

CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

On 13 January 1993, the then Secretary of State for External Affairs, Barbara McDougall signed, on Canada's behalf, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, known commonly as the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The CWC was negotiated over six years in the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament. Once the Convention comes into force (180 days after the 65th ratification has been deposited, but not earlier than 13 January 1995), it will prohibit the development, production, stockpiling, retention and use of chemical weapons and their precursors. 129 other countries were also original signatories to the Convention.

In order to implement the Convention, an Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is being established in the Hague. The Organization will comprise:

- a Conference of States Parties that will meet annually;
- a 41 member rotating Executive Council with day to day responsibility for supervising the activities of the Organization; and
- a Technical Secretariat.

The latter will include an Inspectorate responsible for verifying compliance with the Convention.

One of the most important and politically sensitive aspects of the CWC will be the timely and safe destruction of chemical weapons in the territories of States Parties. Canada is currently in the process of ratifying the Convention.