



**H·I·S**  
HARARE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

66 Pendennis Rd, Harare, Zimbabwe

# ZIMUN XI

*The Cost of Innovation:*

*Navigating the Ethical Responsibilities of Technological  
Advancements and Societal Change for Inclusive, Sustainable  
Development in a Globalised World*



**Historical commission**

## **Addressing the Efficacy and Legacy of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the Chemical Weapons Convention in Preventing Chemical Warfare.**

**Committee:** Historical Commission

**Issue:** Addressing the Efficacy and Legacy of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the Chemical Weapons Convention in Preventing Chemical Warfare.

**Student Officer:** Toby Morgan

**Position:** Chair

### **INTRODUCTION**

The 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibited the use of chemical and biological weapons in war, and was entered into force as an international law on the 8th February 1928. Although for thousands of years before, chemical weapons had been used as tools of war, and many past chemical disarmament efforts had taken place such as The Brussels Convention, which prohibited the employment of poison or poisoned weapons, and the use of arms, projectiles or material to cause unnecessary suffering, although the agreement never entered into force. After World War 1 (in which 1.3 million people were affected by chemical attacks), the world decided that something serious needed to be done. However, The protocol did not ban the development, production, or stockpiling of such weaponry. As well as some major powers such as the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union could use such weapons in retaliation against other nations using chemical armaments.

### **DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

Biological Weapons - use of biological toxins or infectious agents such as bacteria, viruses, insects, and fungi with the intent to kill, harm or incapacitate humans, animals or plants as an act of war.

Asphyxiation - killing someone by depriving them of air.

Nerve agent - a chemical that attacks the nervous system, resulting in respiratory distress, seizures, and potentially death if exposure is severe.

OPWC - the Organisation For The Prohibition Of Chemical Weapons.

## **BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE**

The Geneva Protocol of 1925 failed to address the production, storage, and transfer of chemical and biological weapons, which made it easy to undermine. It has been violated by several countries, including Germany during World War 2 during the concentration camps and by the Syrian government in 2018. Many countries also signed the protocol with reservations that allowed them to use chemical weapons against countries that had not joined the protocol, All of these are factors that affected the 1925 Geneva Protocol's effectiveness. However the Geneva Protocol of 1925 did help prevent future atrocities, it was the first legally binding instrument to outlaw these weapons in armed conflict as well as significantly reducing the occurrence of large-scale chemical and biological attacks. Today the Geneva Protocol of 1925 is considered a foundational international treaty prohibiting the use of chemical and biological weapons in warfare. However, this is not to say that it is not still broken. The entire world is affected by chemical and biological attacks, since if not contained they have the possibility to harm the entire world. Since 1925, the Geneva Protocol has been overtaken in efficiency, by the Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, and the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993. But, before the Geneva Convention the world had also implemented certain measures, such as: The first international agreement limiting the use of chemical weapons in 1675, when France and Germany came to an agreement prohibiting the use of poison bullets. As Well as the 1899 Hague Peace Conference, parties declared to 'abstain from the use of projectiles, the sole object of which is the diffusion of asphyxiating or deleterious gases'. A Second Hague Convention, in 1907, reiterated earlier bans on employing poison or poisoned weapons.

