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The **Chemical Weapons Convention** (**CWC**) is an [arms control](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms_control) [treaty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty) that outlaws the production, stockpiling, and use of [chemical weapons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemical_weapon) and their [precursors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Precursor_(chemistry)). 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 [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organisation_for_the_Prohibition_of_Chemical_Weapons) (OPCW), an intergovernmental organization based in [The Hague](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/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.

Intergovernmental consideration of a chemical and biological weapons ban was initiated in 1968 within the 18-nation Disarmament Committee, which, after numerous changes of name and composition, became the [Conference on Disarmament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conference_on_Disarmament) (CD) in 1984. On 3 September 1992 the Conference on Disarmament submitted to the [U.N. General Assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.N._General_Assembly) its annual report, which contained the text of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The General Assembly approved the Convention on 30 November 1992, and the U.N. Secretary-General then opened the Convention for signature in Paris on 13 January 1993. The CWC remained open for signature until its entry into force on 29 April 1997, 180 days after the deposit of the 65th instrument of ratification (by Hungary). The convention augments the [Geneva Protocol](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geneva_Protocol) of 1925 for chemical weapons and includes extensive verification measures such as on-site inspections. It does not, however, cover [biological weapons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biological_weapon).

History was made on 29 April 1997 with the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)— the world’s first multilateral disarmament agreement to provide for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction within a fixed time frame. The event marked both the culmination of many years of painstaking negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament and Preparatory Commission and the birth of an international chemical weapons disarmament regime headed by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The Organisation strives to fulfil the Convention’s mandate to end the development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons; to ensure the elimination of existing stocks of such weapons; and, in so doing, to make the world safe from the threat of chemical warfare

Going forward the OPCW has much to consider, but it can also feel satisfied with what it has achieved over the past twenty years. The CWC requires its States Parties to destroy all the chemical weapons they possess, and presently we are closer to completing the destruction process. As of today, 96.3 percent of some 72,000 metric tonnes of chemical warfare agent have been eliminated. Just last month, the Russian Federation announced the completion of its demilitarisation process. The United States has destroyed more than 90 percent of its chemical weapons arsenal, and is on track to completing its own demilitarisation process by the planned time of 2023. To monitor compliance with these destruction obligations, as well as the Convention’s core prohibitions, the CWC created one of the most extensive verification systems devised for a disarmament instrument. To date, OPCW inspectors have undertaken nearly 3,500 industrial inspections in over 80 States Parties.

Inspections have generated confidence in the efficacy of the Convention, and promoted trust between the States Parties. The OPCW’s universalization activities have engaged numerous countries since the entry into force and we have attained outstanding results. Today, 192 States Parties enjoy the CWC’s protection. Only four countries are not yet party to the Convention. In parallel to these achievements, the Organisation has also had to face formidable challenges. Our Syria mission was both a test of the Organisation as well as a demonstration of our capacity to adapt to new situations. In 2013, the OPCW commenced the unprecedented and ambitious task of monitoring the demilitarisation of a declared chemical weapons programme in an active conflict zone. Despite the difficulties, the OPCW verified the transportation out of Syria and destruction of 1,300 metric tonnes of chemical warfare agent in less than a year. Our mission in Syria continues. In the face of persistent and credible allegations of chlorine being used as weapons in Syria, I established the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in April 2014 to assess these incidents. The FFM has investigated multiple cases, most recently confirming the use of siren during an attack this April on the town of Khan Sheikhoun.

However, the results of the FFM’s activities are forwarded to the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, which has the mandate to identify perpetrators. We are aware that the use of chlorine in many of the incidents investigated by the JIM is not only a concern to the OPCW and the CWC States Parties, but to the chemical industry as well. I wish to acknowledge the support offered by the American Chemistry Council and Cefic on this issue. Even though much of the OPCW’s work has occurred outside the public eye, the international community has still taken notice. In 2013, the Nobel Committee decided to award the OPCW the Nobel Prize for Peace for its extensive efforts in chemical disarmament. It was my privilege as the Director-General to receive the award in Oslo, on behalf of the Organisation.

The effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), nationally and internationally, will be the major precondition for a future successful functioning of this treaty. For the first time in arms control and disarmament history a treaty calls for definite national implementation by pointing to various obligations States Parties have to fulfil. Each State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention has agreed to a set of fundamental obligations under that Convention. One of the US-recognized rogue states, North Korea, is considering a first strike against South Korea, "and is capable of scorching South Korea with nuclear weapons, chemical weapons and rockets" - so says, Hwang Jang Yop, a defecting senior official from North Korea. According to Hwang, North Korea believes it can win a war with its Southern neighbor. And plans are in place to scorch Japan as well, if the U.S. were to intervene with a North-South Korean skirmish. The threat is very real as the North Korean Army, the world's fourth largest, has retained its strength and capability while the general population is suffering from acute distress because of the collapse of the North Korean economy. According to certain analysts, North Korea has dramatically increased, over the last couple years, its number of long-range artillery and rocket launchers. These weapons, against which there is no real defense, are positioned near the DMZ and are assumed to be chemical weapon delivery systems.

Iran's chemical weapons program has been declared by the U.S. State Department as one of the most active in today's world. There is considerable concern about reports of China's assistance to Iran (and to other rogue states) in matters of chemical warfare technology and production equipment's.24 Even though the Pentagon denies that any precedence is being set, the U.S. purchased 21 Soviet-era MiG-29 aircraft from the former Soviet republic of Moldova in order that rogue nations such as Iran would not get them. The U.S. has consistently vocalized warnings concerning Iran and its goals to acquire WMD and the means to deliver the weapons. The funding program used to purchase the MiGs had previously been used to buy up available bomb-grade uranium from Kazahkstan, but this is the first time that the program was used to buy actual weapons.