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THE HAGUE – THE NETHERLANDS

OPCW: THE LEGAL TEXTS

compiled and edited by Lisa Woollomes Tabassi

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction entered into force on 29 April 1997, banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. The treaty sets a time frame of 10–15 years to destroy all stockpiles of chemical weapons held by States Parties and all facilities used to produce them. Because chemical weapons are relatively cheap and easy to produce, the Convention requires restriction and regulation of production and trade in toxic chemicals and their precursors. In addition to increased international security, States Parties benefit from assistance and protection against the threat of use or the actual use of chemical weapons. They shall also enjoy the fullest possible exchange of chemicals, equipment and scientific and technical information relating to the development and application of chemistry for purposes not prohibited under the Convention.

To achieve those broad objectives, to monitor compliance and to provide a forum for States Parties, the Convention established an international organisation, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague.

The OPCW is composed of three organs: the Conference of the States Parties, the Executive Council, and the Technical Secretariat which includes an international inspectorate to carry out intrusive on-site verification and monitoring of facilities and chemical plants around the globe.

The Chemical Weapons Convention was a compromise text negotiated in a multilateral forum over the course of two decades. Actual implementation of the complex text requires interpretation by OPCW organs. *OPCW: The Legal Texts* draws together in a single volume the text of the Convention, the interpretative decisions and understandings reached by the organs, the policies, model agreements, rules of procedure, regulations and key background texts. The intention of this work is to provide a comprehensive view of the Convention regime, two years into its implementation.

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