



Guidelines for Joint and Individual NGO Statements At the Conference of the States Parties

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Background

Since the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Third Five-Year Review Conference in 2013, civil society has been invited to plenary sessions in the World Forum to present NGO statements. These statements typically take place on the second or third day of the annual Conference of States Parties (CSP) after all national statements have been made.

The CWC Coalition has organized the collection of these statements in close coordination with the OPCW Office of Public Affairs and the External Relations Division and has encouraged geographic, gender, and expertise diversity among speakers.

This year, the CWC Coalition will be organizing 10 joint thematic statements on topics that are timely and relevant to the Chemical Weapons Convention. These statements will be presented during the Conference. The two main goals of these joint NGO statements are 1) to provide CWC implementers with clear recommendations and action items, and 2) to connect civil society representatives with similar areas of expertise. If an individual NGO feels that their specific area of expertise or vein of research is not represented in the joint thematic statements, they are welcome to submit an individual NGO statement. These statements will be submitted to the OPCW as official documents of the Conference, but because of time restraints, they will not be read aloud at the plenary session.

At this time, it is unknown whether CSP-27 will be fully in-person, fully remote, or hybrid. No matter what the format is, the CWC Coalition will continue to organize both joint and individual NGO statements for submission to the OPCW website.

What kind of statements will we be organizing? What is the difference between a joint NGO statement and an individual NGO statement?

NGO statements provide civil society with the unique opportunity to have a direct audience with CWC implementers, including OPCW staff and CWC States Parties. In order to maximize the impact of NGO voices, each statement should address an issue or area where CWC implementation could be improved and present clear, concise recommendations to CWC implementers. See our [NGO Statement Archive](#) for past examples.

Two Types of NGO Statements:

- **Joint NGO Statements:** Joint NGO statements on topics that are timely and relevant to the Chemical Weapons Convention help maximize the impact of civil society statements and connect civil society representatives with similar areas of expertise. The main objective of a joint NGO statement is to provide CWC implementers with clear recommendations and action items based on the expertise of each respective joint statement drafting team. Joint topical statements should be in the range of 500-750 words. When read aloud, they should be around 6-7 minutes. For past examples, view our [CSP Statement Archive](#).
- **Individual NGO Statements:** If an individual NGO feels that their specific area of expertise or vein of research is not represented in the joint statements, they are welcome to submit an individual NGO statement. Like the joint statements, individual NGO statements should present CWC implementers with clear recommendations and action items based on the individual NGO's area of expertise. Individual NGO statements should be no more than 400-500 words in length.

Based on feedback from CWC Coalition members, we will request that the OPCW include both individual NGO statements and joint NGO statements as official documents of the conference. Because of time constraints, only joint NGO statements will be presented live in the plenary session.

How are joint NGO statement topics selected? And how are drafting groups established?

Around September, we will distribute a Google Form to a list of everyone who applied to CSP-27 to gather joint statement topic recommendations. Following a one-week comment period, a second Google Form will be distributed to all CSP-27 applicants with all topics collected (if some topics are similar, they will be combined). Individuals will then vote for the topics they are interested in contributing to, and the ten topics that receive the most votes will be selected. Note: you do not need to participate in a statement if you don't want to. It is entirely voluntary.

Once the second round of voting has occurred and the list has been narrowed down to 10 topics, the CWC Coalition project coordinator will connect individuals that signed up for the same topic via email.

How were NGO statements organized in the past two years?

In 2020, due to the pandemic, NGO representatives were not allowed to participate in-person at CSP-25, but 21 written statements were prepared by the CWC Coalition and included on the OPCW website. Fifteen of these 3-minute statements were videotaped by the NGOs, with helpful support from OPCW Public Affairs, and included on the OPCW website and YouTube. They were not broadcast during the plenary sessions to limit the amount of time delegates had to spend in the plenary hall.

