

Information Note¹

- Event:** Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention
- Organizer:** Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)
- Date and Venue:** 15-19 May 2023, The Hague, The Netherlands
- Participants:** Government representatives from 137 (out of a total of 193) States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Representatives from Israel (signatory State) and South Sudan (non-signatory State) participated as observers.
- Representatives from 14 international organisations, specialised agencies, and other international bodies, inter alia, European Union, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit (BWC-ISU), Interpol, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), World Health Organisation (WHO), International Science and Technology Center (ISTC), Pacific Island Forum.
- Representatives of the global chemical industry, scientific community and non-governmental organisations.
- Chair of the 1540 Committee, 1540 Committee Expert

Background

On 15 February 2023, the Director of the External Relations Division at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) sent a letter to the Chair of the 1540 Committee inviting the Committee to participate in the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The aim of the Conference was to review the operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, taking into account any relevant scientific and technological developments. Furthermore, and among others, to review the role of the Chemical Weapons Convention in enhancing international peace and security and achieving the objectives as set forth in the preamble of the Convention and ensuring the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

This Conference was of direct relevance to the 1540 Committee with regard to resolution 1540 (2004) and subsequent resolutions:

- Resolution 1540 (2004):
 - OP 8 (a) in which the Security Council calls upon States “to promote the universal adoption and full implementation, and, where necessary, strengthening of multilateral treaties to which they are parties, whose aim is to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons”;

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- OP 8 (b) in which the Council calls upon States “to adopt national rules and regulations, where it has not yet been done, to ensure compliance with their commitments under the key multilateral non-proliferation treaties”;
- OP 8 (c) in which the Council calls upon States to renew and fulfil their commitment to multilateral cooperation, in particular within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, as important means of pursuing and achieving their common objectives in the area of non-proliferation and of promoting international cooperation for peaceful purposes.
- Resolution 2325 (2016):
 - OP 23 in which the Council encourages “relevant international, regional and subregional organizations to enhance cooperation and information-sharing with the 1540 Committee, on the issues related to the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004)”.
- Resolution 2663 (2022):
 - Preamble in which the Council reaffirms its decision that none of the obligations in resolution 1540 (2004) shall be interpreted so as to conflict with or alter the rights and obligations of State Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention or alter the responsibilities of the International Atomic Energy Agency or the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.
 - OP 25 which requests the 1540 Committee to continue to organize and participate in outreach events on the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) at the international, regional, subregional, and, as appropriate, national level, including, as appropriate, inviting parliamentarians, as well as representatives of civil society, including industry and academia and promote the refinement of these outreach efforts to focus on specific thematic and regional issues related to implementation.

Highlights

In the opening remarks the Director General of the OPCW, Mr. H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, highlighted the importance of the review conference, which offers an opportunity for all States Parties to review the operations of the Chemical Weapons Convention and to set a strategic direction for the OPCW for the next five years and beyond. He noted that the OPCW has made significant progress in carrying out its mandate over the last five years, but challenges remain. Chemical terrorism threats, possible toxic chemicals misuse and preventing chemical weapons re-emergence require OPCW’s mission to remain open-ended. He reiterated that the timeline to destroy all declared chemical weapons is by the end of this year and mentioned that 99% of them are already destroyed. He also invited the States Parties to report on the implementation of the CWC, 71 State Parties have yet to report. Finally, he pointed out, that a new Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) was opened on 12 May in The Hague, which is an additional tool to support States Parties and would significantly enhance OPCW’s research, operational, analytical and capacity-building capabilities.

Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, also addressed the review conference and emphasized the importance of the CWC as an essential pillar of the non-proliferation regime. She urged State Parties to renew and strengthen their commitments to the CWC and highlighted the importance of international cooperation towards a safer, more secure world without chemical weapons.

During the general debate the States Parties had the opportunity to make statements on their implementation status of the CWC. The Chair of the 1540 Committee also delivered a statement on behalf of the Committee and highlighted the importance of full and effective implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). He emphasized that resolution 1540 (2004) and the Chemical Weapons Convention complement and reinforce each other in pursuing and achieving their common objectives in the area of non-proliferation of chemical weapons. Furthermore, he welcomed the close collaboration between the 1540 Committee and the OPCW, which continues, within its mandate, to provide technical support to States in the implementation of relevant provisions under resolution 1540 (2004).

Discussions on several issues followed, among others, on the role of the CWC in enhancing international peace and security, ensuring the universality of the CWC, implementation of different provisions of the CWC as well as general functioning of the OPCW. No final documents of the Fifth Review Conference were adopted.

On the margins of the conference, the 1540 Chair also met the Director General of the OPCW, Mr. Arias and the Chairpersons of the Conference, using both informal meetings to highlight the importance of close cooperation in support of our common goal of mitigating threats to international peace and security posed by chemical weapons.

Furthermore, informal bilateral meetings were conducted in the margins of the conference between the 1540 Committee and the OPCW as well as with other International and Regional Organisations, listed on the 1540 Committee's website as assistance providers, which also attended the Review Conference: BWC ISU, INTERPOL, OSCE, UNIDIR, UNODC, WHO. In summary, all bilateral meetings were very fruitful and allowed the 1540 Committee to thank the International and Regional Organisations for their efforts to assist Member States in their implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

All International and Regional Organisations, in turn, expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to meet with the 1540 Committee and presented their ongoing assistance programmes and upcoming activities, which are also relevant to the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). They all, without exception, provided assurance of their readiness to continue to support Member States in their implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) and emphasized their interest in maintaining or even intensifying cooperation with the 1540 Committee.

All in all, the participation of the 1540 Committee in the Fifth CWC Review Conference provided an excellent opportunity to "raise the flag" and to strengthen the Committee's message in promoting and supporting the full and effective implementation of resolution 1540 (2004).

Additional comments

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