
PROTOCOL FOR THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE IN WAR OF ASPHYXIATING, POISONOUS, OR OTHER GASES, AND OF BACTERIOLOGICAL METHODS OF WARFARE (GENEVA PROTOCOL)

Opened for Signature: 17 June 1925.

Entered into force: For each signatory as from the date of deposit of its instrument of ratification or accession.

Number of Parties: 132 States.

Depositary: France.

Protocol Text

Protocol Obligations: The Geneva Protocol prohibits the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous, or other gases, and of bacteriological methods of warfare.

Verification and Compliance: The Protocol recognizes the significance of bringing together controls on chemical and biological weapons. While it prohibits the use of such weapons, it does not prohibit their production, development, and stockpiling hence the need for further treaties the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and the 1991 Chemical Weapons Convention. There is no verification mechanism contained within the Protocol and compliance is voluntary.

The Geneva Protocol, implicitly, does not cover internal or civil conflicts. Moreover, a sizeable fraction of its parties have reserved to themselves a right to retaliate in kind if chemical and/or biological weapons should ever be used against them by enemies or allies of enemies. This, and the contractual character of the Protocol, has rendered it a no-first-use agreement.

Background: The Geneva Protocol of 1925 was drawn up and signed at the Conference for the Supervision of the International Trade in Arms and Ammunition, which was held in Geneva under the auspices of the League of Nations from 4 May to 17 June 1925. The conference adopted a Convention for the Supervision of the International Trade in Arms, Munitions and Implements of War, which has not entered into force and, as a separate document, a Protocol on the use of gases. The earlier treaties prohibiting the use of gases to which the Protocol refers are in particular the Hague Declaration concerning as-

phyxiating gases of 1899 and the Treaty of Versailles of 1919.

Responding to the extensive use of chemical weapons between belligerents in the Iran-Iraq War and the increasing number of chemical weapon-capable states, a Conference on Chemical Weapons Use was held in Paris in January 1989. At the conference the States recognized the importance of the Geneva Protocol, reaffirmed the prohibitions as established in it, and called upon all States which have not yet done so to accede to the Protocol.

The Protocol provided the basis for the 1972 [Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention \(BTWC\)](#) and the 1993 [Chemical Weapons Convention \(CWC\)](#) as well as some regional arms control agreements.

Reservations: Upon ratification or accession to the Protocol, some States declared that it would cease to be binding on them if their enemies, or the allies of their enemies, failed to respect the prohibitions of the Protocol. In recent years, however, many of the reservations have been withdrawn, especially following the entry into force of the BTWC and the CWC.

Countries that continue to hold reservations to the Protocol are: Algeria, Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, China, Fiji, India, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Syria, the United States, Vietnam, and Former Yugoslavia.