

PEACE THROUGH CHEMISTRY

Launch by Senator the Hon Gareth Evans QC, Minister for Foreign Affairs, of *Peace Through Chemistry - The New Chemical Weapons Convention* by Trevor Findlay, Fellow of the Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 2 June 1993.

It is appropriate that what appears to be the first published monograph on the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) should be produced here in Australia, given the considerable work and commitment Australia has devoted to the conclusion of the negotiations for this Treaty over the years. Australia's contribution to the successful conclusion of the CWC has been truly a team effort, with strong and active involvement not only from the Australian government but technical experts, industry representatives and academia. I congratulate Trevor Findlay for his consistent academic interest in the negotiation process - of which the monograph being launched today is just the latest example.

This monograph emerged from the proceedings of the international conference on arms control, disarmament and security in the Post-Cold world which Trevor organised through the ANU Peace Research Centre in June last year. I recall saying then, in an opening address, that the development of a modern, verifiable Chemical Weapons Convention was something of a case study of arms control and disarmament approaches for the future. The concept of "peace through chemistry" evoked by Trevor in his introduction can in fact be understood to refer not only to chemical disarmament, but also to the contribution this treaty can and should make to our wider disarmament and non-proliferation goals.

The importance of the CWC should not be understated. This Convention offers enhanced security beyond any previous arms treaty. It is the first multilateral disarmament treaty to provide for the complete and verifiable ban of an entire class of weapons of mass destruction.

There are elements of the Convention's verification regime - with its emphasis on transparency and access - which will be helpful precedents in strengthening other arms control regimes. There are principles potentially applicable to the International Atomic Energy Agency inspections of nuclear facilities in non-nuclear weapons states, and transparency provisions possibly applicable to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). (Not that I am suggesting either that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) should be rewritten in the image of the CWC, or that Australia supports anything less than the indefinite extension of the NPT in its present form.)

A very important feature of the CWC negotiation process was the involvement of industry as an integral part in those negotiations. We hosted here in Canberra in 1989 the Government-Industry Conference against Chemical Weapons (GICCW). At this Conference the world's chemical industries unequivocally committed themselves to achieving, in close partnership with governments, a practical and workable Convention. Industry obviously recognised the benefits to trade, as well as the need to avoid the horrors of chemical warfare. The ability of both government and industry to see both sides of the issue was a welcome development. This co-operation continued through the negotiation process, culminating in the strong endorsement of the CWC by the International Council of Chemical Associations at the signing ceremony in Paris in January this year.

These three elements - enhanced security, precedent for other treaties and industry co-operation - will, I am sure, be reflected in future international security negotiations.

Trevor says, kindly but I think accurately, that Australia's role was crucial in the negotiations for this treaty. Our ability to play such a role originated in the commitment of this Government to grasp the opportunities offered to Australia as a non-NATO, non-European, Western CD member with a strong history of co-operation with non-aligned and neutral countries. We have consistently demonstrated that we have the requisite technical and diplomatic expertise to help craft solutions to problems which those states with a more immediate stake in the outcome are unable to achieve, even if they wanted: the establishment of the Cairns Group in 1986 and the Australian Cambodia

Peace Proposal in 1990 are two other familiar examples of the kind of role a middle power like Australia can play in helping identify creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems.

I was proud to table at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament in March 1992 a draft text together with a game plan for accelerating the conclusion of the negotiations, and I am delighted to say that this strategy worked, not least because of the considerable skill and stamina displayed by the Australian team of diplomats and technical experts in pushing the process to its conclusion.

The negotiation process is now well and truly over, but there is still much to be done to ensure the Convention's provisions are effectively implemented. We hope and expect that the CWC will enter into force in early 1995. Before this, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) must be given a firm foundation. I am happy to say that progress so far, after two Preparatory Commission (Prepcom) sessions, has been good, although as one would expect with the establishment of any new international organisation, there have been a few minor hiccups. Australia will be committing its resources and efforts to ensuring that the unique verification provisions of the Convention so essential to the effective operation of the OPCW are successfully put in place. In this connection I was pleased to announce, after the First Prepcom Session in February, the appointment of Dr John Gee, an experienced Australian diplomat and chemist, as Director of the Verification Division of the provisional Technical Secretariat for the OPCW.

Entry into force of the Convention must be achieved as soon as possible in order to capitalise on the momentum generated by the conclusion of the negotiation process last year. Sixty-five of the (currently) 144 signatories must ratify the Treaty for entry into force. Already three countries have done so: Fiji, Mauritius and Seychelles. Australia plans to ratify in early 1994, following the passing of appropriate implementing legislation through the Commonwealth Parliament later this year.

We are working within our own region to encourage progress on implementation, including ratification, and have offered to provide assistance such technical or legal advice. The last seminar held as part of our Chemical Weapons Regional Initiative in April this year was devoted to technical discussion on the implementation of the CWC. A singular achievement, linked I would like to think with our Regional Initiative, is that all South East Asian countries have signed the treaty. We are working with the few remaining Pacific Island countries who are yet to sign; the only non-signatory of concern in the Asia Pacific region is the DPRK.

Future challenges to the successful implementation of the Treaty can be identified as mainly technical, albeit if complex. However, there is a significant political issue which needs to be resolved - the non-signature of some important Arab League states: Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, as well as Libya, Iraq and Sudan, have yet to sign. Their arguments fortunately do not relate to the merits of the text itself. Australia is doing what it can, while recognising the limited role we can play as an extra-regional party, to ensure that adherence to the CWC is seen as a measure in its own right which will contribute significantly to the security of the region and set a precedent for the achievement of other arms control and disarmament agreements in the region. We have participated in the last two sessions of the Middle East Peace Process Arms Control and Regional Security Working Group; this was partly in recognition of our role in the CWC negotiation process, and it provides us with an additional opportunity to encourage signature of the Treaty.

Although the negotiation process for the Chemical Weapons Convention has been completed, there are still considerable challenges ahead. Fortunately, I believe none are insurmountable; hopefully, none will prove as difficult as the process Trevor has chronicled in this monograph.

Thank you, Trevor for this very useful analysis and summary account of the final negotiation process. It provides an important insight into both the politics and the substance of the treaty and as such should prove equally valuable to chroniclers and future negotiators. I congratulate you and all those who worked with you - including in particular Martine Letts from my office, who was one of the key DFAT negotiators - for a fine and timely publication.

May I also take this opportunity to thank you for the role you have played over the years at the ANU Peace Research

Centre, especially as editor of Pacific Research and as Acting Director of the Centre in 1991-92. I wish you well as you leave for a 2-year term at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, as project leader on Peacekeeping and Asia-Pacific Regional Security issues. You have an excellent international reputation, and 'Peace through Chemistry' will add further to it.

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