



Balancing State Sovereignty and International Security in Preventing the Use of Chemical Weaponry During Warfare

General Assembly: DISEC

Pioneer Valley Model United Nations

Welcome!

Hello delegates, and Welcome to the DISEC General Assembly Committee, Balancing State Sovereignty and International Security in Preventing the Use of Chemical Weaponry During Warfare! Your members of the chair are incredibly excited to welcome you to the charming city of Amherst, and even more excited to meet each of you over the course of this conference. We look forward to seeing how each delegate will represent their country's position on an issue shaped by such a wide range of perspectives. In this committee, delegates will be tasked with exploring the complex relationship between a state's sovereignty, international security, and preventing the use of chemical weaponry during armed conflicts. Despite decades of international cooperation that led to the creation of comprehensive treaties such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, the threat posed by chemical weapons continues to divide states on how these weapons should be regulated, monitored, and enforced. While there is widespread agreement between states that chemical weapons should not be used, ensuring that every state complies with the commitments agreed upon has proven to be far more difficult than expected. Within this committee, delegates will decide how countries should strengthen the existing legal frameworks against chemical weaponry, how nations should respond when signatories fail to uphold their obligations, and how to respond to modern problems that were not addressed originally in the Convention. We look forward to seeing you in Amherst, bringing each country's perspective to life within this committee.

Warm regards,

Chloe Torquato & Madison Burke

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Introduction to the Chairs

Chair I: Chloe Torquato

My name is Chloe Torquato, and I am so excited to be your chair for the Balancing State Sovereignty and International Security in Preventing the Use of Chemical Weaponry During Warfare Committee! I was raised in Conceição do Mato Dentro, a small town in Minas Gerais, Brazil, and I am currently a sophomore at UMass Amherst studying Legal Studies with a certificate in International Relations and a Japanese minor. Outside of Model UN, I stay busy with a broad variety of different organizations on campus. A large part of my time on campus is spent with Kappa Alpha Pi, our pre-law and pre-government fraternity, where I serve on the e-board as a member of the standards committee. During the summer, I usually spend most of my time lifeguarding at the YMCA, tutoring middle schoolers, volunteering as a Portuguese teacher, or being placed to work at various different courthouses across Boston. Getting to work with so many different people has also made me very passionate about learning different languages and cultures. I currently speak English, Portuguese, Spanish, Japanese, and in my very little free time am attempting to learn Russian. Aside from that, best of luck with your research and preparation, and we'll see you soon around Amherst!

See you soon,

Chloe Torquato

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Introduction to the Chairs

Chair II: Madison Burke

I'm Madison, and I am a sophomore studying legal studies with a minor in political science, seeking to graduate early to enter an accelerated master's program for public policy to attend law school. On campus, I am grateful to serve as UMass Amherst's Head Delegate. I am so excited to take twelve members of our delegation to Washington, D.C. this fall (including the amazing Chloe Torquato). In addition to Model UN, I have a deep interest in law. Together with Chloe, I am a part of a pre-law and pre-government co-ed professional fraternity, Kappa Alpha Pi, where I have the pleasure of serving as their Internal Development Chair this fall. I am also continuing my public policy research fellowship into an historic federally funded employment program called CETA. If any of this sounds of interest to you, I'm happy to talk with you!

Looking forward to meeting you all,

Madison Burke

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Introduction to the Committee

Within the United Nations, the General Assembly (GA) committees are the veins of the world, pumping out policies that circulate through every country in the system. In this space, each of the 193 Member States has an equal seat and one vote. Regardless of how many inhabitants a country has, every vote is counted the same. This ensures that a nation's value is not measured by its size or power, and instead, gives every country an equal stage to speak on the same issues, proving that every voice carries the same weight. Along with that, the General Assembly committees provide a space for multilateral discussion regarding a full spectrum of international issues.¹ It discusses specific issues through dedicated agenda items or sub-items, which lead to the adoption of resolutions.² However, this deliberation can also be used for a plethora of discussions, which include appointing the Secretary-General, electing the non-permanent members of the Security Council, and approving any budget that the UN may require.³

With its headquarters in the center of New York City, the building for the United Nations General Assembly is a place where every nation is welcomed, and it sits right on the East River, as a piece of international territory. With this location being internationally recognized as a neutral zone, it belongs to every country, not just the United States. This creates a perfect location for international dialogue, where countries can come together to draft resolutions and engage in debate.

