

Preventing the Use of Chemical Weapons

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The threat of chemical weapons is back today. The difference however is that chemical weapons have now reached the violent non-state actors. The willingness of the state and non-state actors to use the chemical weapons keeps growing with the increasing threats surfacing from different corners of the world. In order to prevent the threat of chemical weapons and the predictable future of the proliferation of the deadly weapons international community took up the initiative to stop the spread of chemical weapons. The only international convention for the purpose of eliminating chemical weapons is the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) which was signed in 1993 and entered into force in 1997. It works against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and employs a strong verification system for its signatories, although only four countries in the world haven't ratified it. CWC aims at eliminating the weapons by destroying the stockpiles and a set of binding is designed to which the signatory parties must adhere. In the present world with modern technology easily accessible, the threat of a chemical warfare remains undestroyed even after its first use almost 106 years ago in 1915 by the Germans and French. Today the leaders, especially those who are engaged in a war in Syria pay little regard to the consequences that the use of chemical weapons can result into. Killing of innocent civilians, unmindful of age and gender is abominable, yet leaders have made decisions to use chemical weapons on the humans, which after attack keeps intact the infrastructure in the surroundings but annihilates all the breathing creatures that are present in the radius of chemical weapon's target. Such a brutal use of chemical weapons, is crime against humanity and the world leaders must never normalize its use. In this regard, the efforts of Organization for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) must be appreciated, which has brought more than 90 countries on the same platform working together for disabling the use of chemical weapons, curbing its production and applying rigid international system of checks and balances. OPCW offers opportunities for those who are able to recognize those responsible for the use of chemical weapon. Moreover, OPCW offers investigation reports regarding the chemical weapon analysis, and has associated itself with worldwide laboratories where they work jointly for curbing the production of materials can that

can be used for a chemical weapon attack. To prevent the proliferation of chemical weapons certain measures must be undertaken by the states, as already laid in the charter of OPCW and CWC. Few of the preventive measures are as following:

- **Verification:** the toxic chemicals have many legitimate uses, such as they used in industrial processes but at the same time often these chemicals are used for the purposes which have been forbidden by the CWC. Thus the parties to CWC guarantee and verify that toxic chemicals are only being used for purposes that are not illegal under the CWC rules and regulations. A further step to this commitment is allowing the OPCW inspectors to visit the facilities where the chemicals and their precursors are produced. The inspection by the inspectors involves the verification process.
- **Managing the International Transfer of Chemicals:** The parties to CWC adhere to the rules and obligations for transferring i.e. import and export of the chemical weapons. The two elements of this obligation are: monitoring the transfer of chemicals between States and secondly, restraining the transfer of toxic chemical weapons to non-state actors. The weapons can only be transferred to a non-state party under the condition that latter provides the certificate for its end use and pledges not to transfer it to any other party.
- **Developing the Capacity of State against Chemical Weapons:** It is significant that the states are able to defend their population against the chemical weapons, for this purpose the parties to OPCW must develop programmes for national protection. OPCW has given specific programmes for this purpose such as detection and alarm system, developing decontamination equipment, enhancing medical capabilities etc. this means improving the military, civilian and also involves international capacity building and cooperation against the possible danger of a chemical weapon attack.

The threat of a threat of a chemical warfare is very much existential and have grown over the years as more and more bloodthirsty and power hungry non state actors are emerging on the chessboard of international politics. The focus of the use of chemical weapons has shifted from being used by a state's military to the use of chemical weapons by an unknown violent actor, that has no home address to be held responsible and acts through strong network that can be transnational in nature. International peace, stability, and cooperation has become increasingly vulnerable to a terrorism through the use of chemical weapons. Many have been victim of its use in the modern world, especially the population of Syria who have experienced the horrors of the use of chemical weapons. The chemical attacks has no short term consequence, rather they are experienced by the victims for a long term. For example, it can result in eye damage which the victim will experience for a life time. The chemical weapon damages crops, which has a negative impact of national agricultural sector as well as the consumers. The water is also contaminated by the use of chemical weapons which can disturb the supply of clean drinking water to the

population. Considering all the impacts it has become of prime importance for the world leaders and organizations like OPCW and CWC to continue their efforts in preventing the proliferation of chemical weapons.