

INTRODUCTION

Chemical weapons were used in the Gulf War. Some Mid-East nations have stated explicitly that they intend to stockpile chemical weapons as a deterrent to the presumed Israeli nuclear capability. These and other recent events have engendered a sense of urgency at the multilateral talks aimed at banning chemical weapons.

The 1989 Paris Conference on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was convened on short notice and was well attended, reflecting the worldwide concern about the current inadequate constraints on chemical warfare. States attending the Paris Conference urged the delegates to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva to intensify their efforts to formulate a verifiable Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

In 1988, eight Canadian non-governmental organizations, under the chairmanship of Walter Dorn, formed the Working Group on International Surveillance and Verification.¹ One of its goals is to increase public awareness of the importance and the difficulty of verifying certain international treaties, including those involving chemical and biological weapons (CBW). For this purpose, they decided to hold a public seminar and panel discussion.

Another goal of the Working Group is to advance expert knowledge in the field. To this end, an experts' workshop was also organized, to grapple with some of the knottier problems facing the drafters of the CWC. Representatives from the UN, the USSR, the US, Europe, and the Middle East came together to discuss the question: What are the major technical, political and economic hurdles in the way of a CWC?

¹ The eight member organizations of the Working Group are: Science for Peace, World Federalists of Canada, Veterans Against Nuclear Arms, Lawyers for Social Responsibility, Peace Research Institute--Dundas, Engineers for Nuclear Disarmament, Group of 78, and the Voice of Women.