



Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention

For Prelims: Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological Weapons Convention

For Mains: Impacts of Chemical and Biological Weapons, Initiatives related to Chemical and Biological Weapons

Why in News?

Recently, the US said that **Russia could be planning a chemical or biological weapon attack in Ukraine.**

- Earlier, Russian claimed that the **US had chemical and biological weapons labs** in Ukraine, which was denied by the US.

What are Chemical Weapons?

- **About:**
 - A Chemical Weapon is a **chemical used to cause intentional death or harm** through its toxic properties.
 - Munitions, devices and other equipment specifically designed to weaponize toxic chemicals also fall under the definition of chemical weapons.
- **Related Initiatives:**
 - **India's:**
 - The **Chemical Weapons Convention Act, 2000** was passed to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).
 - It provided for the establishment of a National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention or NACWC. This institution, formed in 2005, is the chief liaison between the government of India and the **Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).**
 - **Global:**
 - **Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes):**
 - The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions are **multilateral environmental agreements**, which share the common objective of protecting human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes.
 - The **Australia Group (AG)** is an informal forum of countries which, through the **harmonisation of export controls**, seeks to ensure that exports do not contribute to the development of chemical or biological weapons.

PYQ

Consider the following pairs: (2020)

International agreement/set-up	Subject
1. Alma-Ata Declaration :	Healthcare of the people
2. Hague Convention :	Biological and chemical weapons
3. Talanoa Dialogue :	Global climate change
4. Under2 Coalition :	Child rights

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 4 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Ans: (c)

What is the Chemical Weapons Convention?

▪ About:

- It is a **multilateral treaty banning chemical weapons** and requiring their destruction within the stipulated time.
- Negotiations for the **CWC began in 1980** at the [United Nations Conference on Disarmament](#).
- The convention was drafted in **September 1992** and opened for signature in January 1993. It became effective from April 1997.
- It makes it **mandatory to destroy old and abandoned chemical weapons**.
- Members **should also declare the riot-control agents** (sometimes referred to as 'tear gas') in possession of them.
 - [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](#) is an international organization established by the CWC in 1997 to implement and enforce the terms of the CWC.

▪ Members:

- It has **192 state parties** and 165 signatories.
- India is a signatory of the convention.

▪ Convention Prohibits:

- The **development, production, acquisition, stockpiling**, or retention of chemical weapons.
- **Transferring** of chemical weapons.
- **Using** chemical weapons.
- Assisting other States to indulge in activities that are prohibited by the CWC.
- **Using riot-control devices** as 'warfare methods'.

What is a Biological Weapon?

▪ About:

- Biological weapons **use microbiological agents** (such as bacteria, viruses or fungi) or toxins to intentionally cause death or harm to humans, animals, or plants.

▪ Related Initiatives:

- The [1925 Geneva Protocol](#) banned the use of biological weapons in war.
 - India ratified the Geneva Convention in 1950.
- Subsequently, the [Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention \(BTWC\)](#), which **entered into force in 1975 prohibited the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition** and retention of biological weapons.
 - India ratified this in 1974.

Recently, the USA decided to support India's membership in multi-lateral export control regimes called the "Australia Group" and the "Wassenaar Arrangement". What is the difference between them? (2011)

1. The Australia Group is an informal arrangement which aims to allow exporting countries to minimize the risk of assisting chemical and biological weapons proliferation, whereas the Wassenaar Arrangement is a formal group under the OECD holding identical objectives.
2. The Australia Group comprises predominantly of Asian, African and North American countries whereas the member countries of Wassenaar Arrangement are predominantly from the European Union and American Continents.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (d)

What is the Biological Weapons Convention?

▪ About:

- It is a **key element in the international community's efforts to address Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)** proliferation and it has established a strong norm against biological weapons.
 - WMD is a **weapon with the capacity to inflict death and destruction** on such a massive scale and so indiscriminately that its very presence in the hands of a hostile power can be considered a grievous threat.
- Formally known as "**The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction**", the Convention was negotiated by the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It opened for signature on **10th April 1972** and entered into force on **26th March 1975**.

▪ Members:

- 183 States Parties and 4 Signatory States.
- India is a signatory of the convention.

▪ Convention Prohibits:

- It effectively prohibits the **development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons**.
- It was the **first multilateral disarmament treaty** banning an entire category of **Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)**.

PYQ

With reference to 'Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)', consider the following statements: (2016)

1. It is an organization of the European Union in working relation with NATO and WHO.
2. It monitors the chemical industry to prevent new weapons from emerging.
3. It provides assistance and protection to States (Parties) against chemical weapons threats. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Source: TH

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