In-person participation was once again prohibited for CSP-26 due to COVID-19 restrictions. The CWC Coalition organized 10 joint thematic statements on topics related to the CWC. NGOs from across the globe collaborated to create these statements, which were then recorded over Zoom and submitted to the OPCW. While the statements were posted on the OPCW website in both written and video formats, they were not broadcast during the plenary sessions. Individual NGO statements were also collected, but were only published on the CWC Coalition website in written form.

Who is allowed to participate in a statement?

If you would like to participate in an NGO statement at the annual Conference of States Parties (CSP), you must submit an application to the OPCW to register for the conference and receive confirmation from the OPCW that your application has been approved.

You must apply for each year you wish to contribute to a statement. For example, even if you were approved for CSP-26, you must still apply to CSP-27 and receive approval from the OPCW in order to contribute to an NGO statement for CSP-27.

We acknowledge that this rule can be cumbersome – in years past, some applications were not been approved until a week before the conference, which was past the deadline to submit a joint or individual NGO statement. If you have applied for the conference and are awaiting notification of your application status, we still encourage you to contribute to a joint statement or submit an individual NGO statement. Unfortunately, if you are ultimately not approved for the conference, it will mean that your name cannot be added to a joint statement, and your individual NGO statement will not be accepted by the OPCW for inclusion as an official document of the conference. However, the CWC Coalition will still post a copy of your statement on the CWC Coalition's [CSP Statement Archive](#) and indicate that it is not an official document of the conference.

After gathering feedback from CWC Coalition members regarding their CSP-26 application process experiences, we have asked the OPCW to expedite the application review process and to directly notify applicants of their status in a timely manner. Hopefully these measures will help decrease the ambiguity of knowing whether or not an individual is approved to contribute to a statement.

What is the purpose of NGO statements?

NGO statements facilitate the inclusion of civil society. Civil society is a term that describes organizations and individuals that are not associated with government, such as non-profits, universities, cultural institutions, chemical industry representatives, etc. Civil society inclusion in the proceedings of the OPCW brings expertise and diverse perspectives to the annual Conference of the States Parties (CSP). Experts in the field of chemistry, chemical industry professionals,

victims-rights advocates, and more are given the chance to share their unique research, observations, and recommendations.

NGO statements are opportunities for civil society representatives to communicate their research or observations to the OPCW States Parties and make clear recommendations on how States Parties can ensure the full implementation of the CWC. To see past examples of statements, visit our [NGO Statement Archive](#).

When will statements be presented?

Important: It is not yet clear if NGOs will present statements in-person this year. We will update this section when more is known.

Traditionally, NGO statements are presented during the annual Conference of States Parties (CSP) to the Chemical Weapons Convention, or during the 5-Year Review Conferences. Executive Council meetings are not open to NGO participation.

Usually, following the CSP general debate and national statements, a one to two hour plenary session is allotted to civil society statement presentations. Due to time constraints, a limited number of NGO representatives (usually 15-20) give brief 3-4 minute plenary statements. For CSP-26 in 2021, the CWC Coalition organized 10 joint NGO statements approximately 6 minutes in length when read aloud, rather than 20 individual NGO statements.

In the past, if the number of parties interested in presenting a statement is greater than the number of time slots in the allotted 1-2-hour session, Dr. Paul Walker, Coordinator of the CWC Coalition, will select the statements that are read during plenary in a way that maximizes gender and geographic diversity, as well as diversity in topics covered.

How can you view the statements after CSP?

NGO statements and video recordings will be posted on the [OPCW website](#) as official documents of the conference. Video recordings will also be posted on the OPCW YouTube page.

All statements will be posted on the CWC Coalition [CSP Statement Archive](#).

Who is allowed to endorse a statement?

After each group has finished the first draft of their statement, we will circulate the drafts amongst our network using Google Forms for others to endorse or sign-on to the statement if they so choose. Only individuals who have been accepted to the conference can sign-on to statements that will be published on the OPCW website.

How do you join the CWC Coalition?

To learn more about how to join the CWC Coalition, please visit our [About Us page](#).