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**COURSE: WEAPONS PROLIFERATION AND WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION (PCS 408)**

**CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION**

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is an arms control treaty that outlaws the production, stockpiling, and use of chemical weapons and their precursors. The full name of the treaty is the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction and it is administered by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), an intergovernmental organization based in The Hague, The Netherlands. The treaty entered into force on 29 April 1997. The Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits the large-scale use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of chemical weapons. Very limited production for research, medical, pharmaceutical or protective purposes is still permitted. The main obligation of member states under the convention is to effect this prohibition, as well as the destruction of all current chemical weapons. All destruction activities must take place under OPCW verification.

The modern use of chemical weapons began with World War I, when both sides to the conflict used poisonous gas to inflict agonizing suffering and to cause significant battlefield casualties. Such weapons basically consisted of well known commercial chemicals put into standard munitions such as grenades and artillery shells.

In order to prepare for the entry-into-force of the CWC, a Preparatory Commission of [the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)](http://www.opcw.org/) was established with the responsibility to prepare detailed operation procedures and to put into place the necessary infrastructure for the permanent implementing agency provided for in the Convention. Headquarters for this organization were established in The Hague, the Netherlands. The CWC entered into force on 29 April 1997, 180 days after deposit of the 65th instrument of ratification.

**CWC's Accomplishments in its First Decade**

The CWC made progress on strengthening the regime for chemical weapon disarmament and non-proliferation during its first decade. Experts consider achieving near universal membership within a decade an important CWC accomplishment.

In terms of verification of disarmament, the OPCW reports that, as of March 16, 2007, 100% of declared chemical weapons production facilities have been inactivated and 90% of these facilities have been destroyed or converted to peaceful purposes, 30% of the 8.6 million chemical munitions and containers covered by the CWC have been verifiably destroyed, and almost 25% of the world's declared stockpile of approximately 71,000 metric tons of chemical agent have been verifiably destroyed. Since April 1997, the OPCW conducted 2,800 inspections at 200 chemical weapon-related sites and over 850 industrial sites in 77 States Parties.

**Implementing Measures**

All States Parties are required under Article VII of the Chemical Weapons Convention to adopt the ‘necessary measures’ to legally implement the CWC within their legal structures. They must then inform the OPCW of the legislative and administrative measures they have taken. Article VII contains some specific and required measures such as passing laws that criminalize certain conduct prohibited by the Convention and establishing a National Authority.

The complex nature of these obligations means that each State Party must assess the steps necessary for making sure the Convention will be implemented effectively and enforced within its jurisdiction.

Depending upon the State Party’s constitution, its existing laws, the extent of its chemical industry, or whether it has (or had) a chemical weapons program, the steps the State Party has to take may be very few or quite extensive.

In all cases, however, a review of existing legislation is an important first step to ensure that legal implementation is consistent and effective.

National implementation of the Convention can be a demanding task. Some States Parties have little domestic experience with many of the issues covered by the CWC.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat regularly holds training courses around the world for personnel involved with National Authorities; since 1997, thousands of participants have received support through OPCW meetings, workshops, training courses and seminars.