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

Madam Chairperson,
Distinguished colleagues,

1. I welcome you all to the Fifty-Sixth Session of the Executive Council. It is, once again, a very positive development in the area of universality that I wish to take up at this stage. On 27 March, the Dominican Republic ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention and, on 26 April, will become its 187th State Party. I commend the Dominican Republic for this important decision. It serves the interest of peace and security at both the regional and international level. It also takes us one step closer to the goal of attaining universality of the Convention. In fact, universal adherence in the GRULAC region seems just around the corner, with the Bahamas expected to follow suit shortly, and I will refer to that later in my statement.

Madam Chairperson,

2. The Council has a full agenda, and I am confident that under your able guidance and with the usual cooperation of its Members, this Session will also be successful. On my part, I will now present the Council with an update on progress made in the various programme areas during the intersessional period, beginning, as is customary, with chemical demilitarisation and verification.

Chemical demilitarisation and verification

3. A key result achieved in this area during the last three months is, of course, the fulfilment by India of its obligations to completely destroy its declared chemical weapons stockpile. On 26 March 2009, India notified the Technical Secretariat accordingly. India is thus the third State Party, after Albania and A State Party, to have met its demilitarisation obligations. I wish to sincerely, warmly, and emphatically congratulate India on this laudable achievement, which is the result of a consistent and unwavering commitment shown by India since entry into force of the Convention. This attainment further strengthens the Convention as an effective instrument for promoting the objectives of peace and security.
4. Another very important development during this reporting period relates to the fact that the number of States Parties that have declared the possession of chemical weapons or of former chemical weapons production capabilities has increased by one,



with Iraq's accession to the Convention on 12 February 2009, and its subsequent submission of its initial declaration.

5. Iraq submitted its initial declaration on 12 March 2009, and has declared two bunkers with filled and unfilled chemical weapons munitions, some precursors, as well as five former chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs). The Secretariat is now analysing this declaration and continuing its work with Iraqi representatives on certain issues related to it. In this context, I also wish to mention and thank Iraq for having presented yesterday to the Technical Secretariat additional information on the general plans for destruction of its chemical weapons and former production facilities. All in all, I commend Iraq for its committed approach to all these important matters.
6. Furthermore, I reiterate my warm welcome to Iraq to the OPCW family and my conviction that Iraq is making a significant contribution to the ultimate success of our Convention and to the overall cause of disarmament and non-proliferation. By acceding to the Convention, Iraq has solemnly reconfirmed its determination to leave forever behind, once and for all, programmes related to weapons of mass destruction. Those programmes proved costly to the Iraqi people, having been used in the Iran-Iraq war and having served both as a source of international conflict and as the means for perpetrating internal atrocities such as the one committed by Saddam Hussein's regime in Halabja in 1988.
7. Undoubtedly, history, and the unique complexities that we can envision for the implementation of the provisions of Articles IV and V of the Convention, make the Iraqi accession to the Convention a special case, and one that might pose unique implementation challenges. Here, I wish to reiterate the full readiness of the Technical Secretariat to provide all possible assistance to Iraq as it undertakes the important task of fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. Indeed, for some time now, the Technical Secretariat has worked hard to ensure its coordinated preparedness in this respect.
8. At the same time, I appeal to those Member States in a position to do so, to be equally prepared to assist Iraq in implementing the different provisions of the Convention. I trust that the OPCW will rise to the occasion, as we identify the different areas, not just in Articles IV and V, but also in Articles VII, X, and XI, where support might be appropriate, to which end the Technical Secretariat will in due course conduct pertinent consultations with Member States.

Destruction activities

Madam Chairperson,

9. I now turn to the destruction activities. Two destruction facilities—Kambarka, in the Russian Federation, and Newport, in the United States of America—have completed destruction operations while two others—at Shchuchye in the Russian Federation and Ruwagha in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya—have commenced such activities.
10. As at 31 March 2009, the aggregate amount of Category 1 chemical weapons destroyed by all possessor States together was approximately 30,199 metric tonnes, or approximately 43.42%, of the declared quantity of this category of chemical

weapons. The amount of Category 2 chemical weapons destroyed to date is 915 metric tonnes, or 51.84% of the total amount declared, while all Category 3 chemical weapons declared have been already destroyed.