¹ "General Assembly of the United Nations." United Nations. n.d. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/>.

² United Nations, "General Assembly of the United Nations."

³ United Nations, "General Assembly of the United Nations."

Our committee is based on the work of the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC), which operates as a subsidiary body beneath the General Assembly. DISEC is the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly in Model UN. It focuses on global security, arms control, and thwarting threats to international peace, making it one of the most prevalent and largest committees in MUN. Focusing on large geopolitical and social issues, DISEC serves as a forum of collaboration to deliver resolutions and recommendations that promote global peace and security.⁴ DISEC comprises all 193 member states of the United Nations, and unlike the 15-member United Nations Security Council, all member states have an equal vote. This allows every nation to voice concerns on international security regardless of size or military strength.

It is valuable to note that DISEC has a non-binding influence, meaning that it cannot deploy peacekeepers or mandate any sanctions. Instead, DISEC focuses on passing resolutions that act as powerful recommendations and lay the groundwork for global treaties or future Security Council efforts. Not only that, but resolutions frequently inspire major treaties and multilateral agreements because of their massive political weight. DISEC meets every year during the main session of the UN General Assembly, which begins in late September and persists through October and November. During this time, the United Nations' First Committee sessions are divided into three stages. First, general discussion, followed by thematic debates, and finally, action on drafts.⁵ Instead of being divided into permanent sub-committees, DISEC is organized into themes such as nuclear weapons, conventional arms, outer space, and cyber warfare, etc. to ensure thorough, focused debates. And while DISEC itself is just one body, it

⁴ "UN General Assembly - First Committee - Disarmament and International Security." n.d. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/ga/first/>.

⁵ United Nations, "UN General Assembly - First Committee - Disarmament and International Security."

works in conjunction and receives reports from specialized groups with two main subsidiary bodies.

- United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC): A subsidiary organ of the General Assembly made up of all UN member states. This organ operates as a meditative body to make in-depth recommendations on disarmament issues.
- Conference on Disarmament (CD): This is the international community's single multilateral disarmament negotiating platform. Though it is autonomous, it reports annually to the UN General Assembly.

Introduction to the Topic

In accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), by definition, **chemical weapons** are defined as: "1. Chemical Weapons means the following, together or separately: (a) Toxic chemicals and their precursors, except where intended for purposes not prohibited under this Convention, as long as the types and quantities are consistent with such purposes; (b) Munitions and devices, specifically designed to cause death or other harm through the toxic properties of those toxic chemicals specified in subparagraph (a), which would be released as a result of the employment of such munitions and devices; (c) Any equipment specifically designed for use directly in connection with the employment of munitions and devices specified in subparagraph (b)".⁶ However, in accordance with the 1969 United Nations report, Chemical Warfare (CW) agents are defined as: ". . . chemical substances, whether gaseous, liquid or solid, which might be employed because of their direct toxic effects on man, animals and plants . . .".⁷ While both definitions describe what constitutes a chemical weapon, they differ in both their scope and purpose. The definition provided to us by the 1969 United Nations report provides a broad understanding of chemical warfare agents and their usages when deployed, whereas the Chemical Weapons Convention establishes the legal standards that states are expected to follow. How has this shift influenced the way states regulate chemical weapons and interpret their obligations under international law? To answer this question, one must examine the treaties and

⁶ "CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION." n.d. United Nations. *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction*. https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/CWC/CWC_en.pdf.

⁷ "Definition of Chemical Weapons." Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. *Chemical Warfare Nerve Agents — Analyzing Their Degradation Products*. <http://www.opcw.nl/cwc/defini.htm>.

legal principles that were established in order to shape the regulation of chemical weapons over time.

