

NGO Joint Statement

**Keeping Pace with Advances in AI and Converging Technologies**

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**Chairperson, Director-General, Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives, Colleagues,**

The Convention's enduring relevance, amidst pressures of conflict, armament, and science and technology, remains our shared challenge.

This year, artificial intelligence (AI) has captured our attention and created anxieties about its implications. This converges with other advancements, such as additive manufacturing, nanotechnologies, micro-reactors, robotics and others.

These technological anxieties – and the question of what we may do to mitigate them – underscore the importance of rigorously identifying, evaluating, and addressing the nature of the challenges that face the Convention.

**Chairperson,**

We want to suggest that at the heart of our collective endeavour lie four such enduring, persistent and foundational challenges.

These strategic challenges demand attention in every aspect of our work as we assess new risks and consider emerging technologies within a CWC-specific context. I shall briefly outline what I mean by these four challenges:

The first is about **Perceptions of Utility**. This is when actors see renewed utility in chemical weapons, often enabled by new technologies. We must ask ourselves:

*How might AI and other technologies alter the perceived utility and value of chemical weapons for different actors?*

The second relates to **Circumvention and Proliferation**. Emerging technologies, like AI, create new pathways for overcoming the obstacles and mitigations that traditionally constrain an actor developing chemical weapons. We must ask ourselves:

*In what ways could AI and emerging technologies create new pathways for circumventing existing controls and help an actor problem-solve their way to acquisition?*

The third challenge is **Creeping Legitimization**. Without rigorous oversight, some AI-driven applications and other technologies risk contributing to, or enabling, behaviours or outcomes that stretch and probe the prohibition.

*How could AI and other technologies contribute to the normalization of activities that blur the line between permitted and prohibited uses?*

Finally, the fourth relates to **Normative Divergence**. Differing technological capacities and approaches to AI across regions risk fragmenting global adherence to the Convention's principles.

*How might varying regional capacities and uses of AI and other technologies contribute to a re-evaluation by a state or non-state actor as to the value and purpose of chemical weapons?*

**Chairperson,**

The rapid expansion of AI and other technologies brings both opportunities and risks.

AI's capacity, in particular, to accelerate processes, reveal new pathways, shape perceptions, and alter transparency, underscores the need for a deliberate, structured approach to technology within the CWC framework.

It is essential to consider both its potential benefits and the risks it introduces. A proactive stance on S&T will enable us to stay ahead of disruptive shifts that could otherwise challenge the Convention.

**Chairperson,**

Broad engagement across civil society, industry, and academia enhances our ability to draw on diverse expertise, strengthen verification measures, and bolster capacities essential for maintaining the chemical weapons prohibition.

In closing, I respectfully propose the following recommendations for the OPCW and its Secretariat to reinforce resilience against the negative implications of AI and converging technologies.

- 1. Refine Industry Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement:** Conduct a structured review of industry partnerships, aiming to bring in targeted expertise and ensure we are talking to all relevant sectors of industry.
- 2. Enhance Verification through the integration of new technologies:** Continued review, needs assessments both with state parties, industry, and the Technical Secretariat, and a strategic vision of the Convention's purpose in the post-disarmament era, could inspire a consensus driven strengthening of the operationalisation of the Convention's verification mandates.
- 3. Support Targeted Civil Society Engagement:** Facilitate more goal-oriented civil society workshops on high-priority Convention themes, building focused solutions to reinforce the norm against chemical weapons. Such events can address emerging technology challenges and strengthen commitment across sectors.

**Chairperson,**

The CWC is a living instrument.

Its success depends on our ability to adapt and respond in a measured, sustainable, and strategic manner. This requires both exploration and introspection.

This requires an eye on what is changing, and an eye on what remains constant.

Thank you for your attention.

We request that this statement be made part of the official CSP-29 proceedings.