

**ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN****IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE X ON PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO THE
VICTIMS OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS**

The provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) are aimed at protecting all mankind against the use or threat of use of chemical weapons, as well as assistance to the victims of these heinous weapons. Despite 26 years of the implementation of the Convention, adequate attention has not been paid to the victims, in particular to the women and children, who have their lives severely affected by the use of chemical weapons.

So far, the main objectives of the decisions, resolutions, and other relevant documents adopted on women in global efforts towards chemical weapons disarmament are aimed at increasing their participation, equal representation, and empowering them on the peaceful uses of chemistry. However, it is pertinent to identify and address the direct and indirect impacts of the use of chemical weapons on women and children, and other vulnerable groups.

1. Women and children, victims of chemical weapons

One of the main objectives of women and disarmament trends in international organisations, should be the identification of the impacts of chemical weapons use on women and children with a resolution-based approach. This would further realise the object and purpose of the Convention to maintain and strengthen the norm against chemical weapons use. In this context, it is crucial to uphold the human dignity and respect of chemical weapons survivors within the international community. Furthermore, extending assistance and support to the survivors of chemical weapons use would also promote the full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention.

Based on various research, chemical weapons disproportionately harm women and children in different ways and have a pervasive and wide range of both physical and mental health consequences on them. Subsequently, it affects their individual and social role and status. It also has greater mortality and casualty rate for women and children, along with traumatic physiological and mental disturbances. Furthermore, the long-term implications of physical problems and the psychological disorders of chemical weapons use on women and children create barriers to their daily life.

Despite these significant effects of chemical weapons on women and children, this issue has not been accommodated sufficiently in the activities and programmes of the OPCW in a decent way. Moreover, there is a major gap in information and data regarding the social, health, and experiences of women and children injured by chemical weapons.



2. Iran's perspective

Iran, as the biggest victim of chemical weapons in the contemporary era, is home to thousands of women and children suffering from the impacts of chemical weapons use by the Saddam regime during the imposed war on Iran (1980-1988). In the city of Sardasht, the use of chemical weapons (1987), as an indiscriminate weapon of mass destruction, against civilians, including women and children, led to a tragic catastrophe that is transmitted across generations.

As a result of this horrific tragedy, The Islamic Republic of Iran acquires a unique experience and capability in the field of “Assistance and Protection”, against chemical weapons use. In this vein, Iran has cooperated with the OPCW for conducting a training course on medical aspects of assistance and protection against chemical weapons and stands ready to host the course in 2023.

Regrettably, unilateral coercive measures by some States Parties target Iranian victims of chemical weapons, including women and children, which victimise them once again. These inhuman measures, which are severe obstacles to the supply of medicines and medical equipment to the victims amid the COVID-19 pandemic, are a gross violation of international law, international humanitarian law, and the United Nations Charter.

We welcome the holding of an “International Symposium on Medical Treatment of Chemical Warfare Victims: Challenges and Hopes”, on 28-29 June 2018, at the OPCW headquarters in The Hague. We believe that its final declaration could serve as an effective outcome in the implementation of the decision adopted by the Conference of the States Parties at its Sixteenth Session (C-16/DEC.13, dated 2 December 2011). In this regard, the regular continuation of such a symposium with a view to establishing an International Network composed of scientists, clinicians, chemical weapons experts, academia, and civil society could contribute to assessing the effects of chemical weapons use on the victims and provide recommendations accordingly.

3. Conclusion

In light of the significant importance of the chemical weapons victims and their unmet needs, in particular women and children; the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (Fifth Review Conference) is a great opportunity to address this issue by exploring all ways and means to ensure that these groups of individuals enjoy all the needed support in full conformity with the relevant provisions of the Convention.

In this regard, the Fifth Review Conference could request the Director-General to mandate the Scientific Advisory Board to establish a working group to discuss and report on the implications of chemical weapons on the victims, in particular, on women and children with a view to alleviating their sufferings.

Furthermore, the issues related to the treatment of the victims of chemical weapons, in particular women and children, could be incorporated into the work and programmes of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology.

The Fifth Review Conference could also address the impacts of unilateral coercive measures of some States Parties on victims of chemical weapons, with the aim to urge these States Parties to remove these illegal measures on victims to ensure unimpeded delivery of the needs of this vulnerable group.