Prior to any large-scale conflict involving chemical agents, there were various early attempts to reduce the brutality of warfare by limiting the kinds of weapons permitted on the battlefield. One of these early attempts was the 1899 Hague Convention, formally titled the *Convention Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land*, which was adopted at the First Hague Peace Conference in the Netherlands on July 29, 1899, and later revised by the 1907 Hague Convention, which added and modified a few sections to the preexisting three main treaties and three additional declarations.⁸ The First Hague Conference was initiated by Tsar Nicholas II of Russia in an attempt to prevent the devastating impacts of modern industrial warfare by establishing rules that limited certain methods and means of warfare—including the use of dangerous chemical agents such as poison gas, projectiles, and explosives⁹—, while also encouraging the peaceful resolution of international disputes with the establishment of the Permanent Court of Arbitration, which was the first intergovernmental forum that was established to assist in the peaceful resolution of inter-state disputes.¹⁰ Following this, the Second Hague Conference was suggested by the U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt,¹¹ and was held with the intent to expand upon the 1899 Hague Convention by adding an increased focus on naval warfare.¹² This conference produced thirteen treaties—twelve of which were ratified—and one declaration,¹³ which primarily focused on the laws of naval warfare, the regulation of poison

⁸ “Hague Conventions.” n.d. National WWI Museum and Memorial. <https://www.theworldwar.org/learn/about-wwi/hague-conventions>.

⁹ “Laws of War : Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague II); July 29, 1899.” n.d. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/hague02.asp.

¹⁰ “History.” n.d. The Permanent Court of Arbitration. Accessed July 23, 2026b. <https://pca-cpa.org/home/>.

¹¹ “Hague Conventions.” n.d. National WWI Museum and Memorial. <https://www.theworldwar.org/learn/about-wwi/hague-conventions>.

¹² “Second Hague Peace Conference | Law | Research Starters | EBSCO Research.” n.d. EBSCO. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/law/second-hague-peace-conference>.

¹³ EBSCO, “Second Hague Peace Conference | Law | Research Starters | EBSCO Research.”

weapons, and the obligations of neutral powers. Together, the Hague Conventions established the beginning of regulation against the use of chemical weaponry during warfare.

Building upon the early regulations set in place by the Hague Conventions, later agreements and treaties developed more specific restrictions on chemical warfare, which laid the foundation for future efforts to prohibit the use of chemical weapons in its entirety. In treaties such as the 1925 Geneva Protocol—more formally known as the *Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare*¹⁴—, previous vague limitations on chemical warfare were expanded through a more specific prohibition on the use of chemical and biological weapons in international armed conflicts. Specifically, this treaty prohibited the use of “asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of all analogous liquids materials or devices”,¹⁵ as well as “the use of bacteriological methods of warfare”.¹⁶ As far as countries perceived it, this meant a complete and total prohibition on the use of chemical and biological weapons between states, but mentioned nothing in regards to the production, stockpile, or transfer of such weapons.¹⁷ Therefore, when assessed by states in the late 1900s, it was concluded that the 1925 Geneva Protocol ultimately “. . . resulted in a legal framework that allowed states to conduct [chemical] research, develop new biological weapons, and ultimately engage in [chemical] arms races”.¹⁸ As this discovery came to light, “. . . the fear of nonexistent weapons, the potential impact of technological advances,

¹⁴ “Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare (Geneva Protocol).” n.d. U.S. Department of State. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/isn/4784.htm>.

¹⁵ “Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. Geneva, 17 June 1925.” n.d. International Humanitarian Law Databases. Accessed July 23, 2026. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/geneva-gas-prot-1925/protocol?activeTab=>.

¹⁶ International Humanitarian Law Databases, “Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. Geneva, 17 June 1925.”

¹⁷ “The Shortcomings of Indeterminacy in Arms Control Regimes: The Case of the Biological Weapons Convention.” n.d. Beard, Jack M. Accessed July 23, 2026b.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1158&context=lawfacpub>.

¹⁸ Beard, Jack M., “The Shortcomings of Indeterminacy in Arms Control Regimes: The Case of the Biological Weapons Convention.”

and the misperception of threats. . .”¹⁹ is what led states to seek loopholes within the treaty, including only agreeing to not use chemical and biological weapons against countries that also respected the 1925 Geneva Protocol and reserving the right to respond with such weapons if they were attacked first.

