CWC Coalition 7th General Meeting  
OPCW HQ (Ooms Room), The Hague, Netherlands  
16:00 – 18:00, 3 December 2014

Minutes

Participating:
Walter Kruztsch, Harvard-Sussex-Programme; Kai llchmann, PUC IRI; Gillane Allam, Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs; Maria Jose Espona, ArgIQ; Irene Kornelly, Colorado Citizens’ Advisory Commission for Chemical Demilitarization; Alex Kipnyargis, Embu University; Eucharia Kenya, Embu University; Margaret Muturi, Kenyatta University; Amelia Broodryk, Institute for Security Studies; Tobias Weise, SEPS at University of St. Gallen; Barthelemy Tchepnang, CAJAD; Ralf Trapp, independent disarmament consultant; Per Runn, independent consultant; Nick Robson, SASSI; Mustafa Kibaroglu, MEF University; Craig Williams, Chemical Weapons Working Group; Sadik Toprak, Bülent Ecevit University; Rana M. Athar Javed, Pakistan House Denmark; Rajiv Nayan, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses; Cindy Vestergaard, Danish Institute for International Studies; Reinhard Gasser, Green Cross Switzerland; Michael Crowley, Bradford Non-lethal Weapons Research Project; Nathalie Gysi, Green Cross Switzerland; Kaspar Haller, Green Cross Switzerland; Michael Luhan, OPCW;

Observers/presenters: Mr. Malik Ellahi, Head of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria

Chair: Dr. Paul Walker, Green Cross International

Minutes: Sabrina Maeder, Green Cross Switzerland

1 Welcome & Introductions:
Dr. Paul Walker opened the meeting and welcomed everybody to the 7th Meeting of the Coalition; he invited all to briefly introduce themselves around the room after the opening presentation by Mr. Malik Ellahi.

Opening Statement:
Mr. Malik Ellahi, Head of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria on alleged chemical weapons attacks, gave a presentation about the results of the high-risk field mission.
The FFM delegation arrived in Damascus on 3rd of May facing the challenging task to find conclusive evidence of the recent use of chlorine. They wanted to visit Kafr
Zeyta to find some evidence since attacks were reported there in April and May, 2014. But the first vehicle of the convoy was attacked on the way to the site and had to turn around. Still the first report of June 16th indicated that “most likely pulmonary irritating agents such as chlorine were used in a systematic manner” in Syria. This was done on the basis of documents and testimonies of individuals living in the villages that were attacked, which included their descriptions of symptoms from which they are suffering. There is no doubt about the credibility of the witnesses. Their detailed testimonies can be found in the most recent FFM report.\(^1\)

After the presentation a question and answer session followed.

Amb. Gillane Allam from Egypt asked about what the local witnesses said about the attackers, if they knew who attacked them and also what might have been the reason to use chemicals on these particular villages. Mr. Ellahi answered that the witnesses reported that they always heard helicopters and as soon as they heard them, they ran for covers. They didn’t recognize their attackers. They also said that the explosions were different from conventional bombs, as in previous attacks. Why these particular villages were attacked, he didn’t know.

Mr. Rana Javed from Pakistan/Denmark asked about requirements for a next mission to the region. Mr. Ellahi stated that he recommends that the next mission should be simultaneously organized along with a peace-keeping mission. Otherwise it will be very difficult to find people to undertake such a risky mission.

Mr. Craig Williams from the US asked if the witnesses reported that the chemical agents used in the attacks were delivered by helicopters. This would be a significant piece of evidence since only the Syrian government has such military aircraft. Mr. Ellahi said that the witnesses reported that they heard helicopters and a whistling sound from the helicopters and then something hitting the ground.

Mr. Michael Crowley from the UK asked if the temporary measures shouldn’t be made permanent. Mr. Ellahi stated that the policy members will have to consider this. In his personal view it will be difficult to have a permanent mechanism like the mission. But it is important to go forward in a more quiet time and to coordinate and collaborate with the UN.

After the presentation of Mr. Ellahi all participants briefly introduced themselves and their organizations in an around-the-table discussion.

