



PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

**POSITION PAPER ON THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS
ABANDONED BY JAPAN IN CHINA**

On 22 March 2023, China submitted the “Position Paper on the Chemical Weapons Abandoned by Japan in China” to the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Fifth Review Conference). The full text is as follows:

1. The early and thorough destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China (Japanese ACW) is a key aspect of the realisation of the objective of the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention) and the goal of “a world free of chemical weapons”.

The Convention clearly stipulates that “[e]ach State Party undertakes to destroy all chemical weapons it abandoned on the territory of another State Party, in accordance with the provisions of this Convention” and “[f]or the purpose of destroying abandoned chemical weapons, the Abandoning State Party shall provide all necessary financial, technical, expert, facility as well as other resources. The Territorial State Party shall provide appropriate cooperation”. The Convention also specifies the time frame for the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons (ACW). The above-mentioned provisions provide the international legal basis for disposing of Japanese ACW in China.

All Review Conferences and sessions of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention (the Conference) have reviewed the issue of the destruction of ACW, and in their relevant reports have reaffirmed the importance and urgency of completing the destruction thoroughly. The Executive Council of the OPCW (the Council), at its Forty-Sixth, Sixty-Seventh, Eighty-Fourth, and 101st Sessions, either in the form of decisions or reports of the Council (EC-46/DEC.4, dated 5 July 2006; EC-67/DEC.6, dated 15 February 2012; EC-84/2, dated 9 March 2017; and EC-101/DEC.2, dated 4 October 2022), has set out clear requirements for the thorough destruction of Japanese ACW, as well as the relevant time limits.

As the Abandoning State Party, Japan should earnestly undertake its international obligations and political responsibility, and thoroughly destroy the Japanese ACW under the effective verification of the OPCW at an early date, in line with the relevant provisions of the Convention and the relevant decisions of the Council.



2. The matter of Japanese ACW is the most serious issue left over by history under the Convention, and one of the gravest real threats and challenges.

During World War II, the Japanese militarists secretly produced large quantities of chemical weapons and used them in their war of aggression against China in violation of international law. The documented uses of chemical weapons alone has numbered as many as 1,241, which caused more than 200,000 Chinese military and civilian casualties. On the eve of its defeat in 1945, the Japanese army buried underground or dumped large quantities of chemical weapons in rivers and lakes in China to cover up its crimes. Up to now, Japanese ACW have been found at more than 120 sites in 18 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities in China. It has been 78 years since the end of Japan's war of aggression against China and 26 years since the entry into force of the Convention. However, the large quantities of Japanese ACW on Chinese territory still pose a grave threat and harm to the people and their property and to ecological and environmental safety in the affected areas in China. According to incomplete statistics, Japanese ACW have caused more than 2,000 Chinese casualties since the end of World War II. It brooks no further delay that Japanese ACW should be destroyed completely, cleanly, and thoroughly, and as quickly as possible.

Up to now, although some progress has been made in Japanese ACW destruction, there remain severe and prominent challenges. First, the destruction process has been severely delayed. Based on the provisions of the Convention, Japan is required to complete the destruction of ACW by 2007, with a set five-year grace period. Due to insufficient attention and inputs, the Japanese side failed to complete the destruction on four occasions, in 2007, 2012, 2016, and 2022. Second, up until now, the Japanese side has not provided comprehensive, detailed, and accurate clues and information on the burial sites of Japanese ACW. Therefore, Japanese ACW can be found only passively and dealt with urgently, which greatly increases the risk of casualties and delays in the disposal process. Third, the progress of solving difficult issues is slow. In Jiamusi, Shangzhi, Hunchun, and others, excavation and recovery progress is very slow, and the destruction technique and equipment have not been determined for Liaoyuan. Japan has not shown enough political determination to overcome technical difficulties, such as underwater exploration and recovery and underground detection. Fourth, the problem of disposing contaminated soil remains unresolved. The Japanese ACW have been buried underground for decades. The leakage of toxic agents and the breakage and fragmentation of gas cylinders has seriously polluted the soil and water. Japan must take responsibility to solve the relevant problems.