Due to these loopholes within the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the restrictions placed did not last long, and countries continued to develop and manufacture chemical and biological weapons in preparation for potential scenarios where their use could be justified. As a result, stronger enforcement mechanisms and more comprehensive agreements were needed to supplement the Geneva Protocol, which led to the creation of the Biological Weapons Convention. More formally known as the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction*,²⁰ The Biological Weapons Convention was a treaty adopted with no fixed duration, meaning it remains legally binding and in effect today, and specifically for the “. . .elimination of existing biological weapons and [prohibition of] developing, stockpiling, or using biological and toxin weapons”.²¹ Along with that, the treaty itself was the first multilateral agreement that the international community had ever seen to place a strict ban on an entire category of weaponry. Additionally, by establishing a complete ban on biological weapons, the treaty reinforced the international norm that the usage of such weapons should be condemned, as highlighted in the preamble of the Biological Weapons Convention, which notes that states are “. . .convinced that such use would be repugnant to the conscience of mankind and that no effort should be spared to minimise this

¹⁹ Beard, Jack M., “The Shortcomings of Indeterminacy in Arms Control Regimes: The Case of the Biological Weapons Convention.”

²⁰ NTI. n.d. “Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).” Accessed July 23, 2026. <https://www.nti.org/education-center/treaties-and-regimes/convention-prohibition-development-production-and-stockpiling-bacteriological-biological-and-toxin-weapons-btwc/>.

²¹ NTI, “Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).”

risk”.²² Although the Convention was proven to be successful because it established the international norm against biological weapons, its lack of a formal verification regime made it difficult to evaluate state compliance, revealing how a subsequent treaty with stronger enforcement and evaluation measures would be needed.

The progression of these treaties ultimately resulted in the adoption of the Chemical Weapons Convention, otherwise known as the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction*,²³ which is the most comprehensive and effective international agreement on chemical weapons to date. As the primary international treaty governing chemical weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention will serve as the primary focus of this committee and one of the main reference points used when discussing the legality and regulation of chemical weaponry within the context of this committee.

²² International Humanitarian Law Databases. n.d. “Chemical Weapons Convention, Preamble.” Accessed July 23, 2026. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/bwc-1972/preamble>.

²³ “Chemical Weapons Convention.” n.d. OPCW. <https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention>.

History of the Topic

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), an international arms treaty officially in action since 1997, effectively changed the way the globe interacted with chemical weaponry forever. Unlike previous treaties, it did not simply regulate weaponry. Rather, it sought to eliminate an entire section of weapons of mass destruction in a comprehensive document that included provisions such as intrusive inspections, verification mechanisms, and mandatory destruction to ensure follow-through.²⁴

Upon signing, 193 member states agree to...

1. Report any declared chemical weapons, production facilities, and certain industrial chemicals for transparency.
2. Never develop, receive, store, transfer, or use chemical weapons.
3. Destroy all chemical weapons stockpiles and production facilities under international supervision by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).
 - a. The OPCW would also be allowed to inspect military sites and chemical industries
4. Required to pass national laws making chemical weapons illegal.
 - a. Promoting the peaceful use of chemistry while preventing misuse.
5. Provide assistance and protection to countries threatened by chemical weapons.²⁵

²⁴ Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction. (n.d.). CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION. In *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction*.

https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/CWC/CWC_en.pdf

²⁵ *The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) at a glance* | Arms Control Association. (n.d.).

<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/chemical-weapons-convention-cwc-glance-0>

This convention had many obvious successes given its widespread acceptance. First, it has near-universal membership, making it one of the world's largest treaties, increasing its effectiveness. Additionally, other than the strict provisions previously detailed, this treaty was “future-proof” through its general purpose criterion, meaning that it did not just account for contemporary chemical weaponry, but any future innovations of toxic chemicals. All in all, this treaty established a global norm that not only denounced chemical weaponry, but viewed it as unacceptable under international law.

Nonetheless, the CWC has not evaded criticism, as the weaknesses of the treaty are numerous. While the OPCW has the power to inspect, investigate, and make transparent reports of violations, it has no power to impose any kind of punishment on states, whether it be through sanctions or persecution. Also, the OPCW's investigations are entirely reliant on state declarations. This means that if a state has not declared that it has chemical weaponry, facility locations, or relevant chemicals, they cannot investigate or ensure that there are no secret stockpiles or undeclared facilities that may be hidden. Adding another layer, challenge inspections are a verification tool of the CWC that allows any member state to request that the OPCW conduct a short-notice inspection of any facility or location within another member state's territory to verify possible non-compliance.²⁶ Interestingly, this verification tool has never been enacted. Countries fear diplomatic retaliation or the escalation of international political tensions that would result in such an invasive investigation. This makes this important tool completely ineffective in promoting accountability between member states.²⁷

