

Committee: Disarmament and International Security
Committee (GA1)

Topic: Enforcing the ban on the use of chemical and biological
attacks as means to protect children.

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**Children and Youth: Fostering Peace
and Security for Future Generations**

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

II. Definition of Key Terms

III. General Overview

IV. Major Parties Involved and their Views

V. Relevant United Nations Documents

VI. Questions to Consider

VII. Conclusion

VIII. Bibliography

I. Introduction

Biological and chemical warfare fall under the category of weapons of mass destruction, meaning that they can harm large numbers of human and even eradicate a whole population, not only through the spread of bacteria but also through the destruction of agriculture. The production and use of these kind of warfare dates back to the rise of industrial production of chemicals in 19th century. The first major use of chemical warfare was in War World I, when Germany used chlorine gas, a chemical that attacks the body respiratory system, against the French army during, in April 1915. Production of biological weapons are known to exist in a dozen countries, including Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, and Syria.

Such weapons can also serve the interest of terrorist organizations, aiming to inculcate fear among the masses. Although there are many difficulties in producing and putting chemical and biological weapons in effective use, countries that are believed to have active chemical weapons programs can sell amounts of this kind of warfare to terrorist organizations.

Chemical and biological weapons use have been outlawed worldwide for over 90 years and outlawed comprehensively through the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). There has been a number of treaties, along with organizations dealing with the limitations, reductions, and elimination of so-called weapons of mass destruction, making their use in armed conflict a violation of international law. However, they are still used in armed conflicts around the world, with the most recent incident being the chemical attack in Ghouta, Syria in August 2013. Estimates of the death toll range from at least 281 people to 1,729, including many children.

Children are especially vulnerable to chemical and biological attacks due to their undeveloped immune system, resulting to them being the main victims in such attacks. The abolition of these kind of warfare, will not only protect future generations from the direct threat of chemical and biological weapons, but it will also prevent the destruction of ecosystems, and thereby protect future life on earth.

The banning of weapons of mass destruction is an urgent humanitarian necessity. The dangers posed by these weapons are utterly unacceptable, and the only sure way to prevent an unthinkable catastrophe is to eliminate them completely.