11. As I mentioned earlier, India has completed destruction operations. The OPCW inspectors finalised all necessary on-site activities to allow termination of systematic verification of destruction, and ceased their physical presence at the facility as of the end of March 2009. In addition, our inspectors confirmed the completion of destruction of the former chemical weapons production facility, which had been temporarily converted for chemical weapons destruction purposes.
12. The Technical Secretariat conducted a second engineering review of the Ruwagha Chemicals Reloading System in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya between 23 and 27 March 2009, just prior to the commissioning of the facility. Reloading operations commenced on 31 March 2009. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya completed the reloading of mustard on 20 April 2009.
13. As at 31 March 2009, the Russian Federation had destroyed 12,065 metric tonnes of its Category 1 chemical weapons, or 30.1%, of the aggregate amount declared. The Shchuchye facility began on 5 March 2009 the destruction of rocket warheads filled with sarin (GB) and is at present increasing the pace of destruction, in order to reach an optimum destruction rate, through the use of both processing lines in building 1A. An inspection team was deployed at the site to ensure systematic verification of destruction at this facility. Following the destruction of all declared lewisite in bulk storage tanks at Kambarka, the OPCW inspectors completed the necessary inspection activities, as I referred to before, to allow the conclusion of on-site systematic verification of destruction and termination of inspectors' physical presence at this facility. The Maradykovsky facility continues the thermal treatment of the reaction mass and of the previously mutilated (by nose-thread welding) empty munitions bodies, which have already been reported as destroyed, while at Leonidovka the draining of reaction mass is ongoing.
14. I would like to mention that no chemical weapons have so far been reported as destroyed at Leonidovka, although much activity has already taken place there. This is in accordance with the provisions of the approved plan for verification and facility agreement for this facility. As per that agreement, chemical weapons are reported as destroyed once the residual content of the chemical agent in the drained reaction mass is confirmed to be less than 0.1% by weight and the corresponding drained munition bodies have been thermally treated. The Russian Federation has recently notified the Secretariat that it plans to commence operations involving the metal parts furnace around 25 April 2009; incineration of the reaction mass has already started on 16 April.
15. Since I mentioned the Russian Federation, may I also recall that since the last session I have paid an official visit to this Member State, where I met His Excellency Mr Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Foreign Minister, and other high authorities in the Russian Presidency, as well as in the Parliament, and in the Foreign Ministry. The visit demonstrated once again the steadfast commitment of Russia to the full and effective implementation of the Convention, including its solemn obligation to complete destruction of its declared stockpile by the set deadline. Accordingly, I also

conveyed to the Russian authorities our gratitude for this commitment, as well as my conviction that the continued financial support of the international community for the Russian destruction programme will benefit not just the programme itself, but also peace and security overall.

16. As at 31 March, the United States has destroyed about 16,466 metric tonnes of Category 1 chemical weapons, or 59.3% of its declared stockpile. Moreover, I have to say that destruction at the incineration facilities continues at a fast pace. By completing the operations relating to the neutralisation of GB in three leaking one-ton containers at Blue Grass, Kentucky, and the subsequent disposal of the resulting neutralent at Veolia, the Newport Chemical Agent Disposal Facility accomplished the destruction of all the chemical-warfare agents designated for destruction at this facility. Consequently, the Secretariat ceased its physical presence at all three locations declared as part of the facility—Newport, Indiana; the Blue Grass Chemical Agent Transfer System, at Blue Grass, Kentucky; and the Veolia Treatment, Storage, and Disposal Facility located at Port Arthur, in Texas. Two chemical weapons destruction facilities in this State Party—at Tooele and Pine Bluff—are currently destroying mustard, while two others—at Umatilla and Anniston—are preparing for the destruction of mustard, which is planned to commence in April and July respectively.
17. I am also very pleased to echo what you just mentioned, Madam Chairperson, in the sense that the United States has offered to host, in June 2009, a third visit by the Chairperson and members of the Council to two of its chemical weapons destruction facilities. That will be the second one to the United States. These facilities are Umatilla and Pueblo, and preparations are well under way.
18. Finally on the subject of destruction activities, the Technical Secretariat continues to work with Japan and China on a trilateral basis, with the next round of discussions scheduled to take place in June. The current work on the draft detailed plan for verification and facility arrangement for mobile destruction facilities is progressing. It is our hope to have these documents near completion by the end of this year, in time for the anticipated beginning of destruction operations scheduled for the second half of 2010.