²⁶ *Verifying the Chemical Weapons Ban: Missing Elements* | Arms Control Association. (n.d.). <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2007-01/features/verifying-chemical-weapons-ban-missing-elements>

²⁷ Chor, R. (2025). *Erosion of the norm of using chemical weapons*. Foreign Policy Research Institute. Retrieved August 6, 2026, from <https://www.fpri.org/article/2025/03/erosion-of-the-norm-of-using-chemical-weapons/>

Since the treaty came into force in 1997, there have been numerous failures and violations that have raised questions on its current validity. For example, after Syria joined the CWC in 2013, most of its declared stockpile was destroyed under OPCW's supervision.²⁸ However, the Assad regime continued to launch chemical attacks under the CWC during the Syrian civil war, such as the 2017 civilian strikes in Lataminah. This demonstrated some of the failures of the CWC, in that a country could join the convention and fail to disclose the entire scope of its chemical weapons program, and exposed the difficulty to enforce abidance when violations have already occurred. Not only that, but political divisions in the UN's Security Council limited international action, effectively making the CWC incongruent with the protection of morality and civil liberty. Another brief example of its failure occurred in Russia and the Novichok Poisonings in 2018 and 2020.²⁹ Despite the decimation of Russia's declared chemical weaponry under the CWC, Novichok nerve agents were used to poison a former intelligence officer, his daughter, and a Russian political opposition leader. This displays that highly specialized chemical agents are still in development, and raised concerns that states may be continuing secret chemical warfare programs in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.³⁰

²⁸ *Executive Council reinstates the rights and privileges of Syria under Chemical Weapons Convention.* (n.d.). OPCW.

<https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/news/2026/07/executive-council-reinstates-rights-and-privileges-syria-under-chemical>

²⁹ *Novichok used in Russia, OPCW finds* | Arms Control Association. (n.d.).

<https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2020-11/news/novichok-used-russia-opcw-finds>

³⁰ Admin, B. (2025, September 11). *The Chemical Weapons Convention turns 28: a test of – and testament to – multilateralism.* Better World Campaign.

<https://betterworldcampaign.org/blog/chemical-weapons-convention-turns-28-a-test-of-testament-to-multilateralism>

Discussion of the Topic

Although the Chemical Weapons Convention was able to establish one of the strongest legal frameworks in international law in order to prevent the usage of chemical weaponry, creating rules is much easier than having to ensure that states actually follow them. As the Chemical Weapons Convention has evolved through more than a century of various treaties and conventions, states have noticed that there are various practical challenges that come with the enforcement of the Convention's regulations. Most notably, analysts have observed that the Convention's existence alone does not guarantee state compliance, as its effectiveness ultimately depends on each state's willingness to fulfill its obligations.³¹ Along with this, concerns surrounding state sovereignty and the possibility that other countries may not comply with the Convention can discourage states from fully complying with its regulations, especially when doing so puts them at a strategic disadvantage in comparison to other nations. Due to these concerns, various challenges continue to shape the implementation of the Convention and lead analysts to question the effectiveness of its regulatory framework. The following sections will examine several of these ongoing debates and challenges, along with potential solutions to address them.

One of the primary issues in regulating chemical weapons is ensuring that states are accurately reporting and complying with their obligations. The Convention's requirements apply exclusively to States Parties that have ratified or signed onto the treaty, meaning that countries which have not joined are not obligated to report their chemical weapons activities or submit to

³¹ Chor, R. (2025). *Erosion of the norm of using chemical weapons*. Foreign Policy Research Institute. Retrieved August 6, 2026, from <https://www.fpri.org/article/2025/03/erosion-of-the-norm-of-using-chemical-weapons/>

the same verification measures as member states. Therefore, this lack of transparency can create concerns amongst states that do comply with the Convention's terms, as they could feel as though they are at a disadvantage when reporting their findings in relation to chemical weaponry, while others are not. Specifically, states that are signed onto the Chemical Weapons Convention have promised that they will “. . . Prohibit natural and legal persons anywhere on its territory or in any other place under its jurisdiction as recognized by international law from undertaking any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Convention, including enacting penal legislation with respect to such activity”.³² For states that uphold the Convention, their obligations extend beyond simply prohibiting the manufacture and usage of chemical weapons, but also include actively reporting any relevant information and cooperating in investigations of potential violations.

