

**Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the
States Parties (CSP-26) to the Chemical Weapons Convention
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NGO Statement 6:

Strengthening Education, Outreach and Other Public Health Initiatives in All Member States

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Chairperson, Director General, Distinguished Delegates, CWC Coalition Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We applaud the establishment of the Chemical Weapons Convention with its many accomplishments since its creation twenty-five years ago. As the most universal arms control and disarmament treaty today with 193 States Parties and its commitment to implementation supported by adequate staff capacity, education and outreach, transparency and accountability, we believe it is a model for treaties and international agreements in other areas of important public health safety and health concerns that impact on the health and well-being of all populations. We congratulate the OPCW on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and will advocate that the Convention framework be used as a model for other major threats to the public's health.

Public Health Initiatives

Public health systems at local, state, regional and country levels are committed to improving the health of populations using a science-based approach with a health equity and social justice lens. The public health community globally is committed to helping with the implementation of the treaty to assure that 1) all weapons, agents, and stockpiles (including those buried or dumped at sea) are eliminated in an environmentally safe manner; 2) there is adequate education and outreach to all populations in ways that acknowledge the local culture and context; 3) there is transparency in all deliberations; 4) there is planning and training for emergency preparedness at the local, regional and country level in all countries; 5) there is support for comprehensive public health disease registries and surveillance systems (that monitor diseases, injuries and behavioral health disorders) that can be used to assess and monitor the impact of chemical releases (from buried or sea-dumped chemical weapons) in the future; 6) research is supported on the impact of

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.

chemical weapons and the best methods for their elimination as related to human and animal health; 7) adequate health and other social supports are provided to those injured by the use of chemical weapons; and 8) the elimination of chemical weapons does not disproportionately impact vulnerable populations (defined by income, class, gender, race, or disability).

Global Charter

All of these public health activities are embodied in the Global Charter for the Public's Health which was created by the World Federation of Public Health Associations in collaboration with the World Health Organization. The Charter² provides a framework for dealing with the public health challenges of addressing and eliminating chemical weapons, including guidance for protection, prevention, and promotion services using four core functions (governance, information, advocacy, and capacity). The public health community acknowledges that "environmental health" and "prevention of chemical threats" are a major part of public health and that the elimination of chemical weapons is an important "social and political determinant of health." It is especially important that priority for support for these public health activities be given to low and middle income countries.

Founded over fifty years ago, the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) has over 115 member associations, which are mostly multidisciplinary national public health associations. Chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction have been discussed in plenary sessions at the most recent WFPHA Public Health Congresses held in Turkey, Ethiopia, India and Australia.

Civil Society Role

Civil society organizations (CSOs), including public health associations and professionals know that partnerships with all members of society, including industry and businesses, faith-based organizations, academic institutions, media, and governmental agencies, are needed to support education, outreach and other public health functions which are needed to address the risks posed by chemical weapons. Members of the Chemical Weapons Convention Coalition (CWCC) support the strengthening of NGOs in every country to support public outreach, education and public health functions. Well-funded public health systems can assist with the full implementation of the Convention in a transparent, science-based, and community-inclusive manner.

The public health community in all countries is committed to OPCW's success as it will assure better health and well-being for the public's health in all countries. We recommend that the

² Lomazzi, M. (2016). A Global Charter for the Public's Health—the public health system: role, functions, competencies and education requirements. *European Journal of Public Health*, 26(2), 210-212.
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important advisory groups, including the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, the Scientific Advisory Board, the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, and the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities, fully include the concerns and priorities of the public health community in their plans and deliberations.

Statement Co-Signers*:

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