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**MATRIC NUMBER: 16/SMS10/005**

**COURSE: WEAPONS PROLIFERATION AND WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION**

**INTRODUCTION**

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.

As of May 2018, 193 states have become parties to the CWC and accept its obligations. Israel has signed but not ratified the agreement, while three other UN member states (Egypt, North Korea and South Sudan) have neither signed nor acceded to the treaty. Most recently, the State of Palestine deposited its instrument of accession to the CWC on 17 May 2018. In September 2013 Syria acceded to the convention as part of an agreement for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons.

Some chemicals which have been used extensively in warfare but have numerous large-scale industrial uses such as phosgene are highly regulated, however, certain notable exceptions exist. Chlorine gas is highly toxic, but being a pure element and extremely widely used for peaceful purposes, is not officially listed as a chemical weapon. Certain state-powers (e.g. the Assad regime of Syria) continue to regularly manufacture and implement such chemicals in combat munitions. Although these chemicals are not specifically listed as controlled by the CWC, the use of any toxic chemical as a weapon (when used to produce fatalities solely or mainly through its toxic action) is in-and-of itself forbidden by the treaty. Other chemicals, such as white phosphorus, are highly toxic but are legal under the CWC when they are used by military forces for reasons other than their toxicity.

**Accomplishments in the CWC's 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.

Although the CWC faces on-going and new challenges in its second decade, its operations since April 1997 have not suffered the problems the NPT and BWC have had. Unlike the NPT, which has confronted increasing problems related to nuclear proliferation (e.g., North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT and its subsequent nuclear test, and concerns about the proliferation threats posed by Iran's nuclear activities), the CWC has not experienced State Party withdrawal or defection that threatens the treaty's disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. Unlike the failure of the States Parties of the BWC to construct a verification regime, the CWC's verification strategy has produced results the OPCW can build upon in the future.

The chemical weapons convention is a legacy of the end of the cold war. The collapse of the Soviet Union reinvigorated the long-dormant chemical weapons control process. This culminated with most nations signing and ratifying the chemical weapons convention, which came into force in 1997.

Each nation is responsible for the destruction of its own stockpile of weapons (either alone, or with the help of others), with compliance monitored by OPCW. So far about 96% of declared stocks of chemical weapon agents have been eliminated, including all of Russia’s declared stockpile.

**ACTIVITIES OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION IN ELIMINATING CHEMICAL WEAPONS.**

**UNIVERSALITY.**

Universal adherence to the CWC, or universality, is a fundamental goal of the OPCW. If the Convention is to fulfil its mandate “to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons”, universality is crucial.

The universality of the Convention would help not only to establish further the global norm against chemical weapons, but it would also provide a basis for global efforts to eliminate potential safe havens for any individual or group, including terrorists, who would seek to develop and/or use chemical weapons in violation of the convention.

**ACTIVTIY OF DISTRUCTION**

The CWC obligates States Parties possessing chemical weapons to destroy their Category 1 chemical weapons not later than 10 years after the entry into force of the Convention. The Convention also details procedures for requesting an extension for up to five additional years.

After the initial deadline passed, extensions were requested by the six remaining possessor States. At the Eleventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties, extensions were granted, specific to each requesting State Party, with the requirement that any extension should not exceed the minimum time necessary, but in no case should the deadline for a State Party to complete its destruction of all chemical weapons be extended beyond 15 years after the entry into force of the Convention, thus placing the latest possible date as 29 April 2012.

Three States Parties were unable to complete destruction by the 2012 deadline and they requested further extensions. The Conference of the States Parties in its Sixteenth Session noted with concern that the final extended deadline of 29 April 2012 might not be fully met by these remaining possessors States. It decided that each Possessor State would submit a detailed plan for the destruction of its remaining chemical weapons in the shortest time possible to the Sixty-Eighth Session of the Executive Council. These plans would specify the planned completion date for the destruction of any remaining chemical weapons.

If a State ratifies or accedes to the Convention after the 10 year period for destruction, it must destroy chemical weapons specified in paragraph 1 as soon as possible. Details are outlined in Article IV, paragraph 8, of the Convention. The order of destruction and procedures for stringent verification for such a State Party must be determined by the Executive Council.

**National 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.

The focus of training courses has gradually shifted from topics like the preparation of national implementing legislation to other concerns such as the development of analytical capabilities and customs issues. In addition to regional courses, the Secretariat supports national courses in areas relevant to the Convention.

The OPCW provides a wide-range of programmes to support national implementation of the Convention.

**REFERENCE.**

* https://www.opcw.org/our-work/supporting-national-implementation-convention https://www.opcw.org/our-work/eliminating-chemical-weapons https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemical\_Weapons\_Convention