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**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS FIFTY-FIFTH SESSION**

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished colleagues,

1. I welcome you all to the Fifty-Fifth Session of the Executive Council, the first in 2009. Needless to say, Madam Chairperson, it is again a great pleasure for me and my colleagues to serve under your very able leadership. The year has started very positively for the OPCW, with two new States Parties having joined the Chemical Weapons Convention. This brings the number of States Parties to this very successful Convention to 186. We had all greeted Lebanon at the Conference of the States Parties at its Thirteenth Session this past December. It gives me great pleasure today to extend a warm welcome to Iraq as the newest Member State of the OPCW.
2. The remarkable progress towards attaining universality of the Convention is an important indicator of its success. But we all know that there remain a number of other challenges. Those challenges call for unity of purpose and concerted action. I personally, and the Technical Secretariat, would like to reassure delegations that we remain firmly and actively committed to continuing to strive to preserve the constructive spirit of compromise and consensus that has made the OPCW multilateral experience so unique and exemplary. This goal, at the same time, must remain a shared one and each of us must convincingly and untiringly contribute towards achieving it.

Madam Chairperson,

3. Progress continues to be made in the implementation of the programmes of the Technical Secretariat. I will begin my report on the activities of the Secretariat with the subject of chemical demilitarisation and verification.

Chemical demilitarisation and verification

4. States Parties that have declared chemical weapons are moving steadily towards the goal of complete destruction of their stockpiles. In this respect, as at 31 January 2009, OPCW inspectors had verified the destruction of 29,741 metric tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons, or 42.76%, of the total stockpiles declared by six possessor States. The amount of Category 2 chemical weapons destroyed remained unchanged at 915 metric tonnes (or 51.8% of the total declared).



5. India, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America submitted their sixth and seventh reports on the progress made towards completing the destruction of their Category 1 chemical weapons in a timely manner. As on previous occasions, the Secretariat was able to reconcile the data collected during systematic verification of destruction with the information provided in these reports. In addition, China and Japan each submitted two reports on the progress made towards the destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China.
6. The United States has to date destroyed about 16,126 metric tonnes, or 58%, of its stockpile. Two destruction facilities in that State Party—Tooele and Pine Bluff—are currently destroying mustard in one-ton containers. In addition, an OPCW inspection team has been tasked with the monitoring of operations related to the completion of the agent campaign at Anniston and the post treatment of the hydrolysate resulting from the destruction of three leaking containers at Blue Grass. Umatilla, and soon thereafter Anniston, are preparing for the mustard campaign, scheduled to commence in April and June respectively; the Explosive Destruction System at Pine Bluff continues to be in a period of inactivity.
7. I wish to mention here, since I am referring to the United States, a letter addressed to me by President Obama in response to my own letter of congratulation to him last November. In that letter, President Obama indicates his readiness to “work together in a spirit of peace and friendship to build a more secure world ...”. This, indeed, gives us grounds for satisfaction for all of the OPCW and we continue to look forward to promoting and enhancing cooperation with the United States of America towards the success of the Convention.
8. On its part, the Russian Federation has accomplished destruction of about 11,960 metric tonnes, or 29.84%, of its Category 1 chemical weapons. The destruction of chemical weapons at Leonidovka commenced on 2 September 2008, with the insertion of reagent in air bombs filled with Vx. The draining of the resulting reaction mass is currently ongoing. For the time being, no chemical weapons are being reported as destroyed at this facility, as the thermal treatment and mutilation units are not processing. Two other facilities—Kambarka and Maradykovsky—are also operating currently in the Russian Federation. Kambarka is close to completing the destruction of the residual lewisite in bulk storage tanks. Maradykovsky, on the other hand, continues the thermal treatment of the reaction mass and of the previously mutilated (by nose-thread welding) empty munitions bodies. A final engineering review of the Shchuchye facility took place in November 2008, when this facility was in the final stage of preparations, equipment installation and testing for the commencement of chemical weapons destruction. Recently, the Russian Federation notified the Secretariat that Shchuchye would commence equipment testing with live agent beginning on 5 March 2009. Consequently, an inspection team will be deployed at the site to ensure systematic verification of destruction as per the current notification.
9. I also wish to mention that, having due regard to States Parties’ obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and in response to a request from the Russian Federation, the Secretariat has agreed with that State Party on an adjustment of the reported figure for the aggregate quantities of chemical weapons initially declared.