II. Definition of Key Terms

a) Chemical weapon

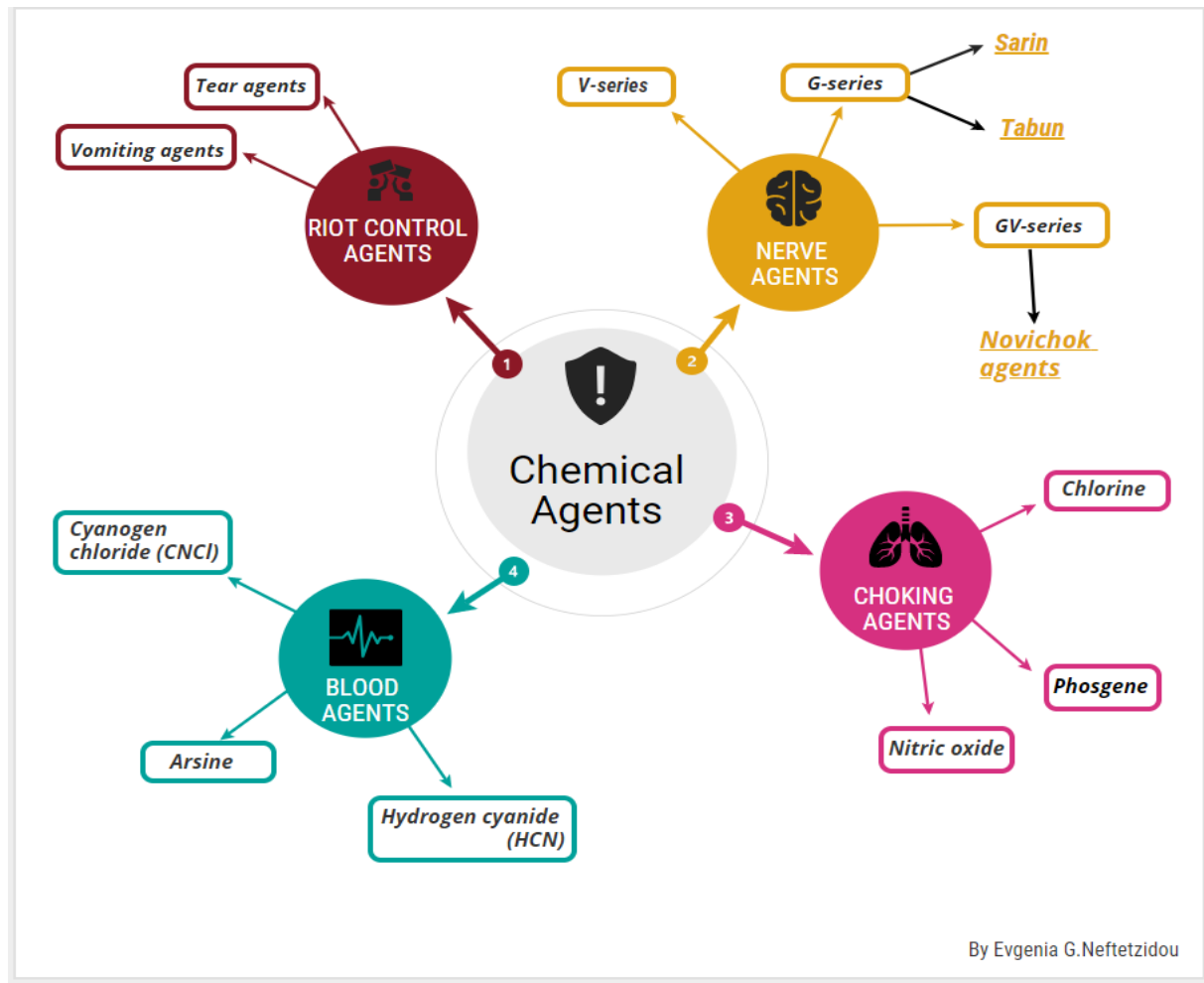
According to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, chemical weapons are armaments that uses chemicals, also referred to as chemical agents, to cause intentional death or harm through its toxic properties, the effects of these weapons are felt immediately upon inhalation or skin contact. The main categories of such agents are;

- I) **Harassing Agents**, also called Riot Control Agents (RCA), they are not meant to kill or injure, but rather to abate the combatants, or to force them out of their cover. These agents affect the eyes, by irritating the eye's membranes, causing a stinging sensation and tears. They can also irritate the respiratory tract, causing coughing, nausea and choking. Their effects disappear within short time following the exposure. Most commonly used harassing agents are;
 - i) **Tear agents**
 - ii) **Vomiting Agents**

- II) **Nerve Agents (NA)**, affect the functioning of the nervous system. This causes muscles to become paralysed and can lead to the loss of many bodily functions, which can be fatal. Agents will act within seconds or minutes if inhaled and slightly more slowly if exposure is the result of skin contamination. Nerve agents take different forms - including powder and gas - but they tend to be a liquid, which can seep through the skin. Most commonly used nerve agents are;
 - i) **Sarin**
 - ii) **Tabun**
 - iii) **Novichok agents**

- III) **Choking Agents (CA)**, they injure an individual mainly in the respiratory tract and particularly the lungs. In extreme cases, membranes swell, the lungs become filled with liquid and death results from lack of oxygen; thus, these agents "choke" the unprotected individuals.

