

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is an international treaty of unlimited duration. It bans chemical weapons and requires their destruction within a specified period of time. The treaty is considered the most comprehensive pertaining to chemical weapons and is a landmark in multilateral arms negotiations in the post Cold War era.

On January 13, 1993, the Convention was opened for signature and it entered into force on April 29, 1997. At present, 183 states are party to the Convention. Amongst the seven states that have not signed or acceded include North Korea and Syria. CWC has been ratified by all the states of South Asia except for Myanmar. Myanmar signed the Convention on January 14, 1993 but has not ratified it as yet.

The implementing body of the CWC is the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The mandate of the OPCW is to “achieve the object and purpose of the Convention, to ensure the implementation of its provisions, including those for international verification of compliance with it, and to provide a forum for consultation and cooperation among States Parties”.¹

Established in 1997, the OPCW has its Headquarters at The Hague, Netherlands. The current membership of the OPCW is 184. Ambassador Rogelio Pfrter is the OPCW Director General from 2006 to 2010.

There are three main organs of the OPCW, the Technical Secretariat, Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties of the OPCW. The Secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day administration and implementation of the Convention. The Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties are the decision-making organs. Composed of all Member States, the Conference meets annually as well as in special session when necessary. The Executive Council is comprised of the representatives of

41 Member States, who are elected by all other OPCW Member States to serve two-year terms. The Executive Council usually meets four times per year, and more frequently in meetings and informal consultations, to take policy decisions that enable the OPCW to function.²

The OPCW Member States already represent about 98% of the global population and landmass, as well as 98% of the worldwide chemical industry.³ The OPCW also support to non-member states to prepare for joining the CWC.

Endnotes:

- ¹ <http://www.opcw.org/about-opcw/>
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.