This adjustment, relating to thickeners forming part of viscous chemical agents, does not affect or limit the obligation of this State Party to destroy its entire chemical weapons stockpile. This State Party will be required to agree on the relevant practicalities with the Secretariat. The Secretariat will provide further information in the 2008 and 2009 Verification Implementation Reports and in other relevant documents.

10. I also look forward to my forthcoming visit to the Russian Federation, in the second week of March, where I will have the privilege to call on H.E. Mr Sergey V. Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and on other senior officials and Members of Parliament.
11. India has progressed to destroy a quantity of Category 1 chemical weapons corresponding to 98.72% of the total amount of such declared weapons. Following the completion of destruction of the unrecoverable heel in bulk storage tanks, the destruction facility in this State Party commenced the destruction of the remaining mustard-filled chemical munitions in January. To increase capacity, a second incineration plant was built at the facility, which is planned to complete the destruction of its entire chemical weapons stockpile by 29 April 2009. We very much look forward to India completing the destruction of its declared stockpile of chemical weapons.
12. The Secretariat conducted a final engineering review of the Ruwagha Chemicals Reloading System in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya between 7 and 14 January 2009. The team of the Secretariat noted that the site was not prepared to start reloading operations as originally scheduled for 15 January 2009, due to the absence or incomplete installation of required process and monitoring equipment. During the visit, as well as in their seventh report on the progress made towards completing the destruction of their Category 1 chemical weapons, the Libyan authorities emphasised that the final assembly and commissioning of the facility will not take place earlier than 15 March 2009, when a further review would be required prior to the actual start of reloading operations.
13. China and Japan, on their part, have just completed the first trial excavation at Haerbaling. The results of this and other, similar trials are expected to provide more information on the condition of buried abandoned chemical weapons there, which will be important for eventual recovery efforts. Both China and Japan have begun discussions with the Technical Secretariat regarding a draft facility agreement and detailed plan for verification. The second series of meetings on this subject is scheduled for the end of this month here in The Hague. While, to date, there has been no destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China, and construction of destruction facilities has not begun yet, we deeply appreciate these States Parties' efforts and look forward to destruction beginning at the earliest opportunity. The Technical Secretariat fully supports them in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.
14. A final point about destruction activities relates to the Dzerzhinsk lewisite chemical weapons production facility (CWPF), in the Russian Federation. Once all conditions for certification of the destruction of this facility had been met, the Secretariat issued in January 2009 a certificate of destruction for that production facility.

Inspectorate

15. Moving on to the Inspectorate, I would like to mention that we recently welcomed the arrival of our newest group of inspectors, Group I. This group comprises 16 inspectors of 15 different nationalities. They are currently undergoing a training programme that includes four weeks of general training, three weeks of specialised training, three weeks of safety training, one week of investigations of alleged use and challenge-inspection training, and a two-week mock inspection module—in addition to the on-the-job training that they will receive on actual missions. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to the governments of Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America for providing valuable assistance in the training of these new inspectors.
16. Even as we are busy training this latest group of inspectors, we are already in the midst of the selection process for the next group of inspectors, namely Group J. The selection process for this group will be finalised shortly, and is expected to bring in another 14 new inspectors. We anticipate that this group will join the Organisation by the end of April 2009.

Industry inspections

17. Allow me to turn now to Article VI inspections. Sixty-seven inspections have been completed since the Fifty-Fourth Session of the Council, which include: two at Schedule 1 facilities; 10 at Schedule 2 plant sites, of which two were with sampling and analysis; eight at Schedule 3 plant sites; and 47 at other chemical production facilities.
18. I also wish to refer to the two papers on enhancing information in OCPF declarations prepared and submitted by the Secretariat to the Council last year. These papers were submitted just before the Fifty-Third Session of the Council, and were also presented to States Parties on 8 July. This topic is now on the agenda for this Council session, and I look forward to Member States' further consideration of these papers—both in the Council, and of course in the Industry Cluster consultations, which began last November 14 and are continuing this year.
19. I would also like to mention the Technical Secretariat's intention to hold a seminar, for which we will seek voluntary funding, on OCPF-related matters in the margins of the meeting of National Authorities planned for November of this year. We will keep you informed on this matter as planning is proceeding apace, and we hope to have a final format for that very shortly.
20. A report on the performance of the modified methodology for selecting other chemical production facilities for inspection was issued to States Parties prior to this Council session (EC-55/DG.8, dated 2 February 2009). The results of applying this modified methodology in 2008 were consistent with what was projected when I announced the modified selection methodology in 2007 (S/641/2007, dated 25 May 2007 and Corr.1, dated 4 June 2007).

