



# CHEMICAL SECURITY IS A GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE GLOBAL CONGRESS ADVANCES UNSCR 1540 IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

© INTERPOL - "Chemical security is a global responsibility" These are the words echoed throughout the Global Congress Plenary meeting;

## ABSTRACT

As chemical and explosive material diversion continues to surge, fuelled by supply chain vulnerabilities and rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies, the situation has reached a critical point. In this precarious landscape, a unified, multi-stakeholder approach –the bedrock of the Global Congress on Chemical Security & Emerging Threats– is crucial, for it is clear that chemical security issues cannot be achieved in isolation. This article provides a high-level introduction to the Global Congress and highlights how this initiative is relevant to the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) (UNSCR 1540).



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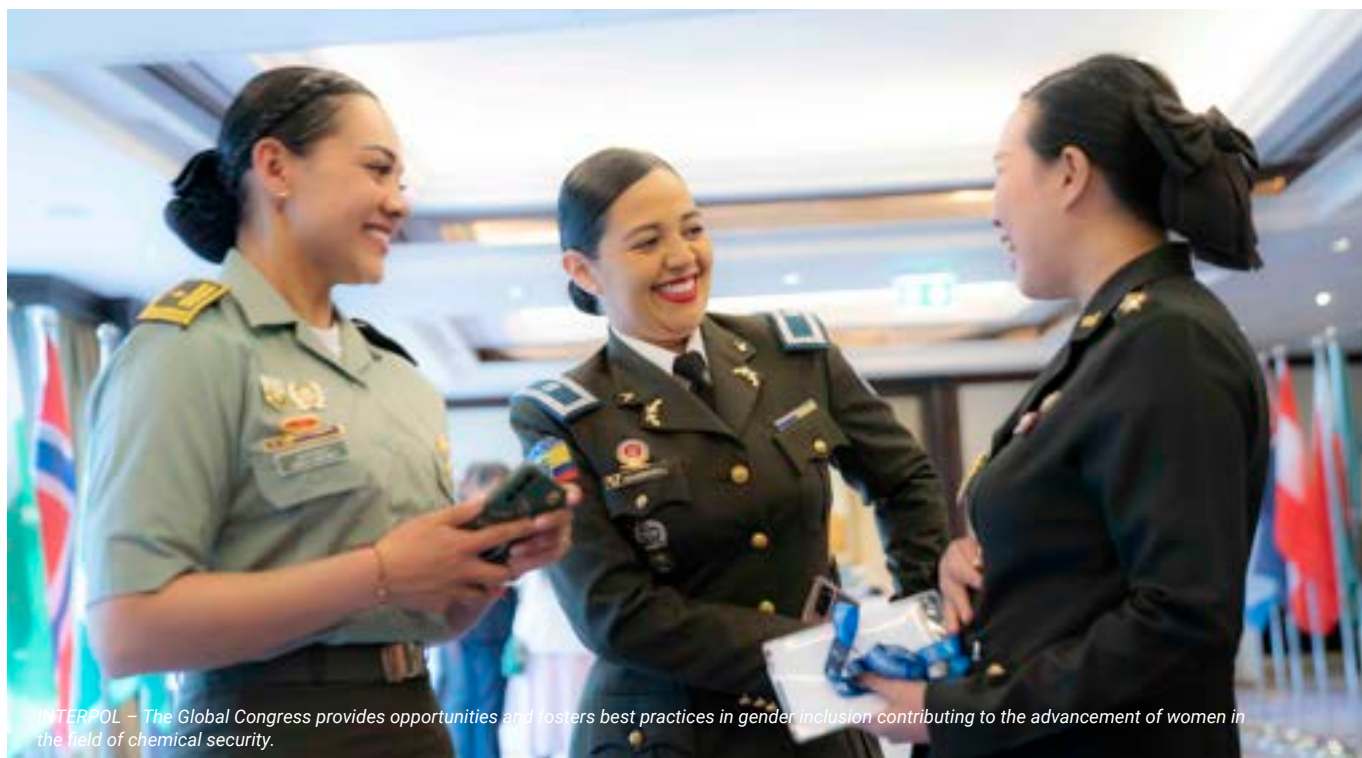


