

NGO Joint Statement:
Preventing Acquisition of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors

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Chairperson, Director-general, Distinguished Delegates, Civil Society Colleagues,

Statement of Appreciation and Urgency: Preventing the Acquisition of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors

We express our sincere appreciation for the opportunity to address the Conference of States Parties on the imperative matter of preventing the acquisition of chemical weapons by non-state actors. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the OPCW have attained numerous significant milestones, guided by their noble mission to establish a world without chemical weapons.

Despite these achievements, the persistent threat of non-state actors and covert state sponsorship using toxic or incapacitating chemicals as weapons remains a significant concern. Non-state actors, including terrorists and criminal organizations, pose an escalating threat in acquiring and utilizing chemical weapons, potentially resulting in mass casualties, widespread panic, and the destabilization of international security. Urgent action is needed to prevent their acquisition and ensure global peace and security.

The consequences of chemical weapons falling into the hands of non-state actors are severe and far-reaching. Deliberate use can cause mass casualties, death, injury, and long-term health effects. Widespread panic and fear can disrupt societal functioning, creating chaos among populations. Moreover, the potential use by non-state actors can destabilize international security, leading to conflicts and erosion of trust in international agreements. Preventing such acquisition is crucial to avoid catastrophic consequences and uphold global stability. Instances of terrorism related to chemical weapons, such as nerve agents used in Malaysia in 2017 and chemical weapons by the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, have heightened the threat perception from non-state actors. Efforts to limit access may have had some impact, but instances of identifying and bringing to justice those responsible for chemical weapons attacks persist.

Until October 2017, the CWC had a limited focus on the threat of chemical weapons and terrorism. During the 86th Session of the Executive Council (EC) of the OPCW, a decision was adopted to address this urgent threat posed by terrorist groups or non-state actors. This marked a new chapter in addressing chemical terrorism. Now, it is imperative to move beyond providing assistance to affected state parties and develop effective strategies for preventing chemical terrorism. This includes robust response mechanisms, accountability, and persecution of perpetrators, serving as a deterrent to terrorists and their supporters.

Universal Adherence to the CWC: A Fundamental Imperative

Universal adherence to and compliance with the CWC by all states parties is the most effective means to prevent the acquisition of chemical weapons by non-state actors. The CWC establishes clear norms and obligations, prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, and use of chemical weapons. Full compliance ensures that chemical weapons are not obtained or used by non-state actors, thereby safeguarding global security. The commitment of all states parties to uphold and implement the CWC is crucial in preventing the proliferation of chemical weapons to non-state actors and maintaining international peace and stability.

Strengthening Global Efforts: Recommendations for Action

States parties, international organizations, and civil society have undertaken various initiatives and best practices to prevent the acquisition of chemical weapons by non-state actors. Recommendations for strengthening these efforts include:

1. **Strengthening national legislation and regulatory frameworks:**
 - Establish and enforce robust national legislation and regulatory frameworks to effectively implement the CWC and prevent the illicit acquisition of chemicals.
2. **Enhancing export controls and border security measures:**
 - Improve export controls and border security measures to prevent the unauthorized transfer of chemicals and related equipment.
3. **Promoting information sharing and intelligence cooperation:**
 - Engage in information sharing and intelligence cooperation to identify and disrupt attempts by non-state actors to acquire chemical weapons.
4. **Engaging in capacity-building and technical assistance:**
 - Provide and receive capacity-building and technical assistance to enhance capabilities in preventing the acquisition of chemical weapons.
5. **Strengthening international cooperation and coordination:**
 - Collaborate closely to prevent the acquisition of chemical weapons by non-state actors, including strengthening international cooperation, coordination, and exchange of information.

By implementing these best practices and recommendations, states parties can enhance their efforts to prevent the acquisition of chemical weapons by non-state actors, effectively upholding the principles of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This contributes to global peace, security, and stability.

Conclusion: A Collective Commitment to Global Security

In conclusion, preventing the acquisition of chemical weapons by non-state actors is a crucial component of global efforts to eliminate chemical weapons and maintain international security. It requires collective action and commitment by all states parties, international organizations, and stakeholders. As an NGO, we express our willingness to collaborate with states parties and other stakeholders in addressing this urgent issue. We thank the Conference of States Parties for their attention and consideration of our statement and stand ready to contribute to ongoing efforts to prevent the acquisition of chemical weapons by non-state actors and safeguard global security.

We appreciate your kind attention and request this statement be made part of the official published proceedings of this Conference.

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