

**Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the  
States Parties (CSP-27) to the Chemical Weapons Convention**

The Hague, The Netherlands  
28 November – 2 December 2022

NGO Joint Statement:

***Promoting Cooperation on Sea Dumped Chemical Weapons in the Context of a Climate  
Crisis***

Statement prepared by:<sup>1</sup>

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(UWM's)

***Chairperson, Director-General, Distinguished Delegates, Civil Society Colleagues,***

The International Dialogues on Underwater Munitions (IDUM)'s mission is to eradicate **underwater** chemical and conventional weapons from the seas and to provide a venue where stakeholders come together to openly, constructively and transparently discuss the policy, science, technology and **remediation** responses to underwater chemical and conventional munitions.

I live in Canada with the longest coastline in the world with a rich history of seafarers, fishermen and women and ship builders who rely on the ocean. Countries rely on the ocean for their livelihood. The dumping of chemical weapons started in the 1910's in the English Channel and continued up until the mid 1970's, as a cheap means of disposing of obsolete, damaged, time-expired, and unwanted weapons. This disposal method continued until countries began to acknowledge the deadly legacy being created throughout the seas, including in UNESCO Protected Biospheres and Marine Protected Areas.

Decades later, these decaying chemical and conventional munitions threaten the wealth and prosperity of all maritime nations. Globally, Blue Economies are impacted by underwater munitions because they reduce fish stocks and pass toxins throughout the food web and up the food chain to humans who rely on them as sources of food and income. Further, by leaching high concentrations of nitrogen from their nitrosamine high explosive contents, underwater munitions can bleach and kill corals and alter the nutrient chemistry of nearshore waters in which they are found. Toxins from underwater munitions are also implicated causing elevated incidents of diseases, such as Black Band Disease in corals and Black Spot Disease in lobsters and crabs. Elevated nitrogen promotes harmful algal blooms that contribute to anoxic dead zones in the coastal oceans.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: the following statement reflects 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.

Underwater munitions leach at least 7 carcinogens into surrounding waters. In proximal positions near to underwater ordnance, all of these toxins have been measured in concentrations well above EPA's Risk-Based Levels for Cancer. These toxins are found in both plant and animal marine life, in the water column, and in adjacent marine sediments. Some have also been found circulating in ocean currents. "These chemicals do not exist in the natural environment. They come from munitions." Dilution is not the solution.

Decaying underwater munitions add toxins and carbon to the ocean. Therefore, they impact ocean chemistry and pH, thereby detrimentally impacting both global climate change and the viability of life below waters. Currently, there is no treaty or international law requiring the removal of chemical weapons or their degradation by-products from the seas. Current scientific evidence counsels that we should change this situation.

Each State Party and NGO brings a unique perspective on how to best meet the challenges to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). IDUM cooperated with The Hawaii State House of Representatives Finance Committee for the passing of **Resolution HR135**: seeking federal funds to remove underwater munitions from coral reefs in the Hawaiian Islands to conserving the State's coral reefs for present and future generations and creating a resilient and sustainable future for coral reefs.

**IDUM proposes that three actions be taken by the OPCW and the International Community:**

- 1) The **OPCW** must **Call on the United Nations** for an Urgent UN Conference focused on human and environmental health concerns raised by underwater munitions.
- 2) The **OPCW** should cooperate with the **International Science and Technology Advisory Board (ISTAB)** to investigate Underwater Munitions (UWM's). This Scientific Advisory Board was established in 2010 to provide independent advice on scientific, technical and organizational aspects of dumped chemical and conventional munitions. It promotes international efforts for dialogue and multilateral contacts on this topic amongst interested governments and international organizations.
- 3) **IDUM**, as an existing International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO), should transition to an Intergovernmental Organization (IGO). In this role, IDUM should be tasked to coordinate international efforts to address global problems caused by UWM's. It would be a group of voluntary member-organizations working together on issues of mutual self-interest. It would become a voluntary platform in which to openly and transparently discuss and take actions on all classes of underwater weapons, weapons policy, science, technology, and engineering responses.

IDUM, operating as an IGO, would (a) assess the situation globally, (b) define the best technical, financial, and political ways of handling underwater munitions, and (c) set priorities on when and where to manage these human and environmental health risks.

*We wish to have this joint statement included in the final CSP Report to Nations and posted on its external server and website.*

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