21. Consequently, the main findings are consistent with what I also have reported at the Fifty-Fourth Session of the Council, namely that that use of the modified methodology has resulted in:
- a) the selection of more plant sites from the States Parties which had declared a relatively large number of inspectable OCPF plant sites; and
 - b) the selection of more relevant OCPF plant sites, through the use of the A14 scores.
22. I also wish to recall that the modified methodology remains an interim measure pending agreement among States Parties on a definitive site-selection methodology. I urge States Parties to address this last remaining issue concerning site selection in earnest.

The Verification Information System and electronic declarations

23. The Verification Information System and electronic declarations is also an important matter I would like to refer to now. Computerisation of verification-related activities is progressing steadily. During 2008, the software modules for inspection planning of OCPF and Schedule 3 facilities became operational. During 2009, the system will be expanded to handle data on the verification of chemical weapons and their destruction.
24. There has been a great interest among States Parties in the new software tool, the electronic declaration software for National Authorities (EDNA) that facilitates the submission of declarations in electronic format. Seventy-six representatives from 54 States Parties were trained on its use during the Thirteenth Session of the Conference of the State Parties and the National Authority Days, also in December 2008, were used for the same purpose. The Secretariat is committed to the further development of this tool, which will significantly reduce the burden of submitting and processing declarations, both for States Parties and within the Secretariat.
25. The Secretariat has also improved its delivery of information to States Parties by providing in electronic form the declarations data requested by States Parties in order to be assured of the continued compliance with the Convention by other States Parties (that is, redacted declarations). This information was provided to the 17 States Parties that requested it.

Timely submission of declarations

26. In response to decision EC-51/DEC.1 (dated 27 November 2007), which refers to the timely submission by States Parties of declarations under Article VI of the Convention, a status report on the timely submission of declarations for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2008 has been made available to the Council (EC-55/DG.12, dated 5 February 2009). I wish to draw your attention to the marked improvement in this area during the latter part of 2008. In that period, more than 80% of the States Parties that did so submitted their annual declarations of anticipated activities for 2009 on time, and all those that were unable to meet the deadline indicated the difficulties that were encountered in meeting the deadline.

By comparison, in the first half of 2008, less than half (or 46%) of the States Parties submitted their annual declarations of past activities for 2007 on time and less than a quarter (or 24%) of those that failed to meet the deadline indicated the difficulties that they encountered.

27. In addition, since November 2007, after decision EC-51/DEC.1 was adopted, six States Parties (one in 2007, and five in 2008) have submitted their initial declarations or completed their initial declarations under Article VI. Fifteen States Parties have yet to submit or complete their initial declarations under Article VI and I encourage them to do so at the earliest opportunity. The Secretariat, for its part, stands ready to provide advice and assistance whenever needed.

International Cooperation and Assistance

Assistance and Protection

28. During the intersessional period, an advanced and a basic course for the Secretariat's Assistance Coordination and Assessment Team (ACAT) were held from 27 to 30 October 2008 and from 11 to 13 February 2009, respectively, with the financial support of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
29. The United Kingdom also financed a course for the regional emergency-response team, which was held in Trinidad and Tobago from 13 to 17 October. An international course on medical aspects of defence against chemical weapons, jointly organised with the National Authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was held from 1 to 5 November in Tehran. A biennial protection course for Spanish-speaking countries was held jointly with the Government of Spain from 10 to 19 November in Madrid.
30. With financial support from the Czech Government, a Swiss laboratory course in Spiez, Switzerland, was held from 10 to 14 November for States in the East African subregion. A new project for States Parties in West Africa was launched with the support of Switzerland. A planning meeting was held in Dakar, Senegal, from 27 to 28 November. A national emergency-response training course was held in Algeria from 24 to 28 November for experts from different agencies involved in the emergency response. The host country provided financial and logistical support.
31. Together with the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC), the Secretariat organised a seminar for the States Parties of South Eastern Europe, devoted to declarations under the Convention. This seminar is under way this very week in Rakitje, Croatia.
32. Finally, three technical visits to assess assistance offers under paragraph 7 of Article X were carried out to Spain, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine in November and December 2008. The last two visits were financially supported by the European Union Joint Action 2007.

