



REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

**PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION C-SS-4/DEC.3 ON
ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE**

1. The Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”), at its Fourth Special Session, adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018). In paragraph 24 of the decision, the Conference decided that “the Director-General shall provide a copy of this decision and a report on its initial implementation to all States Parties and to the United Nations Secretary-General within 30 days of this decision and thereafter provide a report on progress to each regular session of the Council”, in reference to the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”).
2. In furtherance of paragraph 7 of the decision, the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) has continued its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify all gaps, discrepancies, and inconsistencies noted in its initial declaration and subsequent submissions.
3. The last round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority took place in Damascus in February 2021. As reported previously, since April 2021 all efforts to organise the next round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority have remained unsuccessful, inter alia, because of the Syrian Arab Republic’s refusal to issue a visa to the DAT’s lead technical expert, which is not in line with its obligations, including under paragraph 7 of Article VII of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”), paragraph 7 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), and corresponding Council decisions.
4. On 20 May 2022, the Secretariat proposed addressing declaration-related issues through exchange of correspondence, even if such exchanges demonstrably bring fewer outcomes as compared to the DAT’s deployments to the Syrian Arab Republic. This had already been the practice between June 2016 and April 2019 (see the report by the Director-General to the Eighty-Second Session of the Council, EC-82/HP/DG.2*, dated 30 June 2016). In its response dated 31 May 2022, the Syrian Arab Republic agreed to the Secretariat’s proposal.
5. Through its note verbale dated 14 September 2022, the Secretariat provided the Syrian Arab Republic with a list of pending declarations and other documents requested by the DAT since 2019 that could assist in resolving the current 20 outstanding issues. As at the date of this report, the Secretariat still had not received any such pending declarations or other documents from the Syrian Arab Republic.



6. Through a note verbale dated 8 December 2022, the Secretariat proposed to deploy a reduced team comprised of several members of the DAT to conduct limited in-country activities (LICA). This deployment took place from 17 to 22 January 2023 and the outcomes were reported to States Parties in March 2023.
7. During the 102nd Session of the Council, the Syrian Arab Republic expressed its desire to reconvene rounds of consultations between the Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic.
8. Accordingly, through a note verbale dated 14 March 2023, the Secretariat proposed to the Syrian Arab Republic to deploy the DAT to Damascus to conduct the twenty-fifth round of consultations from 3 to 13 April 2023.
9. In its response dated 24 March 2023, the Syrian Arab Republic agreed to the twenty-fifth round of consultations on the dates proposed by the Secretariat, but again conditioned this on the exclusion of the DAT's lead technical expert. Taking into account this limitation, on 28 March 2023 the Secretariat informed the Syrian Arab Republic of its intention to deploy a reduced team composed of several DAT members to conduct another round of LICA.
10. Upon the Syrian Arab Republic's confirmation of the requested LICA deployment, dated 3 April 2023, the reduced team deployed to Damascus from 12 to 19 April 2023 and conducted interviews, site visits and collected samples from two formerly declared chemical weapons sites. During the April 2023 LICA, the Syrian Arab Republic did not provide any of the pending documents or declarations. The outcomes of this deployment will be reported to the Council.
11. The Director-General's "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team" (EC-102/HP/DG.1, dated 6 March 2023) on the recent activities of the DAT was noted by the Council at its 102nd Session. In that report, the Secretariat concluded that, at this stage, considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the Secretariat assesses that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention and, inter alia, Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 (dated 27 September 2013) and EC-94/DEC.2 (dated 9 July 2020), Conference decision C-25/DEC.9 (dated 21 April 2021), and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).
12. Consistent with paragraph 8 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, and following current practice, the Secretariat continues to update States Parties on the operations of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) through, inter alia, the monthly progress report entitled "Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme", and through reports detailing the FFM's activities and findings regarding specific incidents of alleged use of chemicals as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic.
13. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat established the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic by identifying and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those chemical weapons in those instances in which the FFM determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, and cases for which the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has not issued a report. The IIT is continuing its investigations and will issue further reports in due course.

14. The voluntary funding requirements for the IIT for 2022–2023, as specified in the Programme and Budget for 2022–2023 (C-26/DEC.11, dated 1 December 2021), have been set at EUR 1,212,192 in 2022 and EUR 1,213,775 in 2023. Contributions and pledges have been received from Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union.
15. In continuation of its regular briefings to States Parties on chemical weapons-related activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 8 March 2023 the Secretariat provided States Parties with a presentation to inform them of the status of the Secretariat’s mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The Secretariat will continue to keep States Parties informed of activities and progress with regard to the Syrian chemical weapons programme through existing reporting modalities and through briefings.
16. Pursuant to paragraph 12 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat has put in place appropriate measures to preserve and provide information to the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (IIIM), the body established by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 71/248 (2016). All transfers of information to the IIIM are being implemented in a manner consistent with the OPCW’s rules and policies on confidentiality.
17. In accordance with paragraph 18 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat is developing options for further assistance to States Parties to help prevent the chemical weapons threat posed by non-State actors, and to aid States Parties’ contingency planning in the event of a chemical weapons attack. Taking into consideration, inter alia, the decision of the Council entitled “Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors” (EC-86/DEC.9, dated 13 October 2017), the Secretariat is building on existing activities related to preparedness, prevention, and response.
18. Pursuant to paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Director-General, if requested by a State Party investigating possible chemical weapons use on its territory, can provide technical expertise to identify those who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons. Accordingly, the Secretariat is working to ensure that it has the necessary capabilities to respond to such State Party requests, including through assessing relevant forensic tools and capabilities that may be useful in fulfilling them.
19. As reported previously, the Secretariat has been implementing a series of capacity-building measures to expand the existing skills of relevant Secretariat staff. These measures include, inter alia:
 - (a) training to further build investigative capabilities in areas such as crime scene management, witness interviews, evidence collection, and forensics;
 - (b) the revision of job descriptions to recruit applicants with the skills and knowledge to match the evolving needs of the Secretariat;

- (c) through internal and external consultations, the assessment of potential additional investigative tools and capabilities that could be useful for the Secretariat if called to assist a State Party in identifying perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise, of chemical weapons use on its territory; and
 - (d) support for the procurement of software and equipment through the creation of a test and evaluation programme.
20. The Secretariat will continue to expand these activities in order to scale up knowledge and expertise within the Secretariat, and the Centre for Chemistry and Technology will underpin these efforts. The 2024–2025 Biennial Programme and Budget, currently under preparation, will incorporate the anticipated end in 2023 of destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles. In doing so, it will provide for the continued integration of expertise from the Secretariat’s non-routine and contingency missions, in line with the Convention and decisions adopted by the policy-making organs, into standard operations. In furtherance of paragraph 23 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat will continue to prioritise the realisation of the universality of the Convention, on the understanding that this goal is essential to achieving its object and purpose, to enhancing the security of States Parties, and to international peace and security. The Director-General continues to call upon all States Parties to support the Secretariat’s efforts in this regard.