

NGO Statement

**State Disinformation, Generative Artificial intelligence and Chemical Weapons Non-Proliferation**

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Conference of States Parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention  
25 November to 29 November, 2024  
The Hague, The Netherlands

*Mr. Chairman, Director-General, Distinguished Delegates, Civil Society Colleagues:*

The evolving security landscape, characterized by a growing trend of disinformation operations, technological advancements, and chemical weapons use, or the threat of it, presents a significant challenge to international peace and security. As State-backed disinformation wars have become a central facet of global geopolitics in the past several years, their disorderly impact on the international security environment and future challenges are yet to be fathomed. Resolute influence campaigns with AI could vitiate the national and global security landscape that could, in turn, dent international cooperation during crises and emergencies.

Civil society organizations (CSOs), as critical agents of accountability, voice grave concerns over the exploitation of disinformation and generative AI technology by state actors to obscure and justify chemical weapons violations, contravening the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the ethical imperatives binding the global community.

Mr Chairman,

The weaponization of generative AI, particularly in disseminating disinformation, presents a new threat dimension. AI-driven systems facilitate the rapid spread of falsified narratives, reaching global audiences and complicating verification processes. This artificial augmentation amplifies the impact of disinformation, fostering public scepticism around genuine accountability efforts and weakening the response capabilities of the OPCW.

As we commemorate the 11th anniversary of the August 2013 chemical attacks in Ghouta, disinformation continues to obscure the tragic legacy of these events. The Syrian government and its sympathizer nations (e.g. Iran and Russia) weaponized disinformation to evade accountability, confuse narratives, and secure its survival, obstructing international humanitarian responses and eroding public trust in the health sector's ability to address crises effectively.

In recent years, cases like Russia's actions in Ukraine highlight a troubling pattern where state actors leverage disinformation, AI, and emerging technologies to obscure their chemical weapons use and shift blame onto other parties. Evidence indicates that Russia has repeatedly disseminated fabricated information to deflect responsibility, employing tactics that experts termed "mirror politics" by accusing Ukraine and Western nations of the very chemical weapons violations it commits. This systematic disinformation campaign not only sows confusion but also undermines the international consensus on chemical weapons non-proliferation.

Mr Chairman

The CWC and OPCW play pivotal roles in the international community's response to chemical weapons proliferation and use. However, recent conflicts underscore the need for strengthened measures to counter disinformation and adapt to the rise of AI in state-sponsored misinformation campaigns. As part of CWC Coalition, the Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict urges to implement the following actions:

1. In response to AI-driven disinformation, the OPCW must reinforce its verification protocols by integrating AI tools to distinguish authentic reports from fabricated narratives. The use of

blockchain technology for data authenticity could be explored, ensuring that reported incidents of chemical weapon use are accurately verified and resistant to tampering.

2. The OPCW should engage with the members of the CWC Coalition, other CSOs, independent media, and fact-checking bodies to counteract state-sponsored disinformation. The OPCW can enhance transparency and build resilience against deceptive information strategies by partnering with entities equipped to verify on-ground information.
3. The CWC should establish accountability frameworks for member states found engaging in disinformation regarding chemical weapons. This includes imposing sanctions or other penalties on states that misuse international platforms to mislead the public and international community about their chemical weapons activities.
4. The OPCW and the CWC must advocate for international norms around the use of AI in statecraft, particularly regarding disinformation in warfare contexts. This regulation could involve the United Nations and other multilateral organizations, promoting agreements prohibiting AI's deployment in spreading false narratives to cover up violations of international law, including the CWC.

Mr Chairman,

The future of civil society engagement in chemical weapons non-proliferation depends on adapting to new-age digital challenges. We recommend establishing a dedicated platform within the OPCW or the CWC Coalition for civil society voices, enhancing real-time reporting, and involving technologically equipped civil society organizations in verification processes. This platform could serve as a nexus for transparency, allowing civil society groups to share independent and verified findings, especially in regions where state-sponsored media may dominate narratives, as seen in Middle-Eastern and Russo-Ukraine conflicts where disinformation has frequently obscured accountability for chemical weapons use.

As a representative of the Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict, I am pleased to announce that we have a dedicated project to monitor and analyze disinformation trends in chemical and biological arms control. We curate CBW-related information from open sources, focusing on how state and non-state actors use false narratives to undermine non-proliferation norms and trust in international treaties.<sup>1</sup> *Health Security Partners, USA, partially supported this project.*

Mr Chairman,

To maintain the integrity of the CWC, it is imperative that the OPCW evolves alongside emerging technologies and addresses disinformation more comprehensively. NGOs and civil society groups under the Coalition stand ready to collaborate with the OPCW in these efforts, ensuring a world free from chemical weapons, misinformation, and the misuse of artificial intelligence. Taking this opportunity, We urge state parties and the OPCW to take decisive steps to uphold the CWC's principles and protect global security from the threats posed by modern disinformation and AI technologies.

I request this statement be a part of the record of the 29th Conference of States Parties of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

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<sup>1</sup> *Countering CBW Disinformation*, <https://sspconline.org/cbw-disinformation>