Industry inspections

19. Of course, our Convention is both a disarmament and a non-proliferation instrument, a particular feature being verification of the global chemical industry. The verification of industry is in fact the backbone of this non-proliferation objective. That is why I have stressed the need for a continual review of both the intensity and the focus of our industry verification regime, always, of course, within the strict context of the Convention.
20. In the area of Article VI inspections, 40 such inspections have been completed since the Fifty-Fifth Session of the Council. This number includes three inspections at Schedule 1 facilities, five at Schedule 2 plant sites—of which one was with sampling and analysis—seven at Schedule 3 plant sites, and 25 at other chemical production facilities, or OCPFs.

21. As regards the performance of the modified OCPF site-selection methodology in 2008, a progress report was circulated to the States Parties prior to the last session of the Council, informal consultations were held on 1 April in the context of the Industry Cluster, as was recalled by His Excellency the Ambassador of Algeria, Vice Chairperson and head of this Cluster. I hope that these consultations have contributed to further enhancing the common understanding on this very important topic. As mentioned during the consultations, the results so far have confirmed our overall estimate of the impact of the modified site-selection methodology. The Secretariat will continue to review the performance of the OCPF site-selection methodology, and will communicate further with States Parties on relevant aspects, and report again in early 2010. In the meantime, we reiterate the necessity that these interim measures be complemented and finally formalised through the overall decision which Member States will have to take in accordance with paragraph 11 of Part IX of the Verification Annex to the Convention. It is with Member States that ultimately the responsibility of this urgent matter lies.
22. As I mentioned in my statement at the last Session of the Council, the Secretariat has commenced preparations for a seminar on OCPF-related matters in the margins of the annual meeting of National Authorities to be held prior to the Fourteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. We will be developing a concept and programme for this event, which we intend to share with Member States shortly after this Council Session.
23. I would note again that the seminar is to be funded through voluntary contributions. I would, therefore, like to encourage States Parties to consider making resources available for this important event, which might lead to a better understanding of OCPF-related matters.

Release of the revised version of the Handbook on Chemicals and Declarations Handbook in all official languages

24. I am pleased to announce the release of a revised version of the Handbook on Chemicals. This Handbook is intended to aid States Parties in identifying scheduled chemicals and provides information on key chemical identifiers such as Chemical Abstract Registry (CAS) numbers, IUPAC and CAS chemical names, synonyms, and World Customs Organisation Harmonized System Codes. The 2009 revision contains information on over 1,300 scheduled chemicals and riot control agents that have been declared to the Secretariat. In addition, I would like to inform the Council that the updated Declarations Handbook, which was released in English in 2008, is now available in all official languages of the Organisation.

Update on declarations

25. The deadline for the annual declaration of past activities for 2008 has now passed. As at 1 April, 57 declarations had been received. This shows a significant improvement compared with last year, when the corresponding figure was only 38. A full report on the timely submission of declarations is in preparation and will be presented to the Council at its Fifty-Seventh Session.

26. Of the declarations received, 18 were either in part or exclusively in electronic form. Ten States Parties used the Secretariat's electronic declaration tool, EDNA. With a view to enabling States Parties to provide us with feedback, and to exchange experiences of submitting declarations electronically, the Secretariat will hold a "user-group forum" on 27 May, immediately following the Industry Cluster meeting. States Parties are invited—encouraged—to use this forum to share their experiences, with a view to further improving declaration processes.

Challenge inspections

27. The last challenge inspection field exercise was held in 2007. In order to ensure that we retain the capability to conduct a challenge inspection, the Secretariat intends to hold a new field exercise in 2010 or, at the latest, early 2011. The Secretariat aims to approach States Parties before the summer regarding the hosting of this exercise. I hope to be able to report in detail at the autumn session of the Council.
28. The Secretariat also continues, of course, as per the Convention, to ensure its ability to conduct a challenge inspection through continued training activities for inspectors, the establishment and maintenance of internal procedures (such as standard operating procedures and work instructions), internal exercises, and participating in exercises organised by Member States.

Information security

29. I am also pleased to report that the information security audit team, SAT-V, conducted its second audit during the week of 23 to 27 March 2009. SAT-V auditors from France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, and the United States reviewed the effectiveness of the security controls in place for the electronic processing of confidential information within the Technical Secretariat.
30. The SAT-V auditors highlighted several observations and minor non-conformities with ISO standards, which I have accepted and requested the appropriate Secretariat units to actively address. The audit team found no major non-conformities and generally found adherence to accepted security practices and controls which are aimed at limiting risks to the systems used by the Secretariat in the processing of confidential information pertaining to Member States. A summary of the SAT-V auditors' findings is available as an official-series document (EC-57.DG.1, dated 3 April 2009).
31. I would like to take this opportunity to once again express my deep gratitude to the SAT-V team and to those States Parties that made their auditors available for this latest, very successful audit.