The Chemical Weapons Convention also establishes a comprehensive, three pillar verification system, which requires States Parties to submit annual declarations and participate in inspections that allow compliance to be monitored over time.³³ Each pillar is administered and overseen by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which works to ensure that regulated chemicals are not diverted for use in chemical weapons or warfare.

To begin, the Declarations Branch serves as the primary pillar of the Chemical Weapons Convention's verification regime. Formally, the Declarations Branch requires that member states submit annual reports outlining their past chemical warfare activities, their current stockpiles of chemical weapons (if applicable), and any other production or processing methods that they might have had developed. Along with this, the Declarations Branch “. . . assesses State Party

³² *Article VII – National Implementation Measures*. (n.d.). OPCW.

<https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/articles/article-vii-national-implementation-measures>

³³ *Verification*. (n.d.). OPCW. <https://www.opcw.org/about/technical-secretariat/divisions/verification>

compliance with the declarations-related provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), manages all verification and inspection-related information, and maintains the Organisation's Declarations Handbook", to ensure that states that have signed onto the Convention are in full compliance with its obligations.

Following this, the second pillar of the Chemical Weapons Convention's verification regime consists of routine inspections, which allow the OPCW to verify whether states are upholding their obligations to the Convention through unannounced visits to declared facilities and evaluations of whether chemical activities comply with the Convention.

Formally, the OPCW administers this through two branches, the Chemical Demilitarisation Branch and the Industry Verification Branch. The Chemical Demilitarisation Branch primarily focuses on overseeing "... all technical and verification-related aspects of inspection planning, oversight, support, and finalisation to ensure the relevant provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Verification Annex are upheld," but its roles also extend to conducting "...technical assessments and clarifications of chemical weapons-related declarations".

On the other hand, the Industry Verification Branch focuses more on the management of the "... technical aspects of policy, planning, oversight, support, and conclusion of inspections," details that work hand-in-hand with OPCW reports related to a country's compliance with site inspections. Along with this, the Industry Verification Branch also works closely with the "... Inspectorate to verify that activities involving Scheduled chemicals and unscheduled discrete organic chemicals at facilities and plant sites declared by States Parties are for purposes not prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)". Through this, the Industry

Verification Branch is able to ensure that chemical facilities are not repurposing chemicals intended for peaceful purposes toward the development of chemical weapons.

Finally, as briefly mentioned in a previous section, the third pillar of the Chemical Weapons Convention's verification regime is the use of Challenge Inspections and investigations, which are carried out by the OPCW's Inspectorate Division.³⁴ The OPCW's Inspectorate Division (INS) is composed of several specialized units, each with international experts from a wide range of fields who use the capabilities of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) to support inspections and cross-divisional initiatives under Articles X and XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention . Along with this, the Inspectorate Division also “... implements the Technical Secretariat’s on-site verification activities ensuring the efficient and effective deployment of inspection teams to both military and industrial facilities around the world”. Within the Inspectorate Division, the Inspection Team Personnel Branch (ITP) is responsible for “... all inspector staff resources, [maintaining] an integrated and flexible workforce of inspectors that are qualified, [cross-training] and [preparing] for deployment to all types of missions and other operations such as planned verification activities, Technical Assistance Visits, Challenge Inspections, Investigations of Alleged Use, and other contingency missions as required”. Therefore, the ITP serves as the backbone of the Convention's attempts at enforcing compliance, as it is responsible for deploying inspectors to conduct on-site verification and investigation missions at any member state’s request. However, even with the Chemical Weapons Convention's extensive verification measures designed to build trust between member states, nations are still reluctant to cooperate with one another, which in turn diminishes their ability to fully comply with their obligations.

