CWC Coalition 6th General Meeting
OPCW HQ (Ooms Room), The Hague, Netherlands
16:00 – 18:00, 5 December 2013

Minutes

Participating:
Gillane Allam, Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs; Mateah Aqeel, SASSI; Charlotte Baskin-Gerwitz, Global Green (USA); Sergey Batsanov, Pugwash; Amelia Broodryk, Institute for Security Studies; Michael Crowley, Bradford Non-lethal Weapons Research Project; Daniel Feakes, OPCW; Jonathan Forman, OPCW; Richard Guthrie, CBW Events; Onur Güven, Asser Institute (Netherlands); Nathalie Gysi, Green Cross Switzerland; Kaspar Haller, Green Cross Switzerland; Rana M. Athar Javed, Pakistan House Denmark; Shahriar Khateri, Society for Chemical Weapons Victims Support (Iran); Daryl Kimball, Arms Control Association; Finn Longinotto, Global Green (USA); Michael Luhan, OPCW; Muhammad Shakir, SASSI; Barthelemy Tchepnang, CAJAD; Ferruccio Trifiró, Accademia delle Scienze Bologna (Italy); Craig Williams, Chemical Weapons Working Group; Jean Pascal Zanders, The Trench

Observers/presenters:

Chair: Paul Walker, Finn Longinotto and Charlotte Baskin-Gerwitz

Minutes: Sabrina Maeder, Green Cross Switzerland, Charlotte Baskin-Gerwitz, Global Green USA

1 Welcome & Introductions: Finn Longinotto and Charlotte Baskin-Gerwitz (Global Green USA)
Charlotte and Finn opened the meeting and welcomed everybody to the 6th Meeting of the Coalition since Paul was excused for a short interview. He joined the meeting after a couple of minutes. All participants briefly introduced themselves and their organizations in an around-the-table discussion.
The joyful news was shared that Dr. Paul Walker is receiving the Right Livelihood Award in December in Stockholm. Furthermore, the CWC Coalition would like to give its congratulations to the OPCW and the Director General for being awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize.

2 Review minutes from the last meeting
The minutes from the 5th General Meeting were handed out. In the text the correction of the spelling of Gillane Allam’s name was needed. Apart from that no further changes were requested, the minutes were approved and will be uploaded to the CWC Coalition website (corrected version, see above).
Gillane Allam suggested to also upload material of the previous conferences on the CWCC website including links to speakers so that people can stay in touch. After a similar request in 2012 both Global Green USA and Green Cross Switzerland have invested considerable efforts (both time and funds) to migrate, update and restructure the website, and to build a solid database of all individuals, organizations, and groups that have participated at one or more of the Coalition’s meetings or are interested in receiving information. In addition everybody will be informed by e-mail about updates on the website from now on.

3 Review past year’s activities
Paul Walker was giving a review about last year’s activities of the CWC Coalition: It was a successful year. On the 17th CSP in November 2012 the CWC Coalition was organising meetings and side events, but was not allowed to talk in the plenary session. At the RevCon in April 2013 it was possible for the first time for the NGOs to talk in plenary session in front of the State Parties. Fifteen NGOs, chaired by Dr. Paul Walker, gave a presentation in the plenary hall. This was a very major and positive development in view of the CWCC’s efforts to promote transparency and inclusiveness at the OPCW. For this conference it was nevertheless not sure from the beginning if the NGOs could talk in the plenary session again. Only two days ago it became clear that civil society representatives would be allowed to speak in the annual plenary sessions of the CSPs and nine CWC Coalition members were able to address the States Parties. It took a great deal of background work and discussions with States Parties in order to make this possible.

The process to register for the 18th CSP was not easy either. The deadline to register had to be moved to October 25, 2013 because otherwise there wouldn’t have been enough time to fill in the on-line registration forms. About 80 persons registered representing civil society but then had to be approved by States Parties. The decision of approval was first expected on the 3rd of November. But the State Parties didn’t reach a decision then and had the next meeting on the 19th of November. So the approval arrived only two weeks before the Conference of States Parties. This very short notice made it impossible for some registered persons to obtain a visa and therefore 6-8 cancellations were made due to the late approval. Furthermore, flight bookings became much more expensive. And in one case, a registered CWCC participant was vetoed by a State Party just two days before the CSP convened.

Paul Walker informed the Director General about these unnecessary difficulties so that he is aware that this is a major problem for the involvement of civil society and needs to change. In the last year, however, the CWCC was successful in having the OPCW issued annual badges for previously approved civil society representatives, thereby facilitating more efficient access to OPCW headquarters and to meetings.

Regarding the funding of the CWC Coalition: We have received a grant from the Norwegian Government and are drafting the first report for them at the moment. About half of the grant was spent for travel support in the last two meetings.
Together with the financial support of the OPCW and Green Cross, about 80 people can be fully or partially supported for travel grants to these meetings. Unfortunately, this time the OPCW was not able to provide any funding for travel support.