International cooperation and assistance

32. With respect to international cooperation and assistance, the Technical Secretariat continued to organise a number of important programmes in all areas.

International cooperation

33. In particular, the first basic analytical chemistry course in Africa successfully concluded on 3 April at Protechnik Laboratories, in Pretoria, South Africa. Twelve African chemistry professionals from 11 African countries benefited from the course, which was jointly organised by the OPCW, the South African National Authority, Protechnik Laboratories in South Africa, and the Finnish Institute for the Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (VERIFIN).
34. This course is of particular significance to the OPCW, as it is the first activity covered by the Africa Programme to be undertaken for assistance to nationals from African States at an African institution. I wish to sincerely thank the Government of South Africa, and also Protechnik Laboratories for hosting the course and the South African Council for the Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction for their support to this event. I have to say they not only supported the event, they continue to render strong help to the Technical Secretariat. I would also like to thank VERIFIN and the Government of Finland for their cooperation in this important endeavour.
35. Furthermore, I would also like to underline that the International Cooperation and Assistance Division (ICA) will continue to organise activities under the Africa Programme in order to offer tailor-made and focused support to States Parties in Africa, with a view to enabling them to enhance their national capacities, as well as to effectively implement the provisions of the Convention.
36. Preparations for the Associate Programme 2009 are now fully under way. I wish to thank a number of chemical companies that have made offers of placement and training, with the support of our Member States. At the same time, I would like to encourage other Member States from developed countries to offer more training opportunities in their industry sectors for the participants of this flagship programme.
37. Preparations are similarly ongoing for the analytical skills development course, which this year will be held again in Helsinki, Finland, organised by VERIFIN, from 29 May to 12 June.
38. Under the Conference Support Programme, eight conferences—in Austria, Brazil, China, Croatia, India, Slovenia, South Africa, and Swaziland—were approved for support during the intersessional period. At the same time, the Technical Secretariat sponsored five candidates from Africa under the Laboratory Assistance Programme to attend a course on “The Running and Interpretation of GC-MS Spectra” at the Department of Chemistry, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Nairobi, Kenya, from 2 to 6 March 2009. The course was organised by the Pan Africa Chemistry Network, Kenya, with the support of the Royal Society of Chemistry, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

39. Four interns from Burkina Faso, Ecuador, Madagascar, and Nigeria have been supported under the Internship Support Programme, while the Fifteenth Review Committee for Research Projects considered 25 of the 45 research projects submitted through the International Foundation for Science (IFS), Sweden. In this context, I would like to express my gratitude to the IFS and its supporting institutions for their continued and valuable cooperation with this Organisation. Indeed, as you can see, a number of institutes have continued to render very important support to the OPCW, and I think we all—Member States and ourselves—are deeply grateful to them.
40. Finally, I wish to mention that a workshop on the Chemical Weapons Convention and Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and their contribution to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, jointly organised by the Government of Croatia and the OPCW, was held in Cavtat, Croatia, on 4 and 5 April.

Assistance and protection

41. In the area of assistance and protection against chemical weapons, a Technical Secretariat team conducted a successful initial visit to Tunisia from 26 to 27 February for the preparation of the Assistex III exercise on delivery of assistance, which is scheduled to be held in Tunisia in 2010. The invitation for this important event will be issued in the near future. In this connection, I wish of course to express again our gratitude to the Government of Tunisia for their willingness to host this exercise and for the support extended to the Technical Secretariat.
42. The Secretariat and the Republic of Singapore jointly organised the first regional training course on emergency response to chemical incidents for the States Parties from Asia, which was held in Singapore from 2 to 6 March 2009.
43. Moreover, at the request of the National Authority of Viet Nam, the Secretariat dispatched a team for an initial technical assessment visit to start a project for national capacity building against chemical weapons. The visit was conducted in Hanoi, Viet Nam, from 3 to 5 March.
44. The first Swiss advanced training course with a new training curriculum, related to the offer made by Switzerland under Article X, was conducted at the NBC Training Centre in Spiez, Switzerland, from 16 to 20 March.
45. Also during the reporting period, in order to assess offers of assistance from States Parties under paragraph 7 of Article X of the Convention, the Secretariat carried out technical visits to France and Austria on 23 and 24 March, and on 1 and 2 April, respectively.
46. The Technical Secretariat, in cooperation with the National Authority of Peru, also conducted a regional workshop on assistance and protection against chemical weapons for the States Parties in the Latin American and Caribbean region, which was held in Lima, Peru, last week. I wish to express once again my warm thanks to all these institutions again, and to all the countries that have provided support to the assistance and protection activities.

