

Forum: Disarmament Committee

Issue: Implementing Measures to Ensure the Elimination of all  
Chemical Weapons

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## **I. Introduction:**

The use of chemical weapons has plagued the battlefield and tormented civilians throughout much of the recorded history of mankind. Across continents and the ages, chemical weapons were used in war and quickly gained a reputation as an abhorrent weapon. Chemical warfare was first documented in ancient Greece, during the Peloponnesian War, where a toxic chemical compound, sulfur dioxide gas was accidentally formed by a large toxic fire that was used against the city of Plataea.

However, the modern use of chemical weapons started with the First World War. 100 years later, chemical weapons are still being used. This type of weaponry continues to terrorize societies across several continents. Despite concerted international efforts toward combating the use of chemical weapons, in the 21st century, the spectre of chemical weapons remains ever-present. Civilians and soldiers alike continue to suffer unimaginably from the continued use of this widely condemned form of weaponry. The United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs has been working to reduce and eliminate the use and production of chemical weapons for decades. A substantial amount of diplomacy and negotiation was necessary for the international community to come together and find solutions to end the threat of chemical weapons. Despite the existence of a thorough and well-developed Chemical Weapons Convention, the use of chemical weapons persists

## **II. Timeline of events:**

Major Developments in the Use and Prohibition of Chemical Weapons:

1675

The Strasbourg Agreement

The first international agreement limiting the use of chemical weapons, in this case, poison bullets.

- 1874            The Brussels Convention on the Law and Customs of War  
Prohibited the employment of poison or poisoned weapons, and the use of arms, projectiles or material to cause unnecessary suffering.
- 1899/1907    Hague Peace Conferences  
Bans on use of poisoned weapons, 'asphyxiating or deleterious gases'.
- 1915-1918    Europe, World War I  
1.3 million casualties, 90,000 fatalities from chemical weapons; first large-scale use of CW at Ypres, Belgium.
- 1920s            Morocco (Third Rif War)  
Use of chemical weapons in Morocco. Spain uses mustard gas (second confirmed case of mustard gas) on Riffian tribes
- 1925            Geneva Protocol  
Ban on CW use, but no prohibition on development, etc.
- 1930s            Abyssinia  
Use of chemical weapons in Abyssinia. Italy used it against Ethiopians.
- 1972            Biological Weapons Convention  
Comprehensive BW prohibition - 170 parties, 10 signatories by 2014, but no verification mechanism; commitment to negotiate on CW.
- 1980s            Iran-Iraq War  
Including use by Iraq of CW against civilian populations.
- 1993            Chemical Weapons Convention  
Signing of the CWC in Paris, 13 January.
- 1997            OPCW, The Hague  
CWC enters into force and the OPCW commences its operations.
- 2007            Tenth Anniversary of the CWC  
182 Member States 25,000 metric tons of chemical weapons certified by the OPCW as destroyed, 3,000 inspections carried out.
- 2013            Syrian Civil War  
The Ghouta and Khan al-Assal chemical attacks
- 2013            Nobel Peace Prize  
OPCW receives the Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts to eliminate CW.

### **III. Possible Solutions:**

There are many solutions already in place to combat the issue of chemical weapons and further disarmament affairs in this region; however, there are more possible solutions to this very complex topic. Almost no one is arguing that the use of chemical weapons is good, but there are countries that rely on their chemical weapons industry either economically or as a way to retain and gain political power. So, not every solution is an actual solution, but merely an idea. Different solutions work for different countries, with different national interest.

Possible solutions to this issue vary from preventive and precautionary steps, immediate responses, to the overall aim - fostering peace. Precautionary measures are oftentimes frowned upon, but in many cases precautionary work can be the most valuable work in the long term, because it inhibits any further progress or developments that might be even worse in the future. In the case of chemical weapons, preventing new chemical weapons from being developed is key, considering the already high amount of destroyed existing chemical weapons. In chemical weapons especially, disarmament efforts can be very theoretical, because the technology is always developing and changing, and will continue to in the future.

In many instances of international relations, countries who agree to offer something request something in return. You have the possibility to set up a reward and punishment system. If the country complies, a reward or remission of sanctions is possible and if the country does not comply, it can expect a punishment, like increased sanctions. This can be very attractive especially to those countries who are not industrialised and still developing countries, but have chemical weapons stockpiles and industry. Countries could exchange weapons and precursors for a payment. However, this system is rather unlikely to work with rebel groups or non-state actors. It asks the question if you are supposed to | Page 14 of 20 2018 financially support rebel or terrorist groups. With non-member states of the CWC, it would be coherent to work with them, because they have substantial power to gain if they agree to a deal like this. As a punishment if these countries do not want to comply, they can be hurt with sanctions by member states and not gain, but lose, both economically and politically.

**Thank you delegates,**

**Eva Markopoulioti**