Michael Crowley thanked the team for the coordination and all the efforts done for the CWC Coalition. Furthermore, he pointed out that the Syrian delegation was unhappy about some of the NGO statements in the plenary session. Amelia Broodryk added that the Syrian delegation felt that a few of the statements were not providing a fully accurate picture of what is happening in Syria, and also that the reference to the International Criminal Court in the statement of one NGO had upset them. Sergey Batsanov offered to talk to the Syrian delegation together with Paul Walker.

4 Syrian Outreach
Finn Longinotto noted that it is important that civil society stays fully informed about the ongoing crisis in Syria, and about the progress in chemical weapons destruction. He underlined the importance of the CWC Coalition providing regular updates on this important and historic crisis.

Amelia Broodryk pointed out that the Coalition missed out on the opportunity to come up with a collective statement about the situation in Syria. This lies in the responsibility of the coordinator and can still be done now. A collective statement will be circulated and reviewed by the Coalition members.

As we had heard this afternoon in the side event on Syria, the plan is to neutralize chemical agents and precursor chemicals on a ship on the high seas, likely in the Mediterranean. This is what is planned on the technical side. Gillane Allam points out that a continuous flow of updated information on the OPCW operation in Syria is needed especially bearing in mind the concerns of Mediterranean countries. What is happening on the humanitarian side is not clear. It is estimated that there were about 1,400 victims of the August 21, 2013 chemical attack in Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus. The situation throughout Syria appears quite bad. Nathalie Gysi indicated that there are a lot of growing health problems throughout the country.

Daryl Kimball stated that the Arms Control Association will have a one day conference on Syria in 2014, likely in June, and suggested that the Coalition help to bring speakers to the event and make suggestions for possible topics. Paul Walker, CWCC coordinator, will be the honorary chair of this annual ACA event which will be named after the late Jonathan Tucker, a well-known US chem/bio expert.

5 WMD Free Zone in the Middle East
A few speakers noted the extreme difficulty of achieving a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East, although the United Nations is still facilitating international discussions on convening a conference thereon. Sharon Dolev from Israel proposed that Egypt and Israel should both support and sign a WMD Free Zone simultaneously. It was
also noted that it will be important to discuss all WMDs, including nuclear, chemical, and biological, and to promote full universality for all related treaty regimes.

Ms Gillane Allam, representative of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs, indicated that Egypt has been striving since 1974 to establish such a zone and that an Egyptian sponsored UN resolution is being adopted every year for the last 40 years calling for the establishment of a WMD Free Zone, hence Egypt welcomed the opportunity of having the special conference held for that purpose.

Sergey Batsanov believed that the Syrian acceptance of the CWC in September, 2013 reinvigorated the WMD Free Zone debate. It should now be more acceptable for Israel to ratify the CWC because one of their perceived threats is gone, i.e. the chemical threat from Syria.

6 How to broaden membership, particularly to Non-Party States
The CWC Coalition wants to win more members in the few countries not party to the CWC, namely Angola, South Sudan, North Korea, Israel, Egypt, and Myanmar. The CWC Coalition already has members in both Egypt and Israel, but we need to locate new CWCC members in the other four non-member states. Furthermore, we are looking for more members from African and Latin American countries.

Jean Pascal Zanders pointed out that Pugwash has some contact to North Korea and can maybe help to find members there. Several other participants offered their help to win more members. Any contact details are appreciated.

It is a problem that registered CWCC members are always depending on the approval of the OPCW General Committee to participate in conferences. As last resort it would be a possibility to organise an event outside of the OPCW setting, where people from non-approved countries could also take part. In this way the audience could even be broadened because nobody would have to register for such an event.

7 Future Projects
Amelia Broedryk suggested that the Advisory Board Members of the Coalition should review the Norwegian Grant proposal to help them raise additional funding. Nathalie Gysi confirmed that the information will be sent out to the members.

Barthelemy Tchepnang thinks that the Coalition should help African countries spread knowledge about the CWC. Some African countries signed the CWC but don’t have the national legislation to implement it. The NGOs in Africa are interested to learn more about prevention and national implementation.

Michael Luhan regretted that the OPCW could only give in-kind support to the Coalition this year. Each year the role of civil society, including industry, academia, and non-governmental organizations at the annual Conference of States Parties, largely due to the success of the CWC Coalition, has been expanding and he was impressed how well the CWCC side events had been at the 2013 Review Conference
and CSP, even under very short notice because of the participant approval problems. Michael fully endorsed further expansion of the CWC Coalition and promised to help with smoothing the annual approval process so that visa, travel, and planning problems do not interfere with civil society inclusiveness.

Paul thanked Michael for the good and ongoing support by him and his office, and moved to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was followed by a reception in OPCW headquarters hosted by Ambassador Anniken Ramberg Krutnes from Norway and Ambassador Eberhard Schanze from Germany.