Implementation support

47. During the reporting period, various activities have also been carried out in the field of implementation support. A subregional training course for customs authorities in East and Southern Africa on the technical aspects of the transfers regime of the Convention was held under the Africa Programme and with the financial support from the Netherlands and Norway, in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, at the beginning of March.
48. A national training course for customs officials from the Revenue Authority of Malawi, also on the technical aspects of the transfers regime of the Convention took place in Blantyre, Malawi, in the same period, and the Technical Secretariat also participated in the fifth Green Customs Initiative Partners Meeting, held on 26 and 27 January 2009 in Brussels, Belgium.
49. From 23 to 27 March, the Technical Secretariat, in cooperation with the National Authority of France, organised a basic training course for National Authorities from all five regional groups. I thank France for this highly successful course, which was attended by 25 participants, as well as for its valuable support of other activities.
50. A technical assistance visit to the Kingdom of Bhutan on 13 and 14 April was organised with the aim of raising awareness among key stakeholders regarding the national implementing legislation in accordance with the requirements under Article VII of the Convention. This visit was the first in a series to be undertaken by the Technical Secretariat in support of grants made to States Parties under the 2007 European Union Joint Action.
51. I also wish to inform you that in the area of implementation support, the Technical Secretariat is currently in the advanced stages of preparation for a regional workshop for customs authorities in Asia on the technical aspects of the transfers regime of the Convention, which is to be held in Hong Kong from 10 to 12 June 2009, with the gracious cooperation of the Chinese government and the Hong Kong authorities. Through this workshop, the Technical Secretariat hopes to sensitise senior customs officials to the requirements of the transfer provisions of the Convention and thereby supplement ongoing efforts to train mid-level and operational-level customs officials through the subregional training courses offered in Asia. The workshop will also provide the Technical Secretariat with the opportunity to highlight the need for closer interaction between National Authorities, customs and port authorities to monitor trade in chemicals.
52. On 22 and 23 June 2009, the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina will organise, with the support of the Technical Secretariat, an international seminar on national implementation of non-proliferation obligations, highlighting the OPCW as an example of effective assistance in national implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. An invitation Note for the seminar has already been issued. Representatives from various international organisations, the chemical industry, and academia are also invited to attend this seminar, which will build on the results and recommendations of the Second Review Conference.

Evaluation of international cooperation and assistance programmes

53. As I mentioned at the last session of the Council, ICA is continuing to work on the possible upgrading of the assessment and evaluation of its programmes. To that end, a training course on project management and evaluation was held on 10 and 11 March 2009 at OPCW headquarters. The three ICA branches are currently preparing an analysis of their experiences and practices in the field of evaluation, also taking account of lessons learned. Some early conclusions and recommendations on how to bring about improvements in assessment and evaluation are already reflected in the notes submitted to the Council on the various activities conducted by the Assistance and Protection and Implementation Support Branches of the International Cooperation and Assistance Division. More generally, we are continuing to work to improve our evaluation of programmes in ICA and in other relevant parts of the Technical Secretariat.
54. Before closing this chapter of my remarks on international cooperation and assistance, I should also like to reiterate our gratitude to all Member States that have contributed either financial, organisational, or other important resources to the realisation of all the activities.

Implementation of Article VII

55. With the notification of the designation of the National Authority of Congo, the number of National Authorities has risen to 179. There remain, therefore, seven States Parties that have not yet notified the OPCW of the designation of their National Authority.
56. Indonesia has provided information to the effect that its implementing legislation covers all key areas. Three further States Parties—Belgium, Burundi, and Liberia—have informed the Secretariat of the entry into force of their parliamentary implementing legislation.

