

COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT

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Memorandum on monitoring of the prohibition of the use in combat  
of chemical and bacteriological (biological) or toxin weapons

The 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, is one of the most important international instruments in the field of arms control.

Its importance was formally recognized in the Final Document of the first special session, paragraph 72 of which declares that all States should adhere to the Protocol.

It should perhaps, however, be pointed out that the international community had taken the view that prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of chemical and bacteriological agents, and the destruction of such agents, whose use in war is prohibited by the Geneva Protocol, constituted a significant contribution to the achievement of disarmament under strict and effective international control.

The negotiations on this question resulted in the conclusion in 1972 of a first agreement on the prohibition of bacteriological (biological) weapons and toxin weapons and on their destruction. The Committee on Disarmament is at present elaborating a convention prohibiting chemical weapons, taking into account paragraph 75 of the Final Document, which describes this as one of the most urgent tasks of multilateral negotiations.

After the 1972 treaty, and taking into account the ongoing negotiation in the Committee on Disarmament, it becomes apparent that the international community cannot ignore another aspect of the process of reinforcing the Geneva Protocol: deciding on arrangements for monitoring compliance with the prohibition of the use in combat of chemical and bacteriological weapons. In its report to the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Committee on Disarmament made reference to this point.

There is more than one reason why compliance with the Geneva Protocol needs to be ensured:

(a) Every aspect of the undertaking begun in 1925 would then be completed, and the international régime concerning bacteriological (biological) and chemical weapons would thus be consolidated;

(b) Monitoring compliance with the prohibition of use in combat would meet a need that has been expressed on several occasions during the last few decades;

(c) An agreement on this question would create confidence and have a beneficial effect on the climate of international relations.