

CANADA

Working paper on use of measurements
of lethality for definition of agents
of chemical warfareSUMMARY

To arrive at a Treaty limiting or prohibiting chemical weapons it may be necessary to define what chemical agents shall fall within the terms of the Treaty, in which case it will also be necessary to agree to a measure of lethality. The specific problems associated with determination of lethality of chemical warfare agents are discussed and the general concept of the LD₅₀ as a measure of lethality is explained.

It is recommended that separate standards of lethality should be adopted for three groups of agents, according to their routes of entry into the human body, i.e., inhaled gases or vapours, percutaneously lethal materials, and supertoxic solids. It is also recommended that a reference toxic material be adopted by agreement for each of these three groups of agents; and that the reference toxic material should be a readily available substance chosen to have a lethality equal or slightly less than what is agreed to be the least lethal of chemical agents to be restricted or prohibited in each class.

A specific proposal based on the above general principles is submitted for discussion.