Madam Chairperson,

International cooperation

33. During the reporting period, various activities have also been carried out in the area of international cooperation. You will no doubt recall the very successful one-day event for National Authorities that was organised on 1 December 2008 at the OPCW headquarters, at the request of, and with financial support from, the European Union (EU). The aim of the European Union-sponsored day was to promote an interactive workshop to assist National Authorities with capacity-building in relation to the implementation of the Convention, and to enhance their dialogue with the industry. More than 190 participants from 87 States Parties were present in the various activities organised on the occasion, which included legal workshops, industry panels, and presentations delivered during the plenary.
34. A compilation of the presentations made at the European Union-sponsored day will be published soon and made available to Member States. Here I would like to mention that the EU has expressed its willingness to renew its generous support for the activities of the OPCW through a new Joint Action, which will build on the work done in the past years. Work in preparation for this Joint Action is already under way and is expected to be completed in the next few months. Once again, we are extremely grateful to the EU for its continued support and financial contributions. This support is evidence of the Union's own strong commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention and, hopefully, of its full confidence in our ability to deliver high-quality programmes.
35. Preparations are also ongoing for the 2009 Associate Programme, which will be held this year from 17 July to 25 September, for 28 participants. I would like to take this opportunity to invite Member States to continue supporting this highly successful programme by offering training opportunities in their chemical industries.
36. The courses on the development of analytical skills have been expanded. A major new feature is the launching of the Basic Analytical Chemistry Course, which will be held from 23 March to 4 April. This new initiative under the OPCW Africa Programme is jointly organised by the OPCW; by Protechnik Laboratories in Pretoria, South Africa; and by the Finnish Institute for the Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (VERIFIN). The course will be held at Protechnik Laboratories, and will train 12 African chemistry professionals (out of a total of over 40 applications received) who are involved in the analysis, synthesis, or quality control of chemicals related to the Convention.
37. Under the Conference-Support Programme two conferences, in Bangladesh and in Croatia, have been approved for support.

Implementation support

38. In the field of implementation support, during the reporting period the Technical Secretariat carried out eight implementation-support activities. These activities include a regional basic training course for National Authorities of Asian Countries

and a subregional customs course for States Parties in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) area, both of which were held in Doha, Qatar.

39. A subregional legal workshop for Central and West Africa was also held in the Gambia, and two bilateral technical-assistance visits were undertaken—one in Sierra Leone and the other in Laos.
40. Two regional meetings of National Authorities for Asia and Africa took place in Bangladesh and Uganda in October and November 2008, respectively, the latter under the aegis of the Africa Programme.
41. During the reporting period, the Technical Secretariat hosted the Tenth Annual Meeting of National Authorities, which was held here at OPCW headquarters from 28 to 30 November 2008. The focus of that meeting was the role of industry in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, including recent developments relating to Article VI industry declarations and verification. The meeting was attended by more than 190 participants from 92 States Parties and accommodated over 100 consultations between the Secretariat and 91 individual National Authorities, thereby laying the basis for closer cooperation and consultation in the future.
42. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Qatar, Japan, and the Netherlands for the generous financial contributions that they provided, and which made some of these activities possible.

Evaluation of International Cooperation and Assistance programmes

43. Activities related to further development of the International Cooperation and Assistance Division's (the ICA's) evaluation and assessment capabilities in the area of programme management are continuing. With the financial support of the Dutch Government, a training course for selected staff members across the Secretariat was organised in November 2008. Once again, I thank the Netherlands for its valuable assistance.
44. Further training for ICA staff members is planned for next month. In addition, the ICA is in the process of reviewing its evaluation tools and past practices in an effort to come up with proposals to strengthen and improve the evaluation process.

Implementation of Article VII

45. Concerning the implementation of Article VII, the Secretariat has, upon request, continued to provide assistance to States Parties in this area.
46. With the notification of the establishment of the Iraqi National Authority, and I congratulate Iraq for having done that on the very first day of entry into force of the Convention for it, the number of States Parties with a National Authority has increased to 178. One additional State Party, Azerbaijan, has informed the Secretariat that it has legislation in place covering all key areas. This brings the number of States Parties that have fulfilled this requirement to 83. A further 43 States Parties have informed the OPCW that they have laws in place that cover some key areas.

