**Introduction to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)**

***Background***

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is an international arms control, disarmament and nonproliferation treaty that impacts enterprises involved in the production, processing, consumption, import, and/or export of a range of commercial chemicals and related precursors. The Convention entered into force on April 29, 1997. [Insert the name of your country] became a State Party to the CWC on [insert date of CWC ratification].

**All States Parties to the Convention are obligated to establish or designate a National Authority** or NA (CWC), a government entity that is responsible for national implementation of the CWC within each country. The NA (CWC) in [insert the name of your country] is housed within the [insert the name of the agency or institution that serves as the NA (CWC) in your country].

***Overview of CWC Chemicals***

The Convention includes three lists, or "schedules," of toxic chemicals and their precursors that have legitimate medical, commercial, and industrial uses, but may also be used as Chemical Weapon (CW) agents or as CW precursors.[[1]](#endnote-1) The chemicals covered by the CWC are divided into the following three "schedules" (based on their possible utility in developing CW) as follows:

[**Schedule 1**](https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/annexes/annex-on-chemicals/schedule-1/)

* Covers known CW agents and their immediate precursors;
* Few or no legitimate uses (industrial and civil applications);
* May only be produced or used for research, medical, pharmaceutical or protective purposes.
* Developed or used primarily for military purposes but some Schedule 1 chemicals are used as ingredients in pharmaceutical preparations or as diagnostics.
* Examples include nerve agents (e.g. Sarin, soman, tabun and VX), and blister agents (e.g. Mustard and Lewisite).

[**Schedule 2**.](https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/annexes/annex-on-chemicals/schedule-2/)

* Covers chemicals and precursors that have some industrial applications
* Includes toxic chemicals (2A) and precursors (2B) to Schedule 1 chemicals.
* Have some legitimate uses but are not produced in large commercial quantities.
* Examples include: dimethyl methylphosphonate, a nerve agent precursor also used as a flame retardant, and thiodiglycol, a Sulphur mustard precursor widely used as a solvent in inks and dyes, as well as certain chemicals used to manufacture fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides, and pesticides.

[**Schedule 3**](https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention/annexes/annex-on-chemicals/schedule-3/)

* Covers chemicals and precursors with broader commercial applications.
* Includes toxic chemicals (3A) and precursors (3B) to Schedule 1 chemicals.
* Chemicals have significant legitimate uses (including plastics, urethanes, adsorbent, resins, mining chemicals, petroleum refining fumigants, paints, coatings, anti-static agents, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, toiletries, lubricants acrylics, preparations used in leather tannery, surfactants, corrosion inhibitors, materials used in gold extraction, vulcanizing agents and many more) and are produced in large commercial quantities.
* Examples include: phosgene, used in the manufacture of plastics, and chloropicrin, a fumigant, as well as others used to manufacture paint thinners, cleaners, and lubricants.

The CWC also covers **(unscheduled)** **discrete organic chemicals or DOCs**. DOCs are any chemical belonging to the class of chemical compounds consisting of all compounds of carbon except for its oxides, sulfides and metal carbonates.

**Unscheduled Discrete Organic Chemicals (DOCs)**

* DOCs are not included in the CWC Schedules of Chemicals
* DOCs are identifiable by means of their chemical name, structural formula (if known), and by their Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) registry number, if assigned
* Examples include alcohols, aldehydes (e.g., formaldehyde), ethers, amines, ethylene oxide, urea, fertilizers (e.g., glyphosate salts) and pesticides.
* DOCs containing one of more of the elements phosphorus, sulphur or fluorine are referred to as PSF-DOCs.

***Declarations and Reports***

The CWC obligates States Parties to declare certain activities related to these chemicals. Enterprises operating in countries that are States Parties to the CWC must submit declarations on production, consumption, processing, and reports on imports and exports[[2]](#endnote-2) to their country’s NA (CWC).[[3]](#endnote-3) These requirements include:

* Initial declarations;
* Annual declarations of the past year's activities;
* Annual declarations of next year's anticipated activities;
* Declaration amendments or updates for changes to previously submitted data or additionally planned activities.

***Inspections***:

The CWC mandates on-site inspections when certain (generally higher) activity thresholds are exceeded.

*Initial Inspections*

* Verify accuracy of declarations and ensure activities are consistent with the object and purpose of the CWC;
* Assess risk to determine frequency and intrusiveness of future inspections;
* Prepare facility agreements (mandatory for Schedule 1 and 2; optional for Schedule 3 and DOCs).

*Subsequent ("Routine") Inspections*

* Purpose is to verify declarations, the absence of Schedule 1 chemicals (if not declared), and the non-diversion of scheduled chemicals.
* Schedule 1 facility: number, intensity, duration, timing and mode of inspection based on risk.
* Schedule 2 plant sites: maximum 2 inspections per year, per plant site; inspections may last 96 hours.
* Schedule 3 plant sites: maximum 2 inspections per year, per plant site (national annual maximum of 20 Schedule 3 and DOC inspections); inspections may last 24 hours.
* DOC plant sites: generally similar to Schedule 3.[[4]](#endnote-4)

1. The term chemical weapon includes not only the weapons systems, but also the toxic chemicals used to fill them and any precursor chemicals. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. The CWC imposes reporting requirements upon industry in States Parties when imports or exports exceed certain thresholds. Reports are used for national aggregation purposes only and they are not sent to the OPCW. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Individual declarations and aggregated reports are forwarded to the OPCW as part of your country’s national declaration. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. "The Chemical Weapons Convention: A Quick Guide," U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Industry and Security, CWC Bulletin, May 2006, <http://www.cwc.gov/assets/pdf/outreach\_industry\_publications\_cwc002.pdf>. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)