- IV) **Blood Agents (BA)**, they mostly affect bodily functions by preventing the normal utilization of oxygen by body tissues, and may also interrupt the production of blood components. They are highly volatile and rapid-acting, and they produce seizures, respiratory failure, and cardiac arrest.



b) Biological weapons

They are munitions that consist of biological agents which are living organisms, whatever their nature, or infectious material derived from them, which are intended to cause disease or death to humans, animals and crops, and they depend for their effects on their ability to multiply in the host attacked and infect more and more beings over time. Example of such agents;

- i) **Bacteria:** Microscopic single-celled organisms lacking a distinct nucleus are known as bacteria.
- ii) **Viruses:** Any of a large group of submicroscopic infective agents that are usually regarded as nonliving extremely complex molecules. Viruses are capable of replication only inside a living cell and are pathogenic to man, animals and plants.

The effects of such agents vary given that it may not be obvious to those infected until days after a biological weapon has been released.

c) Weapons of mass destruction

Weapons of mass destruction constitute a class of weaponry with the potential to kill large numbers of people in a short time period and/or jeopardize the natural environment. Modern weapons of mass destruction are either nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons—frequently referred to collectively as NBC weapons.

d) Bioterrorism

The use of biological weapons by terrorist organizations as means of spreading fear among the masses.

III) General Overview

a) Attempts to ban chemical and biological attacks

- **Geneva Protocol, 1925**

A protocol focuses on the prohibition of the use of chemical and biological weapons in armed conflict. One of the basic notions underlying the Geneva Conventions is the notion of respect for the life and dignity of the individual. Those who suffer in conflict must be aided and cared for without distinction. The Conventions also confirm and strengthen the role of the medical mission – medical personnel, medical units and transports must be respected and protected in all circumstances.

- **Chemical Weapons Convention, 1993**

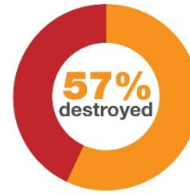
The convention focuses on the outlaw of the production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons in wars. As of January 2018, over 96% of the world's declared chemical weapons stockpiles had been destroyed. However, the CWC does not cover sea-dumped chemical weapons and it doesn't provide the legal basis to cover chemical weapons that were dumped before 1985. They remain an uncontrollable time bomb.

Chemical weapons

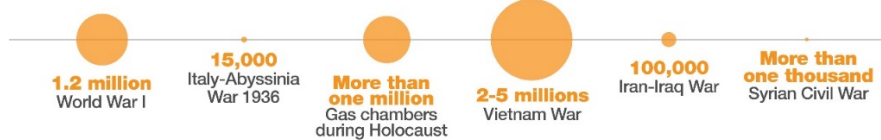
Out of 73,000 metric tonnes of chemical agents