³⁴ *Inspectorate*. (n.d.). OPCW. <https://www.opcw.org/about/technical-secretariat/divisions/inspectorate>

Although maintaining trust between states remains one of the main debates surrounding chemical weapons, it is far from the only challenge that delegates must consider. One major point of contention surrounding chemical weapon restrictions is the tension between maintaining international security and preserving state sovereignty. As previously mentioned, the CWC requires states to “. . . declare in writing to the OPCW their chemical weapons stockpiles, chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs), relevant chemical industry facilities, and other weapons-related information”.³⁵ This information must be submitted within 30 days of the convention's entry into force for each member state, to ensure that state-parties have enough time to analyze the applicant's history in the creation of chemical weaponry.

Even with these verification measures in place, analysts argue that the CWC lacks sufficient enforcement mechanisms and that the OPCW's current efforts are not enough. As a result, many states advocate for the creation of a piece of legislation that focuses on “. . . strengthening the verification regime, which is fundamental to supporting chemical weapons disarmament and nonproliferation; increasing geographical representation within the OPCW; expanding the dialogue between states-parties and civil society; and expanding capacity building and international cooperation efforts”.³⁶

However, others argue that the Chemical Weapons Convention has become too restrictive, with certain states claiming that its regulations overstep the boundaries of state sovereignty by limiting their authority to govern what goes on within their own borders. Richard Price, an international relations scholar whose research focuses on global politics and limitations

³⁵ *The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) at a glance* | Arms Control Association. (n.d.-b). <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/chemical-weapons-convention-cwc-glance-0#:~:text=The%20CWC%20requires%20states%2Dparties,force%20for%20each%20member%20state>

³⁶ *The Chemical Weapons Convention is stronger than you think* | Arms Control Association. (n.d.). <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2023-10/features/chemical-weapons-convention-stronger-you-think>

on warfare, argues that states should place greater emphasis on broader regulations of warfare rather than focusing specifically on chemical weapons. By questioning, “Why of all the horrible things that happen in warfare have chemical weapons been singled out?”,³⁷ Richard Price argues that states should focus on addressing the broader humanitarian concerns of warfare, rather than placing a disproportionate emphasis on restricting a single category of weaponry. Notably, he places an emphasis on the idea that “. . . there are other equally terrible ways to die in an armed conflict and many people question why the U.S. should respond so strongly to one chemical weapons attack in Syria and not to other atrocities committed in that conflict”. Therefore, this debate ultimately focuses on finding a balance between respecting the sovereignty of individual states and maintaining global security whilst creating restrictions on means of warfare.

Additionally, the Chemical Weapons Convention has 193 States Parties and remains open to ratification by all states. However, it is also important to note that there are a handful of states that have not yet signed onto the treaty, and therefore are not obligated to provide any information regarding their chemical weaponry. Specifically, “. . . Three states have neither signed nor ratified the convention (Egypt, North Korea and South Sudan)”.³⁸

With all factors taken into consideration, it is important to examine both sides of the debate when determining whether the need for international security justifies placing limitations on state sovereignty. When considering what limitations (if any) should be placed on the current pieces of legislation, delegates should consider several key factors, including OPCW's current authority over states and their means of production, whether or not the organization's powers should be expanded or restricted, how much access OPCW inspectors should be able to have

³⁷ Northam, J. (2013, September 4). Why do chemical weapons evoke such a strong reaction? *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2013/09/04/218995964/why-do-chemical-weapons-evoke-such-a-strong-reaction>

³⁸ *Chemical and biological weapons status at a glance* | *Arms Control Association*. (n.d.). <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/chemical-and-biological-weapons-status-glance>

within a state's territory, and whether or not unannounced inspections are necessary for security measures or an infringement on a state's sovereignty.

In addition to this, delegates should consider the punishments that the OPCW imposes when states are found guilty of violating the regulations of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Currently, if a state is found guilty of violating the CWC, there are several measures that can be taken to encourage it to return to compliance. However, if the state remains non-compliant, more tangible measures may be taken, including suspending its voting rights and restricting certain rights and privileges under the Convention.³⁹ Additionally, the matter is often referred to the UN Security Council for further action to ensure that the state is held accountable in a manner proportionate to the violation.

With these points of contention in mind, the debate over how to regulate chemical weapons is far from over. While the CWC has proved to be successful in the past, questions surrounding how it is enforced and how information is verified continue to challenge its effectiveness. As delegates move forward in these debates, they are encouraged to think beyond traditional approaches and think outside of the box to develop innovative and new solutions. Ultimately, the future of chemical weapons regulation will be in the hands of the delegates creating the solutions within this DISEC committee. Debate wisely, consider everything, and the committee wishes you the best of luck.

