

CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

After years of difficult negotiations on a Chemical Weapons Convention, a draft agreement was adopted by the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva during the summer of 1992. Formal negotiations on the Convention had been ongoing since 1984, although international discussions on a chemical weapons ban began in 1968.

Although every country involved in the negotiations would have preferred further amendments, the text represents the best possible compromise acceptable to the largest number of countries.

From the Canadian perspective, the convention meets three significant criteria: comprehensiveness- it will eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction; universality- in all probability, there will be a significant number of original signatories from all geographic regions at the signing conference, with many more States adhering thereafter; and effective verification- the Convention regime establishes new norms for verification and inspection that surpass any other previous multilateral arms control and disarmament instruments.

The Convention will be considered at this session of the United Nations General Assembly. Canada is co-sponsoring a resolution calling for its adoption. A formal signing ceremony will be held in Paris, possibly as early as January 1993. The Convention will enter into force with ratification by 65 States.