Universality and external relations

47. As I mentioned earlier, Lebanon and Iraq joined the Convention, which entered into force for these two countries on, respectively, 20 December 2008 and 12 February 2009. Their accession represents an important advance in promoting universality as a factor for advancing peace and security in the region. Accession by these two countries brings us much closer to achieving a full global ban on chemical weapons. For its part, the Technical Secretariat stands ready to work with both countries in their efforts towards effectively implementing the Convention. In particular, we are ready to receive and act upon the declarations that Iraq will have to submit pursuant to the Convention within 30 days of entry into force and that will determine the steps to be taken both by this State Party and by the Technical Secretariat. I wish to underline here that the Secretariat is fully prepared to undertake any inspections that, in the light of Iraq's forthcoming initial declaration, might be required in that country. Naturally, when the time comes for such inspections, as is the case in all the missions that we carry out, all pertinent considerations will be duly taken into account, including, of course, the priority question of the safety of the OPCW personnel.
48. There have also been important developments in the Caribbean region. In December 2008, the Deputy Director-General, John Freeman, paid a high-level visit to the Bahamas, where he met both the Governor-General and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Together with him there was also a team of experts from the Technical Secretariat and they all met with different national stakeholders in the Bahamas. The Secretariat was reassured of the firm intention of this State to join the Convention at the earliest and to fully implement its provisions. At the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, two experts from the Secretariat are travelling to the Bahamas at the end of this month in order to participate in a second round of consultations of national stakeholders, and to discuss specific aspects related to declarations. These intensive preparations are indicative of the readiness of the Bahamas to join the Convention soon.
49. On its part, the Dominican Republic has also made significant progress towards ratifying the Convention. Ratification was endorsed by both Chambers of its Parliament, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is currently proceeding with the preparation of the instrument of ratification. I have addressed communications to the Secretary of State of the Dominican Republic, commending his country on these important steps and indicating that the Secretariat is ready to provide further assistance to them.
50. In the case of Myanmar, we continue to look forward to this country joining the Convention at the earliest. Of course, we remain ready and available to provide support in the process. In the case of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we have made no progress. However, we remain steadfast, as per the mandate from the Second Review Conference, which indicated that all States not Party should join at the earliest and without preconditions. Therefore we will continue our efforts to try and approach the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in order to present the case of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

51. The Secretariat is also continuing the preparations for the workshop on the universality of the Convention in the Middle East and the Mediterranean Basin, to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 16 and 17 April. I am in contact with the Ambassadors of Egypt and Israel in The Hague, and, through my office, with the embassy of the Syrian Arab Republic in Brussels. This represents a continuation of our dialogue with these countries. Efforts to ensure the success of the Istanbul workshop would benefit certainly from any support that our Member States may provide in encouraging Egypt, Israel, and the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in the event at a suitably high level. It is also my sincere hope that Member States will consider attending the workshop, which will be an important opportunity to discuss and support the promotion of the universality of the Convention in the Middle East, and we have already received indication from some Member States that they will do so. In this context, I wish to once again express our gratitude to Turkey and to H.E. Mr Selahattin Alpar, personally, for the hospitality and invaluable assistance extended to the Technical Secretariat towards making this important event a success.
52. The Secretariat also remains in contact with the embassies of Egypt and Israel, with a view to scheduling the goodwill technical missions to these countries to which they have both agreed. We now look forward to the early indication of proposed dates for these visits.

Madam Chairperson,

53. The recent dramatic Gaza crisis has underscored the crucial importance of achieving peace in the Middle East. We have always stressed that adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention by all countries in the Middle East could represent a significant contribution towards that objective. For that reason, I will continue vigorously to advocate the cause of universality in the Middle East region and to pursue it with the utmost conviction and commitment, not just for the sake of reaching the goal of ultimate universality as urged by the Second Review Conference, but, equally and with a sense of added urgency, as a tool to prevent and alleviate human suffering and to avoid the loss of innocent lives.
54. In the area of our cooperation with the United Nations, since the last regular session of the Executive Council, I have addressed the First Committee of the General Assembly on the “Current State of Affairs in the Field of Arms Control and Disarmament and the Role and Contribution of the Respective Organizations” as well as the sixty-third session of the General Assembly on aspects of the cooperation between the United Nations and the OPCW. Those visits to New York also provided an opportunity to meet representatives of States not Party.
55. In the context of promoting cooperation with other international organisations, in November 2008 I also travelled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to address the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) on the status of the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the work of the OPCW, and also to meet with the Chairperson of the AU Commission, H.E. Mr Jean Ping. I also met with the Deputy Chairperson of the Commission, as well as with the Chairperson of the African Peace and Security Council. All these high officials reassured me of the African Union’s strong support in the framework of promoting

the goals and the full and effective implementation of the Convention in Africa, as well as the achievement of its universality on the continent.