2 Review minutes from the last meeting
The minutes of the last meeting were handed out. Up to the 10th of December 2014 the CWC Coalition members can comment on these minutes. Afterwards they count as approved and will be uploaded on the CWC Coalition website.

\(^1\) The three Fact-Finding Mission Reports issued in 2014 by the OPCW Director-General are dated June 16, 2014 (S/1191/2014), September 10, 2014 (S/1212/2014), and December 18, 2014 (S/1230/2014). The FFM is continuing its investigations in Syria and will issue additional reports in 2015.
3 Review past year’s activities
Paul Walker was giving a review about last year’s activities of the CWC Coalition: It was a very active year. Forty-two blog statements about the chemical weapons destruction progress in Syria were drafted and published on the Green Cross International website and sent out to the members of the CWC Coalition. Furthermore, there was a round table discussion organised by the British American Security Information Center (BASIC), Green Cross, IKV Pax Christi and Israeli Disarmament Movement in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in November, 2014. The aim was to discuss options for Israel’s ratification of the CWC. The speakers of the event were international experts from the following organisations: Israeli Disarmament Movement, Green Cross International, Life and Environment, OPCW, The Trench, Center for Public Environmental Oversight, Toxic Remnants of War Project (TRWP), International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons (ICBUW), Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), Verification and Monitoring Programme and the Tel Aviv University.
A number of Knesset members took part in the event. With their help it might be possible to unlock the discussion process in the Israeli Parliament since the CWC has never been discussed there yet. Hopefully the process continues next year and achieves to move forward to create a memo to start the discussion. A report on this event will be sent to the CWC Coalition members.

Generally, it was pointed out that it is vital to be informed about events beforehand and especially about any CWC Coalition events. Also statements in the name of the CWC Coalition should be circulated before their publication. Furthermore, it was stated that publishing joint statements would have a stronger effect, but it is difficult to organise, e.g. we didn’t manage to finalise the press statement about the memorial of the attacks in Ghouta last year.

Paul Walker continued with the activities and announced that members of the CWC Coalition will have the chance to speak again in the plenary session at the CSP19, just as was done last year at CSP18 and the Five-Year Review Conference. This is a big success. Nevertheless, it is a challenge to address critical issues without offending certain States Parties, and thereby risking the right of NGOs to speak in plenary sessions in the future. The speakers might want to be sensitive about making too strong statements or accusations but rather address these issues in side events or documents. All the statements will be published on the OPCW website thereafter and the speakers will receive photos.

The CWC Coalition is also still dealing with the issue that some members are not allowed to attend the CSP. This year five individuals or NGOs from the Middle East were vetoed by certain States Parties. Paul Walker promised to continue to work on this challenge with States Parties and the OPCW in order to allow all interested stakeholders and civil society members to be able to attend and participate in future OPCW meetings.
Then some Information about the funding of the Coalition followed: Since 2012 the Coalition was supported by the Norwegian grant and some additional funding came from Green Cross Switzerland, the US delegation, and the OPCW. At the end of 2014 the Norwegian grant is finished. We will hand in a new application for further funding to them but it is not sure that the grant will be renewed. Although Green Cross Switzerland will continue to support the Coalition, as it has done before the Norwegian grant, the funding for the future is not yet certain. If the Norwegian Foreign Ministry doesn’t renew its grant, the travel support is going to be very limited. Any ideas regarding funding opportunities are very welcome.

At the end of the meeting, Mr. Michael Luhan gave a short speech and complimented the CWC Coalition on the statements in the Plenary session. He will leave the OPCW in the next month after seven years of excellent service in The Hague. Everybody expressed their deep appreciation to Michael for his great support to the CWC Coalition and public outreach and information in general over all the years. His leadership will be sorely missed at the OPCW.

The meeting was adjourned at 18.10 pm.

After the meeting a CWC Coalition group picture was taken followed by a reception in the OPCW headquarters hosted by Ambassador Anniken Ramberg Krutnes from Norway and Ambassador Christoph Israng from Germany.