³⁹ *Main positions and issues | Chemical Weapons Convention Archive*. (n.d.). <https://cwc.fas.org/us-ratification/main-positions-and-issues/>

Key Concepts & Terms

1. **Chemical weaponry**: Toxic chemicals, their precursors, or devices designed to cause death, injury, or harm to human life through their chemical properties.
2. **Chemical Warfare Convention (CWC)**: A treaty in 1993 that entered into force in 1997. It prohibits the development, production, stockpiling, transfer, and use of chemical weapons while requiring their destruction under international verification systems under the OPCW.
3. **Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)**: The international organization responsible for implementing the CWC through inspections, investigations, and verification of chemical weapons.
4. **General Purpose Criterion**: A guiding principle of the CWC stating that any toxic chemical used for purposes prohibited by the Convention is considered a chemical weapon, regardless of whether it is specifically listed.
5. **Schedule 1, 2 and 3 Chemicals**: Categories established by the CWC that classify chemicals based on their potential use as weapons and their civilian applications. Schedule 1 chemicals have little or no peaceful use and include agents like VX and sarin, while Schedules 2 and 3 include chemicals with increasing levels of industrial applications.
6. **Challenge Inspection**: A CWC mechanism allowing any member state to request an immediate OPCW inspection of another state's facilities if it suspects treaty violations. It has never been used due to its political implications.

7. **Geneva Protocol (1925)**: An international treaty banning the use of chemical and biological weapons in war but not their production or stockpiling.
8. **Hague Conventions (1899 & 1907)**: Early international agreements that established rules of warfare and prohibited certain methods of combat.
9. **Dual Use Chemicals**: Chemicals that have legitimate civilian purposes but can also be used to create chemical weapons. For example, schedule 2 or 3 industrial chemicals may be used in manufacturing but can be harmful if converted into weapons.

Important Bloc Positions

Bloc 1: Strong Enforcement & International Security

Countries that generally support strong verification mechanisms, more transparency between countries, intrusive OPCW inspections, and harsher international responses when chemical weapons are used. These countries tend to believe that preventing the proliferation and use of chemical weapons sometimes requires international oversight that may limit aspects of state sovereignty.

- United States
- United Kingdom
- France
- Germany
- Canada
- Norway
- Sweden
- Denmark
- Australia
- Japan
- South Korea
- Netherlands
- Belgium
- Italy
- Spain
- Poland

Important Bloc Positions

Bloc 2: Limited International Intervention & State Sovereignty

Countries generally emphasize that preventing chemical weapons should not come at the expense of national sovereignty. These countries often support the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention but are more cautious about intrusive inspections and enforcement mechanisms that could be used to interfere in domestic affairs or for political purposes.

- China
- Russia
- Iran
- Syria
- North Korea
- India
- Belarus
- Cuba
- Venezuela
- Myanmar
- Algeria
- Egypt

Questions to Consider

→ Overarching Question: How should states balance respect for state sovereignty with the need to ensure international security when addressing the development and use of chemical weapons?

- ◆ Understand that, although the Chemical Warfare Convention may have criticisms, this DISEC committee *does not* have the power to create another treaty. Rather, we want you to consider making alterations to the existing CWC and/or making a non-binding recommendation to negotiate for a future treaty.
- How can states encourage greater compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention without a universal enforcement mechanism?
- Should current verification and inspection mechanisms under the Chemical Weapons Convention be strengthened?
- To what extent should international organizations such as the OPCW be allowed to investigate violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention without infringing upon state sovereignty?
- How should states respond to allegations of chemical weapon use while ensuring that investigations remain impartial and consistent with international law?
- What additional measures can states universally adopt to prevent the development and future use of chemical weapons before violations occur?
- How can states benefit from advances in chemistry while preventing these technologies from being weaponized?
- What policies can states develop ensuring that they remain effective as chemical technologies continue to evolve?

- Should the OPCW have greater authority to conduct investigations without the consent of the state being investigated?
- How should states respond when concerns of national security prevent them from fully cooperating with investigations?
- What incentives, if any, should be offered to encourage greater cooperation between states in preventing the use of chemical weapons?

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