



JAPAN

CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION REVIEW CONFERENCE: ABANDONED CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN CHINA

1. Organisation

- 1.1 Consultations between Japan and China on abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) increased from around 1996, shortly before entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”). In 1997, the Japan-China Joint Working Group (JWG) was created at a directors’ level to facilitate governmental consultations. In 1999, the Japan-China Experts’ Meeting was started under the guidance of the JWG, and it now meets once every month to discuss technical issues involved in the destruction of the ACWs.
- 1.2 In order to tackle the unprecedented task of destroying ACWs drawing upon expertise from all government agencies concerned, the Government of Japan established the Abandoned Chemical Weapons Office in the Cabinet Office as the implementing body of the project. The Government of China also established an ACW office, theirs being part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

2. Investigation, excavation and recovery work

- 2.1 Since 1991, Japan has conducted a total of 23 site investigations at various locations in China to collect information on ACWs. Furthermore, Japan has conducted, with cooperation from China, excavation and recovery operations in Beian City, Heilongjiang Province, Nanjing City, Jiangsu Province and Sunwu County, Heilongjiang Province. Recovered ACWs are stored in temporary storehouses in China.
- 2.2 The biggest burial site of ACWs is in Haerbaling District of Dunhua City in Jilin Province. Given the severe winter conditions and distance from the nearby road, considerable infrastructure has to be built around the burial site in order to undertake excavation and recovery in Haerbaling. The construction of an access road was completed in October 2002.

3. Receiving OPCW inspections

Japan and China, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, have received eight initial inspections of temporary storehouses of ACWs. In addition, in view of the wish of the OPCW Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) to observe the ACWs before they were sealed in containers, Japan and China agreed to receive three OPCW inspections to burial sites while excavation and recovery work was in progress, i.e., before the items were declared to the OPCW. Japan considers that receiving OPCW inspection teams in storehouses and recovery sites contributes to strengthening transparency of the ACW destruction process in China.

4. Characteristics of ACWs in China

The ACWs in China were buried underground for decades before excavation. For this reason, they have the following characteristics which are not found in stockpiled chemical weapons:

- (a) Most munitions are heavily corroded. Some are severely deformed. Therefore, it is difficult to disassemble the munitions;
- (b) There are different types and calibres of munitions, which makes it necessary to choose appropriate technologies and facilities;

In addition, Japanese ACWs in China have the following unique characteristics:

- (c) Many of the munitions contain lewisite, diphenylcyanoarsine or diphenylchloroarsine. These substances yield arsenic compounds during the destruction process, so it is important to collect these compounds properly. A study is underway to establish safe methods of recycling them;
- (d) Picric acid that was used for transfer charges and explosives in projectiles and bombs may have, over the years, formed picrate, a highly explosive substance. Therefore, it is necessary to dispose these charges safely.

5. Preparations for destruction

5.1 Japan has destroyed relatively small numbers of old chemical weapons that were found on its own territory. However, Japan does not have experience in destroying large numbers of chemical weapons. Therefore, Japan has been studying information received from other States Parties which have experience in destroying chemical weapons, including old chemical weapons. At the same time, in order to select the most suitable technologies for the destruction of the ACWs, Japan has been analysing samples taken from the Japanese ACWs, as well as conducting a number of tests to verify the effectiveness of destruction technologies and various safety and environmental issues involved.

5.2 Based on the results of these tests and analyses, in April 2003, Japanese and Chinese experts agreed on the selection of main technologies for the ACW destruction. Both sides also agreed on the location of the destruction plant, which will be in the vicinity

of Haerbaling. Currently, experts from both sides are studying environmental standards to be applied to the destruction process with a view to agreeing on them soon.

6. Convention provisions on ACW

- 6.1 In view of the characteristics of the Japanese ACWs described above, Japan considers that the provisions of Article IV and Part IV (A) of the Verification Annex concerning destruction of chemical weapons and its verification could be applied more flexibly to Japanese ACWs than to stockpiled chemical weapons.
- 6.2 For example, while Japan and China have been cooperating to investigate, excavate and recover ACWs, there still remain a large number of ACWs buried underground, and there is a possibility that new ACWs will continue to be found in hitherto unknown locations. Therefore, there are difficulties involved in applying to Japanese ACWs the same detailed and phased destruction timelines that apply to stockpiled chemical weapons.
- 6.3 The condition of Japanese ACWs described above suggests that the possibility of these munitions being used as chemical weapons is very small. In view of this, Japan considers that the verification regime to be applied to Japanese ACWs could be streamlined, as compared to the regime for stockpiled chemical weapons, with the aim of further improving and optimising verification activities while not compromising the transparency of the destruction process.
- 6.4 With the agreement reached in April 2003 on the main destruction technologies in place, Japan and China are accelerating their preparations to start the destruction of ACWs. With China's cooperation, Japan will continue to do its utmost to complete the destruction of ACWs as early as possible.

7. Cooperation and assistance

- 7.1 The first contacts between Japan and China on ACWs date from the early 1990s. Mutual understanding and cooperation between the two governments on this issue has strengthened considerably in recent years through frequent consultations and cooperation in such projects as excavation and recovery, for the shared goal of destroying the ACWs safely. Japan would like to thank China for its cooperation.
- 7.2 Japan would also like to thank the Secretariat for its assistance in ensuring transparency of the destruction process. Japan is grateful for the technical assistance a number of States Parties have rendered to this ACW project, and hopes to be able to count on their continued assistance.
- 7.3 When the destruction work gets well under way, Japan hopes to be able to share its experience on ACWs with all States Parties.