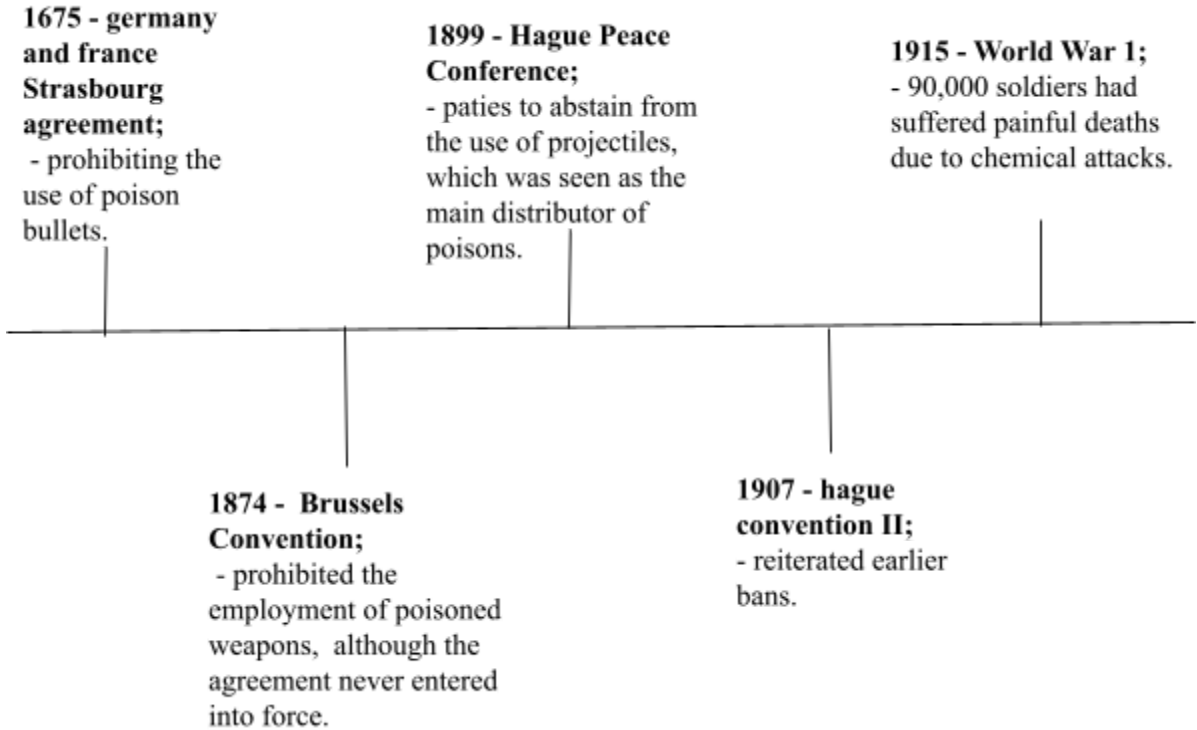
## **CURRENT CONTEXT**

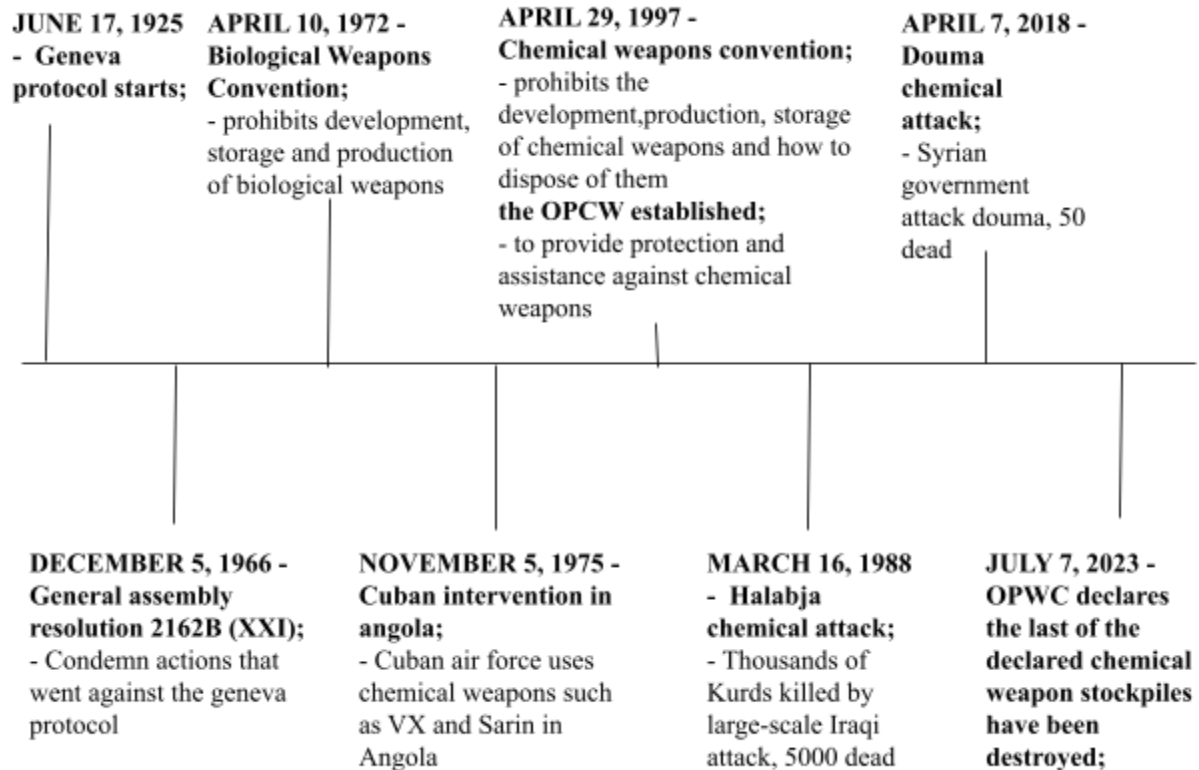
Today the effectiveness of the 1925 Geneva Protocol is always being debated, with it still containing outdated material which allows countries to undermine it. Such as, Douma chemical attack. On 7 April 2018, a chemical warfare attack was launched by the forces of the government of Bashar al-Assad in the city of Douma, Syria. Medics and witnesses reported that it caused the deaths of between 40 and 50 people and injuries to possibly well over 100. As well as Hitler using chemical attacks in concentration camps during World War 2.