Universality and external relations

57. The ratification by the Dominican Republic leaves only one State—the Bahamas—in the GRULAC to join the Convention. In all, only seven States remain that are not yet party to the Convention.
58. The Bahamas is at the final stage of its ratification process. I had announced at the last session of the Council that two experts from the Technical Secretariat would be travelling to the Bahamas at the end of February, as a follow-up to the high-level visit carried out by my Deputy, Mr John Freeman, last year. These efforts yielded positive results. The remaining concerns of the Bahamian authorities concerning transfer of chemicals, the initial declaration, and the establishment of a National Authority were addressed and political focus was also revived on the very important issue of ratification. As a result, we have been informed that the instrument of ratification of the Convention has been drafted and is now undergoing final political consideration in the Bahamas. In this regard, I wish to thank the Government of Canada for its generous financial contribution, from which the visit by the two experts was funded.

59. Only last week, a workshop on promoting the universality of the Convention in the Mediterranean Basin and the Middle East was held in Istanbul. I express again my deep gratitude to the Government of Turkey for hosting this important event, to the Permanent Representation of Turkey to this Organisation, to Ambassador Selahattin Alpar for his personal engagement, and also to the European Union, which funded, through the 2007 EU Joint Action, this important event. Without underestimating the challenges that lie ahead of us in terms of the acceptance of the Convention in the Middle East, I am satisfied at the outcome of the workshop, and I believe many of the participants are also equally satisfied. Israel was officially represented, while the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs nominated a senior expert, who is also a member of the higher House of the Egyptian Parliament. The Government of Myanmar also sent a representative.
60. I am grateful to all States Parties that participated in this activity and thus provided a visible manifestation of the unanimity with which this Organisation upholds the issue of universality of the Convention. It is my hope that such support will be sustained, thus ensuring that the necessary strength will be given to the Secretariat's efforts. Although the States not Party represented at the workshop reiterated their well-known reasons for not participating until now, the tone and tenor of the discussions were cordial and forward-looking. This positive attitude will, I believe, allow us to continue striving to convince our interlocutors in the region of the obvious merits of joining the Convention. I am extremely grateful to Ambassador Petr Mareš of the Czech Republic, representing the Presidency of the European Union, for having chaired the workshop.
61. The next step in this positive engagement will be the Technical Secretariat's goodwill missions, both to Israel and to Egypt. It will be late June for the visit to Israel, and hopefully we will soon have confirmation of the date of the visit to Egypt. These are important events in the series of steps we have taken in order to encourage further knowledge of the Convention on the part of its States not Party. Our mission is simply for the purpose of reporting, but of course we will be open to the countries concerned should they wish to raise other matters, including the one related to universality.
62. Since the last session of the Council, I have also carried out a very fruitful visit, as I mentioned before, to the Russian Federation.
63. In April, I also travelled to Croatia to address the Fifth World Congress on Chemical, Biological and Radiological Terrorism, which was held in Cavtat from 6 to 10 April and was preceded by the aforementioned workshop on chemical and biological weapons held in that country.
64. In the area of ensuring cooperation with the United Nations, in the framework of the Relationship Agreement signed with that organisation in 2000, the Technical Secretariat continues to be represented at the outreach activities of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 1540 Committee, and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. The purpose of the OPCW's participation is to underline the fact that effective implementation of the Convention directly contributes to the objectives of this watershed UNSC Resolution 1540 (2004) in the area of chemical weapons.

65. Let me also recall that, on 29 April 2009, starting from 14:00, the yearly commemoration ceremony to pay tribute to the victims of chemical warfare will be held here in the Ieper room, and of course, you are all invited.

The OPCW's contribution to global anti-terrorism efforts and effective multilateralism

Madam Chairperson,

66. The OPCW's contribution to global anti-terrorism efforts and effective multilateralism continues apace. The Secretariat, as I mentioned before, will continue to support the United Nations in this area. At the same time, the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism has continued to operate under the very able coordination and facilitation of France. On 25 March 2009, the Working Group facilitated presentations from two national counter-terrorism experts from Saudi Arabia.
67. The Secretariat also continues to support the OPCW's involvement in global efforts aimed at ensuring non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In particular, the Technical Secretariat hosted a seminar on "Multilateral approaches to non-proliferation – chemical dimension", which was co-organised with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute. This seminar represented a visible example of effective cooperation among international organisations to promote non-proliferation standards and arrangements in practice at the regional and national levels. We intend to continue supporting this very important institute, based in Turin.
68. Together with the Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael and other Dutch institutions and international partners, the Technical Secretariat has been working on a series of events including workshops, lectures, and training programmes. A first seminar was organised at the Clingendael Institute on 26 and 27 March 2009 on "Effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention as a contribution towards the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004)".