56. During the period under consideration, I also visited Bulgaria and Argentina. I met in both capitals with high-level officials, who reaffirmed the strong support of their respective countries for the Convention and for the OPCW. In November, I addressed a seminar on the “Present and Future Proliferation Risks and Threats: the Adequacy of the International Non-Proliferation Efforts to Address These Challenges”, an event organised by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in Berlin, Germany. In December, I also had an opportunity to address the Geneva Centre for Security Policy on the topic of “The Chemical Weapons Convention: A Case of Effective Multilateralism”.

Relationship with the stakeholders of the Convention

57. The Technical Secretariat has also maintained cooperation with key stakeholders of the Convention, such as industry and the scientific community. It has, in addition, initiated the development of a long-term strategy on how the OPCW should continue to develop its relationship with such stakeholders as part of its efforts in support of a more effective implementation of the Convention and very much in line with the Second Review Conference’s own report.

Madam Chairperson,

Host Country Committee

58. As I had announced at the Thirteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, thanks to the extensive work carried out by the Host Country Committee and with the important support on the side of the Netherlands by the Ambassador of the Netherlands for International Organisations, H.E. Mr Rob Zaagman, and of course the Permanent Representative to the OPCW, Ambassador Pieter de Savornin Lohman, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Technical Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands was concluded and signed on 1 December 2008.

The OPCW’s contribution to global anti-terrorism efforts

59. The Secretariat continues to provide support to the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism. The next meeting of the Group, at the end of March 2009, will feature presentations from two counter-terrorism experts from Saudi Arabia. This will represent continuity of an established practice of sharing regional experiences in the field of countering terrorism potentially involving weapons of mass destruction, more specifically, chemical weapons.
60. In the context of its support for global efforts aimed at ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the Secretariat provided support to the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) in its ongoing programme on “Strengthening International Cooperation to Combat Illicit Trafficking and Criminal Use of CBRN Substances and Weapons”. The Secretariat will also host, on 18 and 19 March 2009, a UNICRI two-day event on “Multilateral Approaches to

Non-Proliferation—the Chemical Dimension”, which will bring together experts from Member States and representatives of various international organisations.

61. The Secretariat has been invited to participate in the seminar entitled, “Effective Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention as a Contribution towards the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004)”, which the Clingendael Institute in The Hague, the Netherlands, plans to organise on 26 and 27 March 2009. I myself will be there. The seminar aims to promote the message that effective implementation of the Convention contributes directly towards fulfilling the obligations of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) in the area of chemical weapons.

Administrative and financial matters

Financial issues

62. Turning now to financial issues, I have submitted for the consideration of the Council a detailed report on the income-and-expenditure performance of the OPCW for the 2008 financial year.
63. In this regard, I would like to point out that 98.2% of assessed contributions were received during 2008, which is the same rate as for 2007. However good this rate is, I have to say that the 98.2% collection rate for 2008 was partly due to the application of EUR 6.6 million (or 9.7% of the collection rate) in cash surpluses from previous years. Referring to the timing of the collections, it is important to mention that it was only during the last two-and-a-half months of 2008 that more than 25% of the total assessed contributions were received, although they were due within 30 days of receipt of the assessment letters as per the Financial Regulations and Rules.
64. As for the provisional expenditure for 2008, this is at the level of EUR 70.9 million, of which EUR 6.12 million reflects obligations that have been carried forward to 2009.
65. The OPCW financial statements for 2008 and the financial statements for the Provident Fund for 2008 will shortly be completed. These statements will thereafter be audited by the External Auditor, and I expect to present them and the accompanying audit report to the Council at its Fifty-Seventh Session.

