

CHINA  
WORKING PAPERProhibition of Chemical Weapons:  
on the Definition of Chemical Warfare Agents

It is generally held that chemical weapons are composed of three elements:

1. The chemical warfare agent which produces a direct toxic effect on the target.
  2. The chemical munitions or devices which are filled with the chemical warfare agents and disperse them into a combat state.
  3. The launching system or means of delivery which sends such munitions or devices filled with the chemical warfare agent to the area of the target.
- The main element of the three is the chemical warfare agent, since the most essential difference between chemical weapons and conventional or other weapons lies in the former's reliance on the toxic effects of chemical warfare agents to produce lethal and injurious capabilities.

Chemical warfare agents should form the central contents for negotiations. In elaborating the Convention, it is imperative to first clearly ascertain the definition of chemical warfare agents. This definition will have a bearing on the scope and content of the prohibition, methods and means of verification, and will affect the solution of a whole series of problems including the destruction of chemical weapons and dismantling of production facilities. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out serious discussions on the question of the definition of chemical warfare agents, in order to reach a consensus at the earliest date.

Many delegations have already expressed their points of view in different forms on the question of definition of chemical warfare agents, and have advanced quite a number of useful proposals. In our view, it would not be difficult to draw up a scientific and generally acceptable definition of chemical warfare agents, on the basis of the reasonable portions of various viewpoints and proposals advanced in the CD.

In accordance with its basic position of the complete prohibition and total destruction of chemical weapons, the Chinese delegation is of the view that in determining a definition of chemical warfare agents, account should be taken of its comprehensiveness and accuracy. Its comprehensiveness is designed to ensure that all chemical warfare agents which ought to be prohibited are in fact prohibited, and not leave any loopholes which can be used for violations of the convention, its accuracy is designed to avoid the prohibition of chemical substances which ought not