

Scientific Insights into Disarmament Policy: Science Advice at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

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From definitions of weapons, to articles governing verification of compliance, inspection, and assistance, science and technology underpin international disarmament treaties. Both treaty negotiation and implementation require sound technical advice to inform policy; requiring scientific advisers. Despite this need for science in disarmament, the two worlds are often at odds. The Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions serve to illustrate this tension, where to some, scientific developments raise concerns about misuse potential and security risk, while others see opportunities for innovation in treaty implementation and solutions to pressing global issues. Science is only one of many dimensions that policymakers must consider in decision making, yet the world's current security environment shows a need for scientifically literate policymakers and scientist-policymaker engagement that has never been greater. Actionable science advice for policy requires experts capable of clearly communicating with those receiving advice. In this regard, the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) serves as a case study on involvement of scientists in treaty negotiation, compliance verification, providing advice to policymakers, and as science communicators to policymakers. We will discuss experiences and lessons learned from the CWC's science advisory mechanism; lessons informative for nurturing the science-policymaker engagement required to meet current and future disarmament challenges.

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