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Written Statement of the DMUN Foundation to the 29th Conference of States Parties (CSP29) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

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DMUN Foundation,
An Accredited Non-Governmental Organization by the General Committee of CSP-29

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Engaging the Next Generation and Youth Stakeholders: Ensuring a Future Without Chemical Weapons for the Next Generation

Introduction

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Chair, Colleagues, and Friends,

Since its founding, the *raison d'être* of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has always been the same: to ensure the absolute and permanent abolition of chemical weapons across the world. This is a commitment unwavering in its moral, legal, and humanitarian dimensions and provides citizens of all States Parties, regardless of age, gender, geographic location, creed, nationality, or any other factors, with the fundamental right to live in peace and protected from inhumane harm during times of conflict.

Yet, for the OPCW's mission to be effectively achieved, we firmly believe that a sense of collaboration should be achieved between youth stakeholders and the OPCW, a group that remains highly neglected in the OPCW's engagement modalities and mechanisms today.

Expanding Youth Engagement in the Mission of the OPCW

In this context, we believe that youth engagement is not an adjunct but an essential corollary of OPCW's purpose. We assert that empowering young leaders and stakeholders is fundamental to perpetuating the OPCW's mission across generations and is necessary to achieve a smooth transition of the issues of chemical weapons from today's generation towards the next— for the issue of chemical weapons require cross-generational collaboration, and cannot be fully solved and addressed in a short period of time.



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Based upon such notions, we urge States Parties and the Secretariat to foster opportunities that bring young people into substantive roles within the dialogue on disarmament and chemical weapons prohibition, enabling them to internalise and carry forth the mission enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Education as an Indispensable Pillar of Disarmament

The sine qua non of lasting disarmament advocacy lies in the education of youths, in which future generations can achieve profound comprehension of the risks and ethical implications of chemical weapons, and the global movement made to outlaw and reduce such weapons.

We believe States Parties should lead the way in such an issue, embedding disarmament education into school curricula and public awareness initiatives, henceforth cultivating a generation aligned with the OPCW's values and is deeply averse to the notion of chemical warfare.

Cross-Generational Collaboration as a Strategic Imperative

Focusing on the notion that youths can provide unique perspectives and expertise in the works of the OPCW, we urge all stakeholders to prioritise intergenerational collaboration as a dynamic force for innovation and resilience in the disarmament community.

Youth brings creativity and momentum, seasoned experts and academia contribute institutional knowledge and strategic insight, and civil society brings a sense of accountability and monitoring over the works of the OPCW. Together, such forces create a fortified trifecta of stakeholder participation that strengthens the OPCW's mission, establishes an effective modus operandi for the functioning of the OPCW and ensures its continuity for years to come.

Institutionalising Youth Representation in OPCW Deliberations

Finally, we advocate for institutionalised youth representation within OPCW processes to reinforce the inclusivity and future-oriented nature of disarmament dialogues. We demand that mandated stakeholder groups on youth, youth-led organisations, and youth-focused organisations be established to guarantee youth stakeholder participation in future Conference of States Parties. Such stakeholder groups should be independent of OPCW's oversight with independent rights on their stance, mandated as a mechanism inside the OPCW, and self-appointed leadership by democratic elections among their members.



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We also condemn the OPCW's decision to prohibit the participation of youths under the age of 18 in this Conference of States Parties. Not only is this an egregious example of ageism and age-based discrimination, but it directly contradicts the fundamental principles of Diversity and Inclusion listed on the OPCW's website.

This is also against the general precedents for minor participation established in other UN System Agencies, such as UNCCD, UNCBD, IPCC, UNFCCC and many others, which do not prohibit the participation of people under 18 (if accompanied by a chaperone).

Conclusion

The DMUN Foundation stands firmly on the importance of youth stakeholders in the works of the OPCW. We believe that it is a certain imperative that youths have a space and voice inside the OPCW, in particular to the Conference of States Parties, and States Parties take requisite steps to expand outreach works of the OPCW for the education of the next generation.