

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

The Chemical Weapons Convention: Safety Rules for Inspections

INTRODUCTION

1. Little consideration has been given so far to safety issues during the conduct of inspections to be undertaken under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). But, with the early conclusion of the Convention now expected, it is important that some attention is devoted to this aspect of its implementation.
2. A principal task of the Preparatory Commission will be to carry out the necessary preparations for the effective operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Commission will be tasked in particular to consider recruitment and training of technical personnel, standardization and purchase of equipment and to prepare guidelines for initial inspections. The United Kingdom believes that safety issues must be an essential element in these preparations. Much has been learned about safety issues during the various national practice challenge inspection programmes and during the United Nations Special Commission inspections of chemical weapon production and storage sites. This working paper addresses the safety question by producing an initial assessment of the safety issues derived from United Kingdom involvement in these experiences. It also offers a preliminary set of guidelines (Appendices 1-4) on safety issues for consideration by the Preparatory Commission.

General safety policy

3. One of the first tasks confronting the Technical Secretariat (TS) will be the need to identify minimum safety standards. If local safety standards are higher, the host State should provide either the necessary resources to achieve them or to waive them during the inspection and apply the agreed minimum standards. Thereafter the TS will need continually to assess the safety standards of all States parties and to update its own procedures in line with current good practice.
4. The responsibility for the safety of inspectors lies with the TS and with the Chief Inspector (CI) on site. The CI may be assisted and advised by a Safety Officer (SO) who should be responsible for all aspects of safety and ensuring that guidelines are properly interpreted in the light of prevailing conditions. Safety measures will be strongly site specific and the SO will need to be aware that an obstructive inspected State party might misuse safety restrictions to delay or hinder inspections.
5. In order to satisfactorily address safety issues during inspections the TS might require its own Safety Group (SG). Although this SG would need to be colocated, and work closely with, the TS it is important that it should have the freedom to act independently; it should be able to report directly to the Director-General. In the same way, individual safety officers provided by the SG to accompany large inspection teams must have the authority to report directly to the SG should there be a disagreement over an important