## **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATION INVOLVED**

Many countries are involved every day with chemical and biological attacks, the Organisation For The Prohibition Of Chemical Weapons (OPWC) with its 193 Member States, oversees the global endeavour to permanently and verifiably eliminate chemical weapons. With 98% of the global population living under the protection of the Convention it is a major contributor to the cause of protection from chemical weapons. Lithuania has recently contributed €10,000 to support OPCW programmes, As Well as The Netherlands contributing €500,000 to support OPCW activities in Syria. But some countries are still using chemical and biological weapons. such as, the Former President of Syria and his al-Assad regime perpetrated a chemical attack in Eastern Ghouta on April 7, 2018, chlorine gas was used, killing about 43 people.

### TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS





## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES, & EVENTS

### Germany and France Strasbourg agreement - 1675;

Prohibiting the use of poison bullets.

<https://www.opcw.org/about-us/history#:~:text=The%20first%20international%20agreement%20limiting,the%20use%20of%20poison%20bullets.>

### Brussels Convention - 1874;

Prohibited the employment of poisoned weapons, although the agreement never entered into force.

<https://www.opcw.org/about-us/history#:~:text=The%20first%20international%20agreement%20limiting,the%20use%20of%20poison%20bullets.>

**Hague Peace Conference - 1899;**

Parties to abstain from the use of projectiles, which was seen as the main distributor of poisons.

<https://www.opcw.org/about-us/history#:~:text=The%20first%20international%20agreement%20limiting,the%20use%20of%20poison%20bullets.>

**Hague Convention II - 1907;**

reiterated earlier bans.

<https://www.opcw.org/about-us/history#:~:text=The%20first%20international%20agreement%20limiting,the%20use%20of%20poison%20bullets.>

**United Nations General Assembly resolution 2162 B (XXI) - 1966;**

To call for states to strictly adhere to the principles of the Geneva Protocol of 1925, To condemn actions that went against the protocol's objectives.

[united Nations General Assembly resolution 2162B \(1966\)](#)

**The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) - 1972;**

Prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological weapons.

[https://disarmament.unoda.org/biological-weapons/#:~:text=The%20Biological%20Weapons%20Convention%20\(BWC,of%20mass%20destruction%20\(WMD\)\)](https://disarmament.unoda.org/biological-weapons/#:~:text=The%20Biological%20Weapons%20Convention%20(BWC,of%20mass%20destruction%20(WMD)))

**Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) - 1997;**

Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction.

<https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention>

**OPWC established - 1997;**

Oversees the global endeavour to permanently and verifiably eliminate chemical weapons.

<https://www.opcw.org/>

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Over the years many states have looked over the legacy and efficiency of the 1925 Geneva convention, it has been tested and improved with the UN implementing organizations such as the OPCW, as well as many countries funding such projects such as Lithuania and The Netherlands. The UN also implemented the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention. But before the Geneva Protocol of 1925, many measurements were put into place, such as: the Brussels Convention of 1874 and the Hague Peace Conference of 1899.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- OPCW (Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons) given expanded authority and resources to carry out more frequent and thorough inspections in regions where chemical weapons are suspected to be in use.
- The establishment of an International Chemical Weapons Tribunal to help ensure nations are held accountable in the case of breaking the Geneva Protocol or other chemical weapon measurements.
- Encourage the few non-signatory countries to ratify the BWC through incentives such as economic aid or security guarantees.

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