CWC Coalition 3rd General Meeting
OPCW HQ (Ooms Room), The Hague, Netherlands
14:30 – 18:00, 29 November 2011

Minutes

Participating organizations: Amman Centre for Peace & Development (ACPD) (Jordan), Bradford Non-lethal weapons research project (UK) Brazilian Chemical Industry Association (Brazil), Centre of Halabja Against the Genocide in the Anfal and Kurdistan (CHAK) (Netherlands), Chemical Weapons Working Group (USA), Environmental Protection and Population Care Association (Yemen), Fars Province Society for Defending the Right of Veterans and Chemical Weapons Victims (Iran), Global Green USA (USA), Green Cross Netherlands (Netherlands), Green Cross Russia (Russia), Green Cross Switzerland (Switzerland), Halabja Chemical Victims Society (Iraq), International Dialogue on Underwater Munitions (IDUM), Kenyatta University (Kenya), Kurdocide Watch (Iraq), Organization for Defending the Sardasht Victims of Chemical Weapons (OSVCW) (Iran), Society for Chemical Weapons Victims Support (Iran), Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict (India), South Asia Strategic Stability Institute (SASSI) (Pakistan/UK), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (Sweden), Syrian Environmental Protection Society (SEPS) (Syria), and Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC) (UK). Note: Representatives from these NGOs were registered for the CSP, and may have attended the Open Forum and CWCC meeting.

Observers/presenters: Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, Director-General of the OPCW; Stanislaw Witek, Chairman of the ISAB (International Scientific Advisory Board), Representatives of the US delegation to the OPCW; OPCW staff from the Media and Public Affairs Branch, Government Relations Branch and Implementation Support Branch.

Co-Chairs: Paul Walker, Global Green USA (USA) & Nathalie Gysi, Green Cross Switzerland (Switzerland)

Minutes: Adamo Antoniadis, Green Cross Switzerland (Switzerland)

Opening moment of silence
Paul Walker opened the 3rd general meeting of the Chemical Weapons Convention Coalition by noting the untimely deaths in 2011 of three colleagues: Jiri Matousek, a chemist from the Czech Republic; Ron Nelson, former administrative director of the OPCW from the US; and Jonathan Tucker, a chem-bio expert from the US. Walker asked for a moment of silence in remembrance of these colleagues, who will be dearly missed, and projected photos of all three on the screen.
Remarks & Q&A: OPCW Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü

Walker then introduced OPCW Director General Ahmet Üzümcü and thanked him for his willingness to speak to the CWC Coalition in the middle of the 16th Conference of States Parties. DG Üzümcü opened his remarks with a discussion of the critical phase which the OPCW is currently undergoing with the April 2012 CW destruction deadline issue, as well as questions on universality and national implementation. He pointed out that NGOs can help the OPCW in the two latter questions. DG Üzümcü also spoke of the need to redirect parts of the verification budget to non-proliferation issues, of peaceful uses of chemistry, and of emergency response options which will become a priority for many States Parties.

On a question about sea-dumped chemical weapons, DG Üzümcü responded that this was an important issue but not covered by the CWC. Nevertheless, he pointed out that the OPCW is interested in having its Technical Secretariat (TS) participate in related workshops, but insisted that the decisions in this field have to be taken elsewhere.

Another question was posed on lessons learned from the current Libyan case. DG Üzümcü stressed that the OPCW cannot send its staff to conflict areas and had had to wait until early November to send an inspection team to Libya because of the on-going civil war. The OPCW team fortunately found the declared stockpile still sealed and undisturbed, with some 10-11 metric tons of mustard agent in bulk containers still awaiting destruction. Libya, under Moammar Gaddafi, had already destroyed 12.9 metric tons in late 2010 through February 8, 2011 when an equipment failure forced the destruction facility to pause its demilitarization. Two additional chemical weapons sites, recently declared by the new Libyan government, will have to be inspected soon in order to know if they are actually a matter of undeclared stockpiles. The OPCW has no means to verify the declared stockpiles in any country, as long as no “challenge inspection” is brought forward by a State Party. This has never been the case until today. Once the inspection in Libya is accomplished, likely in the next few months, the OPCW will inform the States Parties respectively.

In closing, the Director-General congratulated the CWC Coalition for its important efforts in support of the OPCW and CWC and encouraged all members to continue to promote the abolition of chemical weapons and to continue to participate in the annual and regional meetings of the OPCW. Paul Walker thanked the Director-General again for his time and on-going support.

Welcome & Introductions: Paul Walker (Global Green USA)

Paul Walker welcomed participants and opened the meeting. All participants briefly introduced themselves and their organizations in an around-the-table discussion. About 50 individuals participated in the CWC Coalition meeting.
Welcome & Remarks: Michael Luhan (OPCW Head of Media)

Michael Luhan talked about the efforts the OPCW has undertaken over the past years to reach out to the public and civil society and also to include NGOs into the work of the OPCW. OPCW is very engaged in social media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) and Luhan encouraged the coalition to also use social media to reach out to civil society. He also asked everyone in the coalition to participate in the OPCW online activities by sharing, “liking,” and joining groups. Social media is a very cheap way, he underlined, for timely dissemination of public information and for engaging civil society.

Luhan pointed out the recent email exchange of CWCC members on the alleged use of CW by Egyptian police forces and suggested that such issues should also be shared with the public through blogs, Facebook, etc. He felt that such informational exchanges on timely chemical weapons-related issues would be very helpful to all.

Luhan also encouraged all coalition members to send him all information that is published on CW so that it can be put on the OPCW website’s “reading section” and shared through the channels described above.