3. The Chinese Government has attached great importance to the destruction of Japanese ACW. As the Territorial State Party, China has been earnestly fulfilling its obligations under the Convention, has overcome great difficulties, and has agreed to allow Japan to destroy ACW in China, while providing active cooperation to the Japanese side. The Chinese Government has organised experts and technicians to conduct a large number of internal investigations and has assisted in the on-site excavation, identification, and recovery of Japanese ACW, on several hundred occasions. The Chinese side has made great efforts to assist in the safe storage, consolidated transportation, and selection of destruction technologies and sites and construction of destruction facilities for Japanese ACW. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, China has overcome great difficulties to promote the destruction of Japanese ACW, has taken a variety of measures, and has actively explored new models for accelerating all work, such as

virtual visits of the Council and remote inspections. China also effectively coordinated the pandemic prevention and control and the destruction operations for Japanese ACW, to make every effort to protect the health and safety of personnel from both the Chinese and Japanese sides.

4. In October 2022, the Council at its 101st Session adopted the decision on a new destruction plan. The key points include: completing the destruction by the end of 2027 of Japanese ACW buried and stored in and around Haerbaling, which have already been declared to the OPCW as at 31 December 2022, and starting the destruction operations in Liaoyuan in early 2026 with a view to completing them as early as possible; using its best efforts, in good faith, to complete the excavation and recovery of Japanese ACW at Mudanjiang, Yichun, and Dunhua by the end of 2025, and making a medium- to long-term plan for the excavation and recovery at Jiamusi, Shangzhi, and Hunchun by the end of 2023, making its best efforts to move forward and implement such a plan; improving the efficiency of the excavation and recovery operations, actively conducting research to improve technologies regarding detection, excavation, and recovery of ACW, both underwater and underground, and using its best efforts to collect and promptly provide China with information on Japanese ACW; and promotion by China and Japan of the standardisation and consolidation of ACW storehouses.

The Chinese side urges the Japanese side once again to implement the new destruction plan in a comprehensive, complete, and accurate manner, to actively allocate resources, and to increase input so as to complete the destruction of the Japanese ACW at an early date.

5. The Fifth Review Conference should undertake a comprehensive review of the issue of Japanese ACW, and make a decision regarding the next stage of the disposal of Japanese ACW. China maintains that the following contents should be included in the outcome document of the Fifth Review Conference:

The Fifth Review Conference:

- (a) reaffirms the importance and urgency of destroying all Japanese ACW in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the relevant decisions of the Council, and emphasises the due obligations incumbent upon the Japanese side;
- (b) reviews the progress of the destruction of Japanese ACW in a comprehensive way;
- (c) notes with concern that Japan had failed for the fourth time to complete its destruction plan within the deadline;
- (d) welcomes the new destruction plan submitted by China and Japan and adopted by the Council at its 101st Session (EC-101/DEC.2), and calls on Japan to comprehensively, completely, and accurately implement the new destruction plan so as to complete the thorough destruction of ACW at an early date;
- (e) in this regard, urges Japan to take concrete measures to address as soon as possible the existing problems in the destruction process such as, inter alia, unbalanced and insufficient input, inefficiency of the operations, a lack of effective operational plans at some sites, and technical difficulties in underwater and underground exploration, excavation, and recovery, so as to create conditions for accelerating the destruction process in a comprehensive way;

- (f) emphasises that in accordance with the decision of the Council at its 101st Session and the new destruction plan submitted by China and Japan, Japan will continue to make its best efforts to collect, and promptly provide to China, information on Japanese ACW, and cooperate proactively with China with a view to full-scale investigation and confirmation activities regarding traces of ACW;
- (g) considering the objective of the Convention, calls upon all parties to pay attention to the realistic threat of water and soil contamination caused by Japanese ACW, urges Japan to earnestly shoulder its responsibility and solve the above-mentioned problems properly, and authorises the Scientific Advisory Board to study the issues;
- (h) reaffirms the important role of the Review Conference, the Conference, and the Council in reviewing the destruction of Japanese ACW;
- (i) reaffirms the importance of conducting visits and inspections to Japanese ACW destruction facilities by the Council and the OPCW;
- (j) emphasises that the OPCW should continue to ensure its resource inputs for the verification of the destruction of Japanese ACW; and
- (k) welcomes the two visits of the Director-General and delegations representing the Council to the destruction facilities in 2019 and 2022 within this review cycle.