Out of 8.7 million chemical munitions and containers



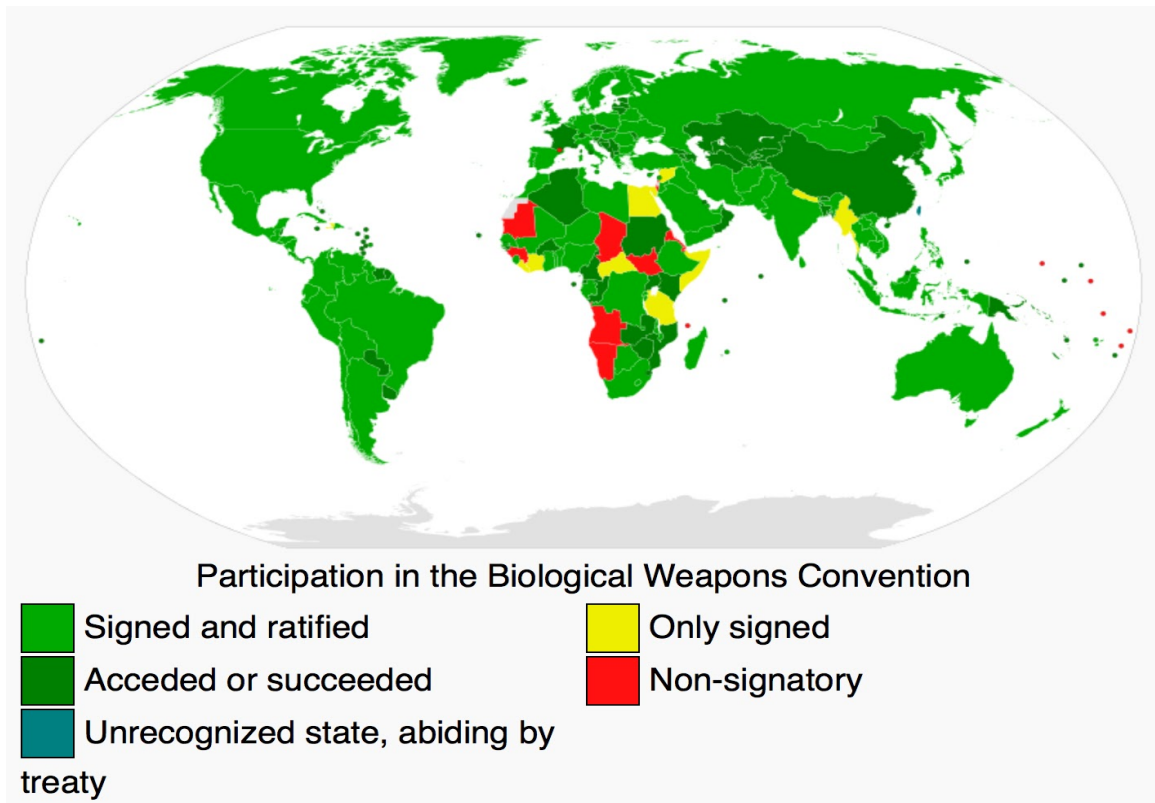
Major casualties:



Source: Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Al Jazeera

- **Biological Weapons Convention, 1975**

Similar to the CWC, the convention focuses on the outlaw of production, stockpiling and use of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons and on their elimination. In addition to that, at the 2nd Review Conference was agreed that the States Members were to implement a numbers of measures in order to reduce distrust between countries, aiming to improve international cooperation in the field of biological activities.



a) Bioterrorism

Terrorist organizations can use weapons of mass destruction, in order to kill numerous people and easily eliminate the enemy's forces. Biological weapons are particularly convenient due to their inexpensive production, in contrast to other kinds of armaments, such as guns and explosives. In addition, it is much easier for terrorist groups to use them, because they provide time for the attacker to get away from the source of infection. Nowadays, many terrorist organizations are funded by governments, in order to serve their mutual interests, causing the phenomenon of state-sponsored arms trade.

There are many examples where terrorist organizations have used biological warfare to cause massive deaths. In March 1995, members of the cult movement Aum Shinrikyo, a religious cult based in Tokyo, released sarin, an odorless liquid used as a chemical weapon due to its potency as a nerve agent, in the Tokyo Metro, instantly killing 12 people and severely injuring 50 others.

The attack was launched by the Assad regime against opposition forces. But chemical weapons are difficult to be controlled and the accuracy of the attack is not guaranteed while the chance of harming only the enemy is slim to none. The attack killed nearly 1,700 civilians while injuring thousands.

b) Syria chemical warfare use

In July 2012, Syria publicly acknowledged that it possesses chemical weapons.

Since then the Assad regime has been accused of several attacks using chemical warfare, against opposition forces. Some of the main attacks are;

i) Ghouta chemical attack, August 2013

The region was struck by rockets containing the chemical agent sarin. The number of victims is estimated at 1,700 people, many of whom were non-combatant. The victims' symptoms were body convulsion, foaming from mouths, blurry vision and suffocation.

ii) Douma chemical attack, April 2018

The chemical used for the attack has not been specified, however it is believed that it was a chlorine-like substance. Approximately 70 people were killed, including 33 children and 18 women, with symptoms similar to those of exposure to the nerve agent sarin.

The Syrian government has been found guilty several times for using chemical warfare in armed conflicts, not only harming the opposition forces but also killing numerous civilians.