Paul Walker recalled past issues of “non-transparency” at the OPCW, and cited the fact that NGOs still cannot speak in plenary sessions, although NGOs do speak in plenaries of the BWC and NPT conferences. A recent proposal by the DG for NGO presentations in plenary session was unfortunately rejected by Russia and many Asian countries.

Luhan also pointed out the fact that the OPCW is an organization of States Parties and can only publish documents on the website if the States Parties explicitly allow the OPCW to do so.

CTIFT Report on CBW Terrorism: Krzysztof Paturej, Director, Office of Special Projects

Krzysztof Paturej thanked the coalition for collaborating and participating at the “Seminar on the OPCW’s contribution to security and the non-proliferation of chemical weapons” in April 2011 (link to seminar papers), and displayed the new hardback volume of seminar reports.

Although the CWC does not deal directly with terrorism and proliferation, some of the articles have important references to this issue. The OPCW is more and more addressing such issues, trying to encourage States Parties to prevent misuse of chemicals. Paturej talked about the approaches of the OPCW and the collaboration with States Parties and UN agencies. One result of such cooperation is the CTIFT Working Group Report, “Interagency Coordination in the Event of a Terrorist Attack Using Chemical or Biological Weapons Materials” (pdf). Paturej invited Coalition members to have a look at it. He also encouraged NGOs to write papers with the
OPCW and not for the OPCW. Also he suggested that the CWCC could build a plan of work for the 2013 CWC Five-Year Review Conference.

On a question whether industry is dedicated to issues related to the CWC (more than “voluntary” measures), Paturej pointed out that industry is indeed very sensitive to public opinion and therefore interested in “good PR.” While safety had been the main issue for industry in the past, now it is becoming security. The industry has a great interest to show the world that chemistry is for the good of human beings. In his personal opinion, the OPCW will have to go into the direction that was taken by the IAEA. Instead of tackling industry directly, the way should be through governments. The final aim should be a sort of guidance for industry in both security & safety, but there is still a long way to go.

The International Cooperation & Assistance Division Branch of the OPCW:
Mark Albon, Head of Implementation Support Branch
Marc Albon had a very elaborate presentation on the implementation of the CWC at a national level, and the support the OPCW is offering with this. He explained how the Implementation Support Branch works with the regional groups, States Parties, and other partners (UN agencies, customs associations, etc.). One of its main tasks is to build capacities within the States Parties for the implementation (and also for emergency response measures). Albon also reminded all participants that they can play a significant role in national implementation of the CWC, especially once the National Authority is established. Albon’s PowerPoint presentation is attached to this summary.

The CWC Coalition priorities: Paul Walker & Nathalie Gysi

CWCC Website
After the website had been taken down by IB consultancy a few weeks ago, it was agreed that the content will be migrated to Global Green USA. Green Cross Switzerland has also offered to support the website with resources and financially and will further discuss the joint management of the website with Global Green, once the technical issues are solved. It will be important that the website is updated more frequently in the future, and that related information is uploaded in a timely way. For this purpose the help of all coalition members is needed. The members are asked to provide any relevant information to the website manager for uploading.

There has also been a problem with invalid email addresses in the past. GGUSA and GCCH will go through existing addresses and update the list. Nick Robson has offered to provide us with information on an online solution for keeping the CWCC mailing list updated.

CWCC Name
The discussion to change the CWCC name came up with regard to the “WMDFZ in the Middle East,” where the Coalition wants to engage. The question was raised
whether the CWCC could deal with other WMDs (nuclear and biological weapons) with its current title focused only on chemical weapons. Also, a name change might help to raise more funds because of the fact that nuclear weapons are getting more attention. On the other hand, there were several critical voices stating that it is important for the CWCC to also in the future put an emphasis on chemical weapons destruction as there is still a lot to do (e.g. universality, national implementation, and 30% of declared CW arsenals still awaiting destruction) and little public attention on CW abolition. The present members agreed to retain the current title of the group – the CWC Coalition – but that it will be important to cooperate with other NGOs concerning nuclear and biological weapons, and that the WMDFZ in the Middle East is a good opportunity. Nevertheless chemical weapons destruction will remain an important activity for the CWCC.

**WMD free zone in the Middle East**

Due to the scarce time available, only a few words could be stated on a possible regional meeting on a WMDFZ in the Mideast. Some of the participants just met with a Finnish delegation the day prior to the CWCC meeting. Finnish Undersecretary of State Jaakko Laajava has recently been appointed by UN Secretary-General Ban Kimoon as facilitator of the proposed 2012 Conference on the Middle East as a WMDFZ, mandated by the Action Plan adopted at the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in May 2010. Finnish Ambassador Heidi Schroderus-Fox, one of two deputy facilitators, is very interested in including civil society and also showed strong interest in cooperating with the CWCC in her meeting in The Hague with CWCC representatives.

Given the fact that the CWC Coalition has managed to gather more participants, members and other interested NGOs from the Middle East, the planning of a 2012 regional CWCC meeting should be started. There are several options where such a meeting could take place (Turkey, Switzerland, Finland, the Middle East, and elsewhere). Further discussion on this task will be continued via email in early 2012.

At the very end, Dr. Ghassan Shahin (Syrian Environment Protection Society) made a short but comprehensive presentation on “The Frantic Race to Nuclear in the Middle East.” His PowerPoint is attached.

In conclusion, Paul Walker thanked all speakers and participants for attending, and announced that there would be a reception in the OPCW Delegates’ Lounge, sponsored by the German and Norwegian Permanent Representations to the OPCW. He also expressed his appreciation, on behalf of the CWCC, to the US Delegation and Ambassador Robert Mikulak for helping sponsor the travel of a number of CWCC members from the developing world, and to Michael Luhan and Menchu Hernandez for their support in organizing the CWCC meeting.

The CWCC meeting was adjourned at 6PM.