

## CWC Fourth Review Conference: Key Areas of Focus

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### Summary

OPCW marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its formation on the April 29, 2017; it is indeed laudable to note the efforts of the organisation in fostering international cooperation to strengthen implementation of the Convention and promote the peaceful uses of chemistry. Presently, the civil society, academia, industry experts and state parties are discussing range of possible policy recommendations and suggestions to set an agenda for the Fourth Review Conference to be held during November 19-23, 2018 at OPCW, The Hague.

A discussion was held at Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) during the recent Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) coalition meeting and during the eighth open ended working group meeting (OEMG-RC) on what should the Fourth Review Conference seek to address as a matter of priority and what should be the priority areas for the Organisation in the next five years and why. The civil society, academia and industry experts along with state parties took part in the discussion to chalk out specific recommendations and suggestions to be focused on during the Fourth Review Conference to be held in November 2018 at OPCW.

During the last two decades of its journey, the OPCW has performed its responsibilities with the sincerity for controlling the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons. The OPCW's membership remains at 192 State Parties since Angola's accession on 16 October 2015.<sup>1</sup> During 2017, OPCW has made significant progress in destroying the remaining declared stockpiles of chemical weapons, enhancing industry verification, expanding international cooperation and assistance, addressing counter terrorism and broadening education and outreach. In the process of destruction of declared chemical weapons in 2017, the Technical Secretariat verified the destruction of 1,620.889 metric tonnes (MT) of Category 1 chemical weapons. From the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to 31 December 2017, the Secretariat verified the destruction of 67,877.6661 MT of declared Category 1 chemical weapons, representing 96.29% of the declared total amount<sup>2</sup>.

Destruction operations in the Russian Federation at the only remaining facility at Kizner were completed on September 27, 2017. The United States continued to work towards its target date of September 2023 for the complete destruction of its remaining chemical weapons stocks. Progress was also recorded in the destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan in China. During 2017, the Secretariat conducted 11 inspections regarding abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) and seven concerning old chemical weapons (OCW).<sup>3</sup>

The full and effective implementation of the Convention continued to underlie the OPCW's contribution to global counter-terrorism efforts.<sup>4</sup> The Council's Open-Ended Working Group on terrorism, and its more technically oriented sub-working group on non-state actors, continued to explore a number of areas in which the OPCW could advance this contribution.<sup>5</sup> As Chemical Weapons (CW) related terror incidents are expected to grow, the role of OPCW in countering CW terrorism, needs to be enhanced, well-defined and the organisation should be provided with the requisite wherewithal to take up this role.

There is a need to work hard to increase awareness about OPCW and its activities among the general public. There is a need to promote transparency and inclusiveness including availability of documents.

Achieving total demilitarisation is also important, therefore, pressure needs to be maintained as the United States still has some quantities of CW left to be destroyed which should not take beyond 2023; the issue of Libya also needs to be resolved.

Determining the use of chemical agents and weapons is important particularly given the recent incidents in Syria and in the UK.

North Korea is a big question too as it is suspected to have stocks and could produce more in violation of the CWC. Hence, there is a need to support Fact-Finding Mission (FFM ) efforts.

There is also a need to reassess the adequacy of an OPCW inspectorate which is now tasked with ongoing inspections in Syria under very difficult conditions. Therefore, the inspectors should get all the required assistance and security cover.

OPCW needs to build network of organisations which are committed to similar cause. It can increase its interaction with the relevant multilateral organisations such as the Biological weapons Convention (BWC), World Health Organisation (WHO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) etc. This will allow them to learn from each other's experiences.

The importance of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) involvement is must to have wider and non-official perspective. Some state parties on occasions are found resisting the role for NGO's which actually is counterproductive to the wider cause of CWC. Organisations like CWC Coalition is actually playing a key role towards the constructive engagement of NGO's to further the OPCW agenda. It has helped to register about 200 NGOs at the 22nd CSP (Conference of the State Parties) (November 2017). NGOs are found contributing at various platforms from education to increasing visibility of OPCW work. They along with academia are providing various policy inputs. In addition, industry interests are found projected properly by NGO's and even many NGO's are supporting victims of the chemical attacks.

There is a need to increase awareness and educate the general public through seminars, and workshops and involve the younger

generation, mainly university students and make them aware of the importance of the CWC and its universal implementation. The infusion of the younger generation opinion should be taken on “how to prevent re-emergence of chemical weapons”. This can be helpful to reach out to the wider audience. For this purpose social media could be used effectively. Using this medium, issues concerning the uses of chemical weapons i.e. about the chemical causalities, medical treatment of chemical weapons victims, psychological effect on chemical weapons victims and their families could be effectively highlighted to a larger audience. There is a need to increase engagement with print and visual media as a continuous process. Also engaging celebrities as public ambassadors for promoting OPCW’s vision and mission would be helpful.<sup>6</sup>

It is also important to get political support, corporate funding and technical assistance for carrying out effort to increase consciousness that “chemistry should be used for peace”. The importance of the Science Advisory Board (SAB) needs to be enhanced for continuing to assess the impact of S&T on the OPCW’s work and the non-proliferation of CW.

The implementation of Article X of the CWC is important, especially to those in need of advice and support for protection against any use of toxic chemicals.

Determining accountability for any use of CW through a relevant mechanism needs to be formulated either by the UN Secretary General or through other similar organisations.

Reassessing the annual budget is important, which has dropped by almost \$10 million over the last decade. Therefore, OPCW should look for voluntary contribution for increasing the funding instead of cutting the

budget, reducing administrative staff and inspectors.

Similar to the Advisory Board for Education and Outreach (ABEO) on project can be introduced for enhancing education and outreach in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

More efforts of outreach are required and a roadmap for future activities could include expanding OPCW’s regional centres and have more designated laboratories. This will encourage involvement and active participation of government sectors as well as non-government bodies and organisations.

There is a long way to go to save the world from chemical weapons, maintain peace and reduce the risk to humanity. OPCW has to continue working jointly along with scientists, academics and the civil society for preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons.

## Endnotes:

\* The author was a participant at the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) coalition meeting held during February 19-20, 2018 at Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and presented her views at the interaction between States Parties and external partners during the “Eighth Open Ended Working Group Meeting”, held at the OPCW on May 16, 2018.

1 EC-88/CRP.1 25 April 2018 Original: ENGLISH DRAFT REPORT OF THE OPCW

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

6 Ibid