Administrative and financial matters

69. Turning now to administrative and financial issues, I have submitted a detailed report on the income-and-expenditure performance of the OPCW for the first quarter of the financial year 2009 and this is now before the Council for its consideration.
70. In this regard, I would like to point out that 39.3% of the 2009 assessed contributions were received during the first three months of 2009, which is less than the 52.4% of the 2008 assessed contributions received by the end of March 2008.
71. It should be noted that the Conference of the States Parties convened one month later in 2008 as compared to 2007. Consequently, the decisions on the budget and the scale of assessments, and therefore the assessment letters for 2009 were also issued one month later. But the decrease in receipts to date is nonetheless a matter for concern. I therefore wish to express my gratitude to those Member States that have

already provided their assessed contributions for 2009 and invite early compliance by the other Member States with their financial obligations under the Convention.

72. Given the importance of assessed contributions being paid as soon as possible, I hope that the States Parties will, as necessary and where appropriate, review their past practices and consider making payments at an earlier stage than they have done in the past.
73. As for the expenditure for 2008, this is at a level of EUR 71.1 million, of which EUR 6.1 million reflects obligations that have been carried forward to 2009.
74. The OPCW Financial Statements for 2008 and the Financial Statements of the Provident Fund for 2008 have been completed. The External Auditor has finished the audit, and I expect to present the Financial Statements and the accompanying audit report to the Council at its Fifty-Seventh Session.
75. In the course of moving forward in the implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), the Technical Secretariat has taken several preparatory steps. I will be presenting a further progress report on this matter to the Council at its next session.
76. During the current financial crisis, in order to ensure the proper stewardship of OPCW cash resources, the Secretariat's Investment Committee began meeting on a weekly, and later on a fortnightly basis, to actively monitor the situation. This includes closely following changes in bank ratings, pursuing relationships with new highly rated banks, and ending relationships with those banks whose ratings were downgraded.

Proposed Programme and Budget for 2010

77. The coming few months will see continuing efforts across the Secretariat to draft the 2010 Programme and Budget. We will aim once again to produce a document that addresses both routine service delivery and emerging priorities for the OPCW, at all times ensuring that the Organisation meet its core objectives, but without burdening States Parties with unwarranted costs or items of expenditure.
78. As I indicated during my statement to the Council at its Fifty-Fifth Session, I will once again 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. I believe this approach is all the more in line and in order, given the present financial situation of the world.
79. However, let me stress once again that this endeavour underscores how crucial it is for States Parties to comply with their financial obligations. A zero-growth budget for the fifth consecutive year can only be successfully implemented if Member States pay their assessed contributions in full and on time. I apologise for repeating this theme in my statement, but it is so very important to the ability of the Organisation to carry on its programme in full.

80. The budget document to be presented to you on 10 July 2009 will reflect a revised budget structure that includes subprogrammes. This, I believe, will further enhance the transparency, accountability, and planning of the OPCW Programme and Budget. Further enhancements, which I indicated to you during the last session of the Council, will of course also be incorporated in the 2010 budget document.
81. As I had announced to the members of the Council at its last session, I will make the programme-performance report for 2008 available to Member States. The report, which is currently being finalised, is an important reflection of the results-based budgeting process.

Scientific Advisory Board

82. Finally, Madam Chairperson, let me briefly mention that the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) held its Thirteenth Session from 30 March to 1 April. During this session, the SAB members were given two briefings, on the basics of nanotechnology and on its specific principles. The SAB also discussed the review of operational requirements and technical specifications for inspection equipment. The next session of the SAB is planned to take place from 9 to 11 November. The session will be preceded by the fourth meeting of the temporary working group on sampling and analysis.

Madam Chairperson,

83. Since this is the last occasion on which you are chairing a session of the Council, allow me to conclude my statement by expressing to you my deepest gratitude for the support you have rendered to the Technical Secretariat. I hope you have felt also that the Technical Secretariat was always behind you. I have witnessed closely and admire the exemplary commitment with which you have conducted the work of this very important body, and I am sure the Member States in due course will express to you a similar gratitude. I wish you all the very best in your future endeavours. Thank you very much.

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