



Chemical Weapons Convention

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, also known as the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), opened for signature in Paris January 13, 1993, culminating 25 years of negotiations in the United Nations. Prior to CWC signature, the United States entered into two bilateral agreements with the former Soviet Union concerning chemical weapons.

In 1989, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Soviet Union and the United States regarding a Bilateral Verification Experiment and Data Exchange (referred to as the Wyoming MOU) sought to facilitate the CWC negotiating process through data exchanges and verification experiments, which have been completed.

In 1990, the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Bilateral Destruction Agreement (BDA), which prohibits chemical weapons production and calls for each country to destroy most of its chemical weapons capability. By signing the BDA, the United States and the Soviet Union demonstrated their willingness to halt production and begin destruction of chemical weapons without waiting for agreement on the CWC. A verification protocol to the BDA remains uncompleted and the CWC has entered into force.

The CWC prohibits research, development, production, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons. States Parties are required to destroy their chemical weapon stockpiles and production facilities located any place under their jurisdiction or control, as well as chemical weapons abandoned on the territory of another State Party. The CWC also prohibits the use of riot control agents as a method of warfare.

Verification

The CWC contains an ambitious verification regime of comprehensive data reporting and detailed on-site inspections. All State Party facilities that produce or consume treaty-limited "scheduled" chemicals above certain levels or thresholds are obligated to report those activities under the CWC.

Any facilities that meet specified production or consumption thresholds found in the CWC must be "declared" by the State Party and become subject to routine inspections. They consist of an initial inspection and periodic follow-ups, called systematic or routine inspections. The purpose of routine inspections is to verify, through on-site inspection, each State Party's declared chemical activities. The Technical Secretariat of the CWC's organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) reviews data declarations and conducts these on-site inspections using multinational inspection teams employed by the organization.

Concerns about compliance with the Convention, including those not resolved during routine inspections, may be addressed through challenge inspections. Conducted by the OPCW, a challenge inspection may be requested by any CWC State Party at any facility that is believed to be conducting prohibited CW activities. State Parties to the CWC do not have the right to refuse a challenge inspection. No challenge inspections have been initiated to date.

Implementation progress

The U.S. Senate provided its advice and consent to ratification of CWC April 24, 1997, and the treaty entered into force April 29, 1997, 180 days after the 65th signatory (Hungary) deposited its instrument of ratification with the United Nations. One hundred seventy-four states have signed the Convention, and 144 signatories have ratified or acceded. The OPCW Technical Secretariat has conducted over 1050 initial and routine inspections worldwide. These inspections have focused on chemical weapons production, storage and commercial sites and facilities that manufacture small quantities of highly toxic chemicals for permitted medical, pharmaceutical or other peaceful purposes.

The OPCW has completed initial inspections of all U.S. government Department of Defense (DOD) declared facilities. The first CWC initial inspections of a DoD destruction facility occurred at the Tooele Chemical Disposal Facility, Utah, June 1-4, 1997. The first initial inspection of a U.S. storage facility occurred at the Bluegrass Chemical Activity, Kentucky, also in June 1997. Since entry-into-force, the OPCW has conducted 340 visits and inspections at DOD chemical weapons storage, former production, and destruction facilities.

The OPCW currently has a continuous monitoring presence at the Tooele Chemical Destruction Facility, Utah, with planned continuous monitoring beginning in 2002 at the Anniston Chemical Disposal Facility, Alabama. Completion of CW destruction activities at the Johnston Atoll Chemical Disposal System, Pacific Ocean, ended continuous monitoring requirements in February 2001.

In May 2000, CWC inspections began at U.S. industry sites. The Department of Commerce (DOC), is the lead agency for industry inspections. The OPCW has conducted 27 initial inspections and one re-inspection of chemical industry sites.

Agency role

Although the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) is not responsible for conducting inspections under the CWC, DTRA has obligations for escorting OPCW inspection teams in the United States. Before an inspection, the OPCW declares its intent to inspect a U.S. facility to the U.S. Nuclear Risk Reduction Center, Washington, D.C. Following notification by the NRRC of an impending DoD CWC inspection, DTRA informs DOD components. The NRRC notifies DOC, the lead agency, and DTRA of U.S. chemical industry inspections. DTRA then provides point-of-entry processing and logistical support for OPCW team's inspection-related equipment and coordinates support arrangements for OPCW inspectors at the inspected site. The Agency also arranges transportation, escorts the inspectors to the site and serves as on-site escort in partnership with DOD site escorts and similarly supports DOC at commercial sites.

DTRA is also involved in CWC education and preparation programs for U.S. facilities, including assistance visits, practical exercises and dissemination of information materials through the Defense Treaty Inspection Readiness Program Outreach Program.

DTRA

DTRA deters the use of weapons of mass destruction, reduces the present threat to the United States and its friends, and prepares for future threats. This Department of Defense combat support agency is located in the Washington, D.C., area and operates field offices worldwide.

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