

**Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the
States Parties (CSP-26) to the Chemical Weapons Convention
The Hague, The Netherlands
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Statement on:
Written Evidence and Observations

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Chairperson, Director-General, Ladies and Gentleman,

I write to support concerns about the future of the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention, shared with many other members of International Civil Society.

My background is as a Director of Proliferation and Arms Control in the British Defence Ministry, a UN Disarmament Commissioner, on UNSCOM and UNMOVIC, and, latterly, Honorary Professor.

The Undervalued Promise and Lasting Importance Of the CWC

As a desk officer, I had the honour of working on the original negotiations for the CWC. It offered a significant step beyond Cold War suspicions, as a historic new stage for international society. Unprecedentedly, a huge consensus of states decided to bring a whole category of abhorrent weapons and their precursors under effective international control, with detailed declaratory and verification obligations. The CWC created a new disarmament architecture, involving an empowered Technical Secretariat, reporting to a multinational Executive Council, closely linked with the UNSC for enforcement. There is still no more advanced alternative design for total WMD disarmament. This was an important and welcome indicator of detente and widespread acceptance of multilateral security arrangements. It helped overcome previously entrenched oppositions to trust in treaties rather than national armaments. What allowed progress towards near universal signature was a growing belief that the workings of the new Convention could be kept separate from conflicting geopolitical interests, that carefully compiled scientific evidence could be impartially appraised by international experts, and well supported conclusions would lead to effective enforcement action. Nevertheless, risks of non-compliance were taken intensely seriously. Great attention was paid to agreeing mechanisms to challenge and overcome it. But these mechanisms are now being systematically blocked, and I do not believe we would have achieved widespread signature and ratification if the present impasse had been predicted.

Recent Regression: An Emerging “Obstructors Playbook”

Reactions by key member states to unconcealable lethal non-compliance indicate a disturbingly unforeseen contemporary pattern. Interlocking obstruction, denial, personal, professional, and institutional denigration, disinformation, and obfuscatory counter

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accusations together form a set of tactics visibly evolving to frustrate the CWC's intended functioning.

Others can better address chemical, medical and forensic details. As an academic observer with previous international experience, I have disappointedly traced the development of concerted, overlapping patterns of deliberately obstructive state behaviour. Yet this cannot obscure accumulated evidence, meticulously compiled by OPCW technical experts, globally respected laboratories, and hospitals - often, revealingly, against the wishes of certain highly politically involved member states.

Today's Triply Intolerable Stalemate entails:

A) Injustice and Impunity

Hundreds of Syrians, including children, have been chemically murdered, in multiple attacks. Individual émigrés and dissidents have been covertly poisoned in Europe. Without accountability, CW may become an increasingly usable form of intimidatory state chemical terror against communities or individuals: a modality of "Dark Power".

B) Increased Risk of Conflict

Exposed but persistently denied Treaty breaches generate wider regional risks. Other states will respond to the dangers posed to them and to innocent civilians. Defiant non-compliance is therefore an intrinsic threat to international peace, already provoking third-party military actions against otherwise unpunished breaches of international law.

C) Diminished Chances of a Peaceful World Order

Although mankind has developed no better treaty design, the adequacy of the CWC's leading-edge legal and institutional architecture is now put in question. A UNSC member systematically attacks the integrity of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the good faith of its Executive Council. If every painstaking institutional conclusion about CW use is automatically rejected as a provocation or False Flag Operation, and UNSC veto power repeatedly, shamelessly, and successfully abused for partisan reasons, confidence will be undermined in all future negotiated agreements.

Resultant Imperatives

This scandalous stalemate creates a duty, not only to the poisoned dead and disabled and their relatives, and to all those now fearing chemical attack, but to the human future, to restore the world's ability to control its most dangerous technologies - before chemical crimes become normalised and forgotten, through being deliberately made too diplomatically acrimonious and unpromising to be pursued. Investigations have already yielded overwhelming evidence for attribution - despite obvious, damningly consistent, obstructive (often contemptuous), behaviours, using every procedural device, without believable explanations except to deny guilt or shield clients. It therefore becomes the moral and prudential responsibility, however politically uncomfortable, of every conscientious CWC member state to reach unillusioned, all source, independent national conclusions about this existential crisis for the Convention - and then cooperate determinedly to preserve the CWC's essential, globally endorsed,

purpose. International Civil Society should, and will, continue critically monitoring, appraising, and publicising resultant governmental statements and decisions.