

## Press Release

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# OPCW Chemicals Transfer Regime Workshop for Customs Authorities Concludes

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has conducted a Workshop for Customs Authorities on Technical Aspects of the Implementation of the Chemicals Transfer Regime, which was held at the OPCW headquarters in The Hague from 4 to 5 October 2005.

In total, 82 participants from fifty States Parties attended the workshop. In addition, representatives from the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), the World Customs Organisation (WCO) and the Port Authority of Rotterdam also participated in the meeting.

In his opening address to the Workshop, Ambassador Rogelio Pfirter, the OPCW Director-General, noted the crucial role that customs authorities play in the effective implementation of the Convention. He stressed that through the exchange of experience and information provided by the Workshop, the OPCW aimed to improve senior customs authorities' understanding of the requirements of the Chemical Weapons Convention, particularly those relating to the import and export of relevant chemicals.

Director-General Pfirter hoped that the participants would acquire an in-depth understanding of the measures that each customs authority is required to undertake to comply with the provisions of the Convention, as well as to gain insight into the practices being followed by other Member States' customs authorities.

Representatives from more than twenty participating Member States, as well as representatives from UNEP, WCO and the Port Authority of Rotterdam, provided presentations on specific implementation-related issues, including addressing areas which would benefit from cooperation between the OPCW and the other international organisations dealing with chemical substances.

This workshop was funded by the European Union Joint Action Plan. The Joint Action Plan provides support in the framework of the European Union strategy against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to the OPCW's activities, which aim to enhance the effective implementation of the Convention.

## Background Note for Editors

### THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION AND THE OPCW IN BRIEF / STATUS REPORT

The [Chemical Weapons Convention](#) (CWC) is an international, multilateral disarmament treaty which bans the development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons. The [States Parties](#) to the CWC are obligated to declare any chemical weapons-related activities, to secure and destroy any stockpiles of chemical weapons within the stipulated deadlines, as well as to inactivate and eliminate any chemical weapons production capacity within their jurisdiction.

The CWC entered into force in 1997 and mandated the [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](#) (OPCW) to eliminate chemical weapons forever. The OPCW verifies the irreversible [destruction](#) of declared chemical weapons stockpiles, as well as the elimination of all declared chemical weapons production facilities. The OPCW Member States, together with OPCW inspectors, monitor the non-diversion of chemicals for activities prohibited under the CWC and verify the

consistency of industrial chemical declarations. In addition, OPCW States Parties undertake to provide [protection and assistance](#), if chemical weapons have been used against a State Party, or if such weapons threaten a State Party. The CWC also calls for [international cooperation](#) in the peaceful use of chemistry.

The CWC is the single disarmament agreement that in its daily application around the world is used to verify the on-going elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, chemical weapons. OPCW [inspections](#) are conducted in dozens of countries, where both military and industrial sites are subject to verification. The verification procedures and the declaration obligations of the States Parties are applied in an entirely non-discriminatory manner, following protocols negotiated and adopted in intensive and transparent multilateral negotiations. All States Parties enjoy the same rights and bear the same obligations, regardless of their declared possession of chemical weapons.

The global chemical weapons ban is approaching [universality](#): as of 16 October 2005, 174 States will be party to the CWC and have taken the sovereign decision to renounce chemical weapons in perpetuity, while voluntarily complying with a strict verification regime. Together, these countries form the OPCW. Only 20 States have not as yet [acceded](#) or [ratified](#) the CWC. Every country is urged to accede to, or ratify, the Chemical Weapons Convention so that the development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons is illegal everywhere. Universality of the CWC is a key priority in establishing a global and permanent ban of chemical weapons.

The CWC's international jurisdiction and deterrent effect is bolstered by the steadily expanding membership of the OPCW, now encompassing over 95% of the global population, as well as 98% of the relevant global chemical industry. The broad coverage of this disarmament treaty, the most complex and comprehensive international agreement of its kind ever to be adopted, grants States party to the CWC an ever more robust assurance that chemical weapons will no longer be developed, produced, stockpiled, used or transferred.

## **OPCW Status Report**

Six States Parties have declared chemical weapons and must destroy over eight million items, including munitions and containers —in total, over seventy-one thousand metric tonnes of extremely toxic chemical agents. By comparison, one drop of a nerve agent, no larger than the head of a pin, can kill an adult within minutes after exposure.

Every Member State must introduce and [apply legislation](#) to make the development, production, use, stockpiling or transfer of chemical weapons by any person or group illegal. Severe penalties must be imposed should this crime be committed. Each Member State is obliged to provide other Member States with its fullest cooperation so as to expedite prosecution.

To make sure that the Convention is implemented effectively, Member States are obliged to designate or establish a ["National Authority"](#). This body participates in and coordinates OPCW inspections of relevant industrial or military sites, makes initial and annual declarations, participates in assisting and protecting those Member States which are threatened by, or have indeed suffered, a chemical attack, and fosters the peaceful uses of chemistry. In addition, the National Authority acts as the focal point in the State Party's interaction with other States Parties and the OPCW's Technical Secretariat. The OPCW Technical Secretariat has established a coordinated mechanism to support Member States in their national implementation of the Convention. The focus of this work is to provide advice and assistance to the staff of National Authorities in order to help them enhance their skills and expertise.

100% of the declared [chemical weapons production facilities](#) (CWPFs) have been deactivated. All are subjected to a verification regime of unprecedented stringency. Over 75% of the declared CWPFs have been eliminated. Over 25% of the 8.6 million chemical munitions and containers covered by the Convention have been verifiably destroyed. Nearly 17% of the world's declared stockpiles of approximately 71,000 metric tonnes of chemical agent have been verifiably destroyed. Over 2,000 on-site inspections have been conducted in over 70 States Parties to verify compliance with the CWC.

## States not party

### **Twelve States have signed but have not yet ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention as at 3 October 2005**

1. Bahamas (Date of Signature: 02-03-94)
2. Central African Republic (14-01-93)
3. Comoros (13-01-93)
4. Congo (15-01-93)
5. Democratic Republic of the Congo (14-01-93)
6. Djibouti (28-09-93)
7. Dominican Republic (13-01-93)
8. Guinea-Bissau (14-01-93)
9. Haiti (14-01-93)
10. Israel (13-01-93)
11. Liberia (15-01-93)
12. Myanmar (14-01-93)

### **Eight States have not yet acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention as at 3 October 2005**

1. Angola
2. Barbados
3. Democratic People's Republic of Korea
4. Egypt
5. Iraq
6. Lebanon
7. Somalia
8. Syrian Arab Republic

FOR INFORMATION — NOT AN OFFICIAL RECORD

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#### [Conference of the States Parties](#)

Executive Council  
Technical Secretariat  
Confidentiality Commission  
Scientific Advisory Board  
Advisory Body on Admin. & Financial Matters  
Other International Agreements  
Universality of the CWC  
Introduction  
Chairperson of the Conference  
Rules of Procedure  
History of Chemical Weapons