Camille Scotto de César is a policy analyst within the Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear and Explosives (CBRNE) Sub-Directorate of INTERPOL. The Sub-Directorate supports member countries to execute law enforcement duties related to CBRNE threats of a deliberate or unintentional nature by leveraging their competencies in three pillars of work: police data management and analysis, specialized expertise and international engagement.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery poses a significant threat to global peace and security. In response to this growing concern, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1540 in 2004, calling on all UN Member States to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. The resolution acknowledges the link between proliferation and the risk of non-State actors, including terrorists, ac-

quiring such weapons or related materials. To mitigate this risk, UN Member States are urged to strengthen national legislative and regulatory frameworks and to establish and enforce effective measures to control WMD-related materials. This is achieved primarily by enhancing border security and providing law enforcement agencies with the right tools to detect, deter, prevent, and combat the illicit trafficking of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

For years, INTERPOL's CBRNE Sub-Directorate has been a driving force in the global fight against CBRNE terrorism, spearheading international efforts to prevent, detect, respond to, and support the investigation of these threats. By harnessing its expertise, the Sub-Directorate has empowered the global law enforcement community through implementing specialized training and capacity-building initiatives, providing agencies with actionable intelligence and an-



INTERPOL – The Global Congress provides opportunities and fosters best practices in gender inclusion contributing to the advancement of women in the field of chemical security.

alytical products, and fostering seamless information sharing among its 196 Member Countries.

INTERPOL has pinpointed a significant gap in coordination among national stakeholders involved in CBRNE security, a gap also acknowledged in the resolution, which urges States to “develop appropriate ways to work with and inform industry and the public regarding their obligations (...)”. Cognisant of this, INTERPOL’s CBRNE Sub-Directorate has made national cooperation among all national stakeholders involved in CBRNE security a cornerstone of its programming efforts, fostering a collaborative

approach and cultivating public-private partnerships to address this key issue.

INTERPOL’s Chemical and Explosives Terrorism Prevention (CMX) Unit has established itself as a pioneer in combating the evolving threats of terrorist use of chemicals and explosives, driving multi-sectoral and international collaboration through initiatives like the Global Congress on Chemical Security and Emerging Threats. As chemical and explosive material diversion continues to surge, fuelled by supply chain vulnerabilities and rapid advancements in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, the situation has reached

a critical point. In this precarious landscape, a unified, multi-stakeholder approach—the bedrock of the Global Congress—is crucial, for it is clear that chemical security issues cannot be tackled in isolation.

Launched in 2018, the Global Congress was established in response to a call by the Chemical Security Working Group of the G7 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction to foster an international community of chemical security experts. The Global Partnership has actively supported the implementation of UNSCR 1540 since its adoption

and regularly reiterates such support.<sup>1</sup> Today, the Global Congress has evolved into a dynamic network of over 1,600 chemical security experts from around the world, working together to combat the threat of terrorist use of chemicals and explosives. Through these efforts, the Global Congress is also effectively contributing to the effective implementation of UNSCR 1540.

The Global Congress is a collaborative effort, jointly led by five agencies: INTERPOL, Global Affairs Canada, the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, the US Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. The network continues to expand, fostering a holistic and multi-sector dialogue that enables a collective response to the global chemical and explosive threat.

The Global Congress serves as a unique platform, convening subject matter experts from across the chemical security supply chain to build relationships, exchange expertise, and share critical information

on emerging threats and innovative best practices. This diverse gathering of stakeholders facilitates a comprehensive approach to identifying and addressing vulnerabilities in the supply chain, thereby preventing criminals and terrorists from exploiting them to acquire chemical and explosive precursors.

The Global Congress Plenary (GCP) meetings provide a vital platform for regular information exchange, ensuring that experts and practitioners stay abreast of the latest developments and contribute to the global dialogue. In October 2023, the fourth GCP brought together over 300 experts from more than 80 countries in Bangkok, Thailand, marking its largest event to date.

