

**Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the
States Parties (CSP-26) to the Chemical Weapons Convention
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NGO Statement 1:

Accountability for Old, Abandoned, and Sea Dumped Chemical Weapons

Statement prepared by:¹
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***Chairperson, Director General, Distinguished Delegates, CWC Coalition Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

As we edge closer to completing declared stockpile destruction, we must now begin more proactive evaluations and destruction of non-stockpile weapons and agents, both on land and dumped at sea. We cannot achieve a world free of chemical weapons without the complete destruction of old and abandoned chemical weapons.

We applaud States Parties' achievements in the destruction of 75 percent of declared old munitions and urge those States Parties to continue to make the fullest possible effort to complete destruction as early as possible.

We also congratulate the continued progress made by Japan and China in the resumption of destruction and excavation, and recovery operations of declared abandoned chemical weapons and encourage them to continue to work constructively towards the 2022 deadline and in identifying any further locations. All states, however, should be making concerted and urgent efforts to survey suspected chemical weapons burial sites and create plans for their safe disposal. On-site neutralisation methods pose significant risks of allowing the dilution of dangerous chemicals into the soil. States Parties need to be actively pursuing more environmentally sound disposal methods.

Of continuing concern, however, are sea-dumped chemical munitions – an issue in which the Convention is rapidly falling behind outside efforts to rid this danger from our seas and oceans. The global ocean economy is predicted to grow by more than 100 percent between 2010 and 2030. As human oceanic activity continues to expand, all aspects of the blue economy are consistently at risk from the threat of chemical weapons abandoned within almost all of our oceans and seas. Once unreachable chemical weapons dump sites are becoming increasingly accessible and in danger of being disturbed, posing dangers to human

¹ Please note: the following statement is a reflection of the views and opinions of the authors and the co-signers, and does not necessarily reflect the views of all organizations and individuals within the CWC Coalition.

and marine life, and the number of human encounters by fishermen and others with abandoned munitions continues to rise.

A highly conservative estimate made in 2017, estimated the total amount of chemical munitions on our ocean and sea floors to reach 1.6 million tons. We have little to no knowledge of the location or state of additional dumpsites, but there is growing evidence that unstable munitions severely endanger the marine ecology, exacerbating the devastating changes to marine life and habitats already struggling under threat from climate change and other human activities.

States parties must undertake to be more proactive in understanding, managing and mitigating these dangers. Actions to be undertaken should include:

- Investigations to better understand the long-term health, environmental and ecological impact of sea-dumped chemical weapons;
- Efforts to identify in detail the locations and state of dumpsites that are currently poorly documented;
- Activities to investigate existing and new management options available to deal with the threat, including biomonitoring techniques and the creation of guidelines regarding offshore chemical weapons disposal that ensure all chemical weapons are eliminated in an environmentally-safe manner;
- A review of the “blow-in-place” approach and an OPCW/UN-Sponsored Conference on Sea Dumped Weapons with Civil Society;
- Sustained support for casualty-tracking and the development of risk education programmes and guidelines for fishermen on how to deal with chemical munitions;

Thank you for your attention, and I request that this statement be made part of the official CSP published proceedings.

Statement Co-Signers*:

Dr. Matouk Hassan S. Alrainee, *Environmental Protection and Public Care Org.*

Samuel Asamoah Asare, *High Hope*

Kwame Baah, *Margliz Foundation*

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***Note:** endorsement by these individuals does not represent endorsement by the organization they are affiliated with.