

Get the Facts: Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction (CWC)

Opened for Signature: 13 January 1993

Entered into Force: 29 April 1997

Duration: Indefinite

Membership: 192 State Parties, 1 Signatory (Israel)

Depositary: UN Secretary-General

Overview:

The CWC, a multilateral treaty with a strong verification regime, prohibits the production, use, and proliferation of chemical weapons. It targets munitions, toxic chemical agents, their precursor compounds, and specific production equipment. The CWC categorizes chemical compounds into three groups (Schedules I, II, and III) based on their potential use as chemical weapons versus their peaceful uses. The listed compounds are subject to increasing restriction, control, and monitoring with each increment of the Schedule, with Schedule I – those with the most military and fewest industrial uses – being the most restricted.

Rights and Responsibilities:

In accordance with Article I of the CWC, each State Party is prohibited from:

- Producing or developing chemical weapons agents and munitions
- Stockpiling or retaining chemical weapons
- Acquiring or transferring chemical weapons
- Using any chemical as a weapon during warfare

Each State Party is also obligated to destroy the entirety of its chemical weapons stockpile and all of its chemical weapons production facilities within 10 years of the convention's entrance into force. However, each also has the right to produce small amounts of restricted compounds in monitored facilities for chemical defense research or other peaceful purposes (Art X; Verification Annex, Part VI).

The CWC established the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to conduct monitoring and verification of each State Party's compliance with the convention. The OPCW reviews reports from the States Parties and conducts both routine and challenge inspections of chemical weapons facilities. Each State Party has the right to request a challenge inspection of a facility belonging to another State Party if it has reason to believe the site is involved in prohibited activities.

Review Process:

As required by Article VIII, the first Review Conference of all interested member states was held six years after the entry into force, in 2003. Review Conferences have been held every five years since then. Their goals are to evaluate the operation and implementation of the CWC and to include any recent scientific and technological developments.