The meeting facilitated collaborative dialogue among experts from law enforcement, industry, government, academia, and international organizations, focusing on chemical security, risk management, public-private partnerships, and emerging threats, such as 3D printing, biological toxins, and AI. Presentations high-

lighted AI's potential risks and benefits, as well as innovative technologies and cyber security solutions to detect and prevent threats. In this context, the Global Congress not only contributes to the development of "effective border controls and law enforcement efforts to detect, deter, prevent and combat (...) illicit trafficking"<sup>2</sup> of chemical weapons, but also enables participating countries to sustain such efforts, as called for by UNSCR 1540, by reinforcing their law enforcement agencies' knowledge of the latest threats.

The importance of public-private partnerships was at the heart of the dialogue, with presentations highlighting success stories from bolstering these partnerships. The meeting agenda was driven by the established call-for-abstracts process, which enables the most pertinent topics to be brought to the forefront of the dialogue and allows the network to have a driving voice in the agenda development. This collaborative approach is essential for effective implementation of UNSCR 1540, as it fosters a coordinated response to

1 Chemical Weapons Convention, 5<sup>th</sup> Review Conference, 2023, Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (GP), Statement, Delivered by Japan, as 2023 President – Available at <https://www.opcw.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023/05/WEBSITE%20RC5%20G7GP%20STATEMENT.pdf> (accessed on 16 July 2024).

2 S/RES/1540, Op 3(c).



the threat of chemical weapons and their means of delivery, and underscores the understanding that chemical security is a global responsibility that requires collective action and commitment.

Beyond its plenary meetings, the Global Congress fosters a far-reaching mechanism that promotes partnerships, information sharing, and continuous dialogue. The network cultivates a trusted environment, facilitating the sharing of actionable information and identifying opportunities

for peer-to-peer exchange. Members can tap into the network's collective expertise by requesting technical assistance and support, giving rise to innovative systems that foster peer-to-peer learning, capacity building, and knowledge sharing, thereby facilitating the exchange of assistance encouraged by UNSCR 1540.<sup>3</sup>

The core objectives of the Global Congress are building public-private partnerships and developing opportunities for collaboration across sec-

tors, ultimately driving positive change for global chemical security. To achieve this, the Global Congress continues to invest in developing its capabilities and to leverage the network's collective expertise. The Global Congress Advisory Bodies, currently comprising the Steering Committee and Industry Advisory Group, provide strategic guidance, ensuring that multi-sectoral and multinational perspectives are reflected in its programming activities. The Steering Committee guides discussions on cross-sectoral

3 S/RES/1540, Op 7.



©The Global Congress sets network diversity and inclusivity as one of its three Strategic Goals for 2024-2026, thereby ensuring discussions continue to include all voices across the chemical supply chain; Credit, INTERPOL

collaborations to counter security threats by providing law enforcement agencies with the right tools. The Industry Advisory Group addresses the needs and challenges of the chemical industry sector, hence engaging a dialogue between sectors on the existing rules and regulations.

The Global Congress launched the 2024–26 Global Congress Strategic Framework in April 2024, which serves as a guide to focus efforts and to channel resources towards achieving tangible, impactful results that drive meaningful change for chemical security.

The Strategic Framework provides a clear roadmap for collective efforts, ensuring that the Global Congress is working towards a common goal: a safer, more secure world.

The Global Congress facilitates effective implementation of UNSCR 1540 by providing multidimensional support to participating countries. This includes enhanced coordination efforts at the national, regional, and international levels, as well as dialogue among all relevant chemical security stakeholders. The Congress also fosters the exchange of as-

sistance between countries, which helps to improve the understanding of the threat and identify vulnerabilities in legitimate activities. By sharing best practices in regulating the chemical industry, the Congress contributes to supporting national law enforcement efforts to prevent non-State actors from acquiring chemical weapons and their means of delivery. In recognition of the critical role that international cooperation plays in preventing these threats, chemical security is viewed as a global responsibility that requires collective action and commitment.