IV. Major Parties Involved and their Views

a) Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

OPCW is an intergovernmental organization, and the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention. The OPCW mission is to implement the provisions of the CWC and to ensure a credible, transparent regime to verify the destruction of chemical weapons. The signatory states of the CWC, are also member of this organization. Its role is to oversee the continuing global effort towards the complete elimination of chemical weapons. also investigates attacks for possible use of chemical weapons and can assign blames for the attack, while at the same time preventing future possibilities of use of such weapons by;

- i) Ensuring that any existing toxic chemicals are only used for purposes that are not prohibited by the CWC,
- ii) Monitoring international chemical transfers, by allowing the transfers to be made only between States Members and restricting the transfers to non- States Members,
- iii) Implementing inspections on States Members upon request of another Member.

b) The Australia Group, 1985

The Australia Group is an international body that states use to organize their national exports and an informal group of countries, that aims at helping member countries to identify the exports that need to be controlled, in order to minimize the risk of them assisting chemical and biological weapon transfer and trade and therefore their proliferation. The 43 members in the Australia Group do not undertake any legally binding obligations: the effectiveness of their cooperation depends solely on a shared commitment to CBW (Chemical and Biological Warfare) non-proliferation goals and the strength of their respective national measures. All states participating in the Australia Group are parties to the CWC and the BWC, and strongly support efforts under those Conventions to rid the world of CBW.

c) United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

United Nations ODA was established in January 1998 as the Department for Disarmament Affairs. The Office promotes the strengthening of the disarmament regimes in respect to other weapons of mass destruction, and chemical and biological weapons. Additionally, UNODA has supported previous conventions regarding the prohibition of use of weapons of mass destruction.

V. Relevant United Nations Documents

a) Hague Peace Conference Declaration, 1899

The negotiations focused on issues of disarmament, the laws of war and war crimes. The conference was partly based on the Geneva Convention of 1864 and it set the foundations for the Geneva Protocol and later for the BWC and CWC.

b) Geneva Protocol, June 17, 1925

It has the title of “Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare”. The Geneva Protocol was produced under the supervision of the League of Nations and is consisted of two different protocols- the first is about the arms and munitions and the second only about gases.

c) Biological Weapons Convention, April 10, 1972

The convention is based in the Geneva Protocol, which it also strengthens and nowadays it has 182 member states, although ten countries have not signed it yet, such as Djibouti, Eritrea and Israel.

d) Chemical Weapons Convention, January 13, 1993

It is administered by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. As of May 2018, 193 states have become parties to the CWC and accept its obligations. Israel has signed but not ratified the agreement, while three other UN member states (Egypt, North Korea and South Sudan) have neither signed nor acceded to the treaty. The main obligation of member states under the convention is to effect this prohibition, as well as the destruction of all current chemical weapons. All destruction activities must take place under OPCW.

III. Questions to Consider

A series of questions in bullet points to help you think about what the delegations might do, how they'd do it, why they'd do it, etc.

- *How can the already existing regulations for biological and chemical weapons get strengthened?*
- *How can the safety of the international population, and therefore the protection of children, be ensured?*
- *How can all states cooperate in order to have no future victims of biological nor chemical warfare?*
- *What is your country's policy regarding the production and possession of these kind of warfare?*

- *How can NGOs help the elimination of chemical and biological weapons' development, production and stockpiling?*
- *How should the countries that violated the Geneva Convention and/or other international conventions be treated?*
- *Should there be a separate section regarding the safety of children in future conventions and treaties on the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction?*

VII. Conclusion

In order for our debate to be productive each delegation should research in depth their country's policy on the topic of chemical and biological warfare. Moreover, it would be advised to also research other countries policies similar to yours, in order to form successful alliances during the debate. However, we must realize that a few countries can't face the threat of weapons of mass destruction alone, there should be global cooperation in order to tackle the issue efficiently. In this committee it's your mission to structure resolutions that aim at the complete ban and eventually elimination of chemical and biological weapons, and therefore ensure safety and peace for future generations.

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