THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

ELIMINATING A WHOLE CATEGORY OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

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"At the end of the Cold War, the United States joined together with other nations in the Chemical Weapons Convention to state in unequivocal terms that we will end our chemical weapons programs and destroy existing stockpiles, precursor chemicals, production facilities and weapons delivery systems."

– Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which entered into force on April 29, 1997, is a landmark agreement that has proved its effectiveness in enhancing international security.

The Convention's Reach

The CWC, officially the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, has 188 Member States, including the United States – making it nearly universal. Building on earlier agreements, like the Geneva Protocol of 1925, which prohibited the use of chemical weapons, the CWC bans an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

The Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits:

- Developing, producing, acquiring, stockpiling, or retaining chemical weapons.
- The direct or indirect transfer of chemical weapons.
- Chemical weapons use or military preparation for use.
- Assisting, encouraging, or inducing other states to engage in CWC-prohibited activity.
- The use of riot control agents "as a method of warfare."

Convention Requirements

The CWC requires the declaration and verified destruction of existing chemical weapons (CW) and implements a comprehensive inspection regime for both government and private chemical facilities to verify that chemical weapons are not being produced.

Verification and Assistance

The CWC has a strong verification regime which provides for investigations of the alleged use of CW and challenge inspections at any location inside a Member State's borders. The Treaty's implementation process is designed to include minimal intrusion into Member States' economic or technological development. In addition to prohibiting the development and use of CW, the Treaty contains provisions for assistance and protection against these weapons.

Global Progress

Under international verification, stockpiles and production facilities are steadily being eliminated.

Since 1997:

- Over 60 percent of declared global stockpiles of chemical weapons have been destroyed.
- Over 2,000 inspections of declared chemical and related industries have taken place.

U.S. Commitment

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has made clear that the United States is committed to the complete elimination of chemical weapons stockpiles in the United States and around the world. She has said, "To date, we have already destroyed 89 percent of our original chemical weapons stockpile. We reaffirm our commitment to finish the job as quickly as possible in accordance with national and treaty requirements that ensure the safety of people and the protection of the environment."

Continued Vigilance

The United States will continue to cooperate closely with the other Member States of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and work toward complete elimination in the United States and around the world. The international community must continue to speak with one voice and remain vigilant, so these weapons pose no threat to people in the United States or anywhere.