWC and the work of the OPCW.