



Strategic Eye



A column on current affairs - relating to India and/or Canada and looking at ways to promote Indo-Canadian relations in many spheres.

Hague Push For Total Ban On Chemical Weapons

Need Stressed To Counter CW Terrorism; US Still Has Two Stockpiles; Four States Have Not Signed On

By Nivedita Das Kundu @

“Remembrance Day” was commemorated on 11th of November, the 101 years have passed after the end of the First World War which incidentally, is also known as the Chemists’ War. Global community has moved forward and lot has been done.

Twenty three years have passed since entry-into-force of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), in the year 1997.

There is a need for us to note many accomplishments and be grateful for a universal treaty regime, for almost complete abolition of declared chemical weapon stockpiles in eight possessor states, and perhaps most important, the establishment of a world free of deadly chemical agents, which were the major cause for the violence in the last century.

Since the early days of this Convention, a lot has been done and much praise needs to be noted for the determined and dedicated work of the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) technical secretariat and its inspectorate.

It has been acknowledged that 98% of the global population



The headquarters of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague, Netherlands. (AP Photo/Peter Dejong, File)

are covered by the Convention and that 97% of the chemical weapons stockpiles declared by possessor states have been verifiably destroyed. Applause goes to OPCW on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and the Convention framework can be used as a model for other major threats to world nations.

Unfortunately, the threat from chemical weapons has not disappear - the use of chemical weapons in recent past in Syria, Iraq, Malaysia, and in the United Kingdom have caused concern. There is a continuous challenge

posed by non-state actors misusing chemicals. There is an ever-present risk that harmful chemical agents are still being used.

In light of recent events, it is encouraging to note the push made by Canada, United States of America and the Netherlands, to add Novichok to Schedule 1 listed chemicals in the CWC, to ensure, the treaty remains robust and adaptive to current threats.

Achieving universalization and full compliance with the obligations of the CWC is in the interest of all States-Parties. It is important to reach out to the four re-

maining countries Egypt, Israel, North Korea, and South Sudan to join the Convention.

Pressure needs to be maintained on the United States, which still has two stockpiles of CW left to be destroyed and the deadline should not go beyond 2023. The regime is the product of international cooperation and can only survive with greater partnership amongst state parties.

It is commendable to note that OPCW has made efforts in engaging various non-governmental stakeholders and improved relations with private, public and

civil actors giving importance to public outreach and civil society’s involvement to play a constructive role towards fulfilling the CWC’s mandate.

Non governmental organisations and civil society are pleased to work with all components of OPCW to assure that the Convention is fully implemented in a transparent, science-based, and community-inclusive manner.

It is expected, that the proposed new Centre for Chemistry and Technology supported by OPCW state parties, will solidify the joint commitment, in the name of the victims of chemical weapons around the globe and in the name of the future generation for making the world truly free of chemical weapons.

However, the role of OPCW in countering CW terrorism, needs to be enhanced and well defined. It is anticipated that the OPCW is able to redefine its purpose owing to changing geopolitical realities and promote peaceful use of chemistry.

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Freeland: Promoted Or Doomed To Failure?

By Peggy Nash

The new Liberal cabinet has mostly familiar faces, with just a few shuffled deck chairs and some new ministers.

Much of the focus has landed on Chrystia Freeland, the new minister of intergovernmental affairs and deputy prime minister.

Freeland is clearly Justin Trudeau’s most powerful minister, with a bundle of political problems on her plate. Regional tensions are brewing across Canada and she will need all her negotiating skills to forge solutions.

So is this a promotion for the high-profile former foreign affairs minister who spearheaded the negotiations with U.S. President Donald Trump’s team to nail down a new NAFTA, and who told the world that Canada had returned as an important middle power and defender of women and all human rights?

Or is this a dead end, a no-win situation where she will now be the lightning rod for anger across the land?

The Liberals were elected in 2015 to a majority government after an aspirational campaign that focused on middle-class prosperity and aimed to restore Canada’s place in the world.

Due to their majority, the Liberals could pass confidence bills like the budget or initiatives like the assisted suicide law or the legalization of marijuana provided they accepted some input and tweaking from the Senate.

They could also block what they didn’t want, especially at committees, such as the shutdown of the SCN-Lavalin inquiry.

Trudeau’s new minority government in 2019 now faces a different reality. The Liberals looked vulnerable to defeat in the wake of a number of ethics scandals and other thorny issues.

A “Wexit” separatist movement has now emerged, with Alberta Premier Jason Kenney throwing gas on the flames of western anger and alienation.

The West wants action on pipelines and job creation. Squaring this circle on the environment and the economy, the West and the rest of Canada will be this government’s biggest challenge. This is where the Alberta-born Freeland comes in.

Many women, in particular, are cheering Freeland’s high-profile appointment and wish her well.

Women remain greatly under-represented in Canada’s Parliament at 29 per cent, edging up slightly from the 26.9 per cent of the previous parliament by electing 10 more women, but still trailing more than 50 other countries in women’s representation.

So whether this new position is a promotion or a dead end for Freeland depends on where party and regional alliances can be built. Freeland is a talented negotiator. But she will need to check herself on her tendency to lecture others. Kenney and Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe are in no mood for virtue lecturing by federal Liberals.

Her role as minister of inter-governmental affairs, a job that prime ministers often keep for themselves, suggests she’ll have lots of room for breaking new ground. However, no deputy prime minister has ever gone on to lead the country. Many see Freeland as ambitious and a possible successor to Trudeau. So does this position favour that aspiration?

Time will tell. And women will be watching.

Peggy Nash, Distinguished Visiting Practitioner, Faculty of Arts, Ryerson University

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