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All countries in Europe, except Yugoslavia, have already signed up

**By defence correspondent Jonathan Marcus**

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has agreed to accede to the international convention banning the production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons.

According to a spokesman for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, that oversees the treaty, Belgrade deposited its instruments of accession with the UN Secretary General on Thursday.

The Yugoslav army is widely believed in the West to have a significant chemical warfare capability and now all stocks of such weapons will have to be destroyed.

**Nerve agents**

The Yugoslav Government's decision to accede to the convention is a significant step.

It is the last country in Europe to do so and in due course, it will have to open up its chemical facilities - both military and many civil plants - to international inspection.

Before the break-up of Yugoslavia, its armed forces had developed a significant chemical warfare capability with stocks of nerve agents and mustard gas, along with various other incapacitating chemicals.

The army of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia inherited the bulk of this programme, including production facilities and stocks of chemical munitions.

Yugoslavia's membership of the arms control regime will enter

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into force in mid-May, after which it will have some 30 days to submit a detailed declaration of its holdings.

### **Constructive relationship**

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the watchdog body that oversees the convention, will then organise the first base-line inspections.

The Yugoslav Government's decision will be broadly welcomed, not least by other south-east European countries.

It also represents a clear signal that at least in this area, Belgrade wants a more open and constructive relationship with the outside world.

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