Proposed 2010 Programme and Budget

66. The Secretariat, I have to add, has now commenced preparations for the Draft Programme and Budget for 2010, which I plan as usual to present to you in June, that is, prior to the Fifty-Seventh Session of the Council.
67. Bearing in mind the delivery status of the 2008 approved Programme and Budget, the 2008 provisional financial results reflect a financial surplus of EUR 1.9 million. The reasons for such a surplus are complex but, in my judgement, the 2008 budget level seems appropriate in order to provide for the core requirements of the OPCW, including those for 2010.

68. I will therefore once again, as we prepare the budget for next year, aim to present a Draft Programme and Budget with zero growth, which will allow for full programme delivery in the context of strict financial discipline. If we succeed in our endeavour, 2010 will be the fifth consecutive year with a zero-growth budget.
69. With the objective of further enhancing the transparency, accountability, and better planning of the OPCW Programme and Budget, I am glad to inform you that the budget structure for 2010 will reflect the re-instatement of subprogrammes. I have also decided to revise the list of funding objects in order to allow the Organisation to better account for its outputs and activities. Furthermore, the list of objects of expenditure has been revised and allows for better planning and reporting. I would like to note that these improvements reflect a further step towards the final achievement of results-based budgeting (RBB).
70. I am also pleased to inform you that, as has been indicated previously, I have decided to make the programme-performance report for 2008 available to Member States; the report, which is currently being prepared, is an important reflection of the RBB process.
71. As I have stated on numerous occasions, the Secretariat's ability to carry out the annual Programme and Budget depends upon the willingness of the Member States—all of them—to pay their dues on time and in full. This is a matter that has a substantial impact on our ability to effectively implement all of the Secretariat's programmes as approved by Member States. Late payments (or no payments) severely complicate the Technical Secretariat's planning assumptions. Part of the reason for surplus funds, typically at the end of the year, is that major assessed contributions are usually paid late in the year, leading to a situation where the Secretariat cannot obligate for or conduct programmes in a timely and efficient manner. In this regard, I wish to express thanks to those Member States that have already provided their assessed contributions for 2009.

Personnel matters

72. Moving on to personnel matters, I would like to mention that in the last quarter of 2008, the Secretariat continued to improve its services by streamlining procedures and automating various systems, thereby shortening recruitment time-lines. The Recruitment Manual is expected to be completed in March 2009. Six administrative directives have already been finalised. The automation of the current Performance Management and Appraisal System (PMAS) has also been initiated.
73. The OPCW received 814 applications and filled 11 posts during the last quarter of 2008. I urge the Member States to continue to disseminate vacancies on as wide a basis as possible, and to advise qualified candidates to forward their applications in a timely fashion within the vacancy-notice period. In relation to tenure, as requested by all of you last time and as volunteered by myself, I will present a report later in the year for your consideration.

Scientific Advisory Board

74. To conclude, Madam Chairperson, let me refer to the work of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). You have received the report of the Twelfth Session of the SAB and the related Note providing my comments and my recommendations to the Council. At its next Session, the SAB will continue to address the questions of advances in science and technology, and in particular, to study the toxicology of nanomaterials. The SAB will also provide advice on the review of the operational requirements and technical specifications for inspection equipment currently being undertaken by the Secretariat. Five members of the SAB will finish their term of office in May, and another one in October 2009. I intend to issue a call for nominations in the coming weeks for these six vacancies.

Meeting of governmental experts to consider the report of the Scientific Advisory Board to the Second Review Conference

Madam Chairperson,

75. I would also like to refer to the meeting of governmental experts that has been held at the OPCW headquarters from 11 to 13 February, under your able direction and with the contribution of Mr Ralf Trapp as moderator. The meeting was organised pursuant to a request by the Second Review Conference that the Council consider the report by the Scientific Advisory Board, which I had submitted to the Conference in February 2008 (RC-2/DG.1, dated 28 February 2008 and Corr.1, dated 5 March 2008). Your report on the findings will be circulated by the Technical Secretariat as it becomes available. Concerning this very issue, the Secretariat is of course guided by the practice established following the First Review Conference, when a similar meeting took place.

The SAB Trust Fund

76. As for the Board's Trust Fund, I would like to express my appreciation to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for its generous contribution to the fund. I hope that more Member States will provide voluntary contributions, thus allowing me to convene an additional meeting of the SAB in November 2009, as well as to continue the work of the sampling-and-analysis temporary working group.

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished colleagues,

77. This concludes my report. I wish the Council a successful Session.