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Working Paper on the Definition of Chemical Warfare Agents (CWA)

In 1976 the Yugoslav delegation submitted a working paper entitled "Definition of chemical warfare agents" (CCD/505 of 5 July) aimed at offering the bases for a definition that would be more comprehensive than all previous ones.

The proposed definition would read as follows:

All chemical compounds intentionally used in quantities and manner, which directly or indirectly, immediately or after some time can produce physiological disturbances or cessation of physiological functions in man, animals and plants should be considered as chemical warfare agents.

As is evident, our draft definition encompasses the following in reduced form:

- (a) intention of use
- (b) the quantity used
- (c) manner of utilization
- (d) the direct or indirect toxic effect
- (e) immediate or delayed toxic action
- (f) the effect on all living structures

The following was borne in mind (with regard to items a - f):

- that the proposed definition expresses in a somewhat more precise manner that which was proposed as a definition in "Health Aspects of Chemical and Biological Weapons", the WHO, Geneva 1970, inasmuch as the term "employed" has been replaced by "intentionally used";
- the term "used in quantities" was intended to point out that one should not exclude the possibility of applying chemical compounds not classified as chemical agents in quantities (concentrations) not envisaged (necessary) for their usual utilization (pesticides, for instance, etc.) which also exists apart from the use of classified chemical agents;
- all weapons, regardless of their primary purpose, are to be classified as CW if they invariably cause injury or death during or after their utilization because of foreseeable and dominant toxic action;