

**NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL****UPDATE ON THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT'S READINESS TO CONDUCT
A CHALLENGE INSPECTION OR AN INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED USE****Introduction**

1. The First Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the First Review Conference”) requested the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) “to continue maintaining a high standard of readiness to conduct a challenge inspection in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, to keep the Council informed about its readiness, and to report any problems that may arise in relation to maintaining the necessary level of readiness to conduct a challenge inspection” (paragraph 7.91 of RC-1/5, dated 9 May 2003).
2. The Second Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Second Review Conference”) reiterated this request to the Secretariat (paragraph 9.90 of RC-2/4, dated 18 April 2008).
3. The First Review Conference “stressed the importance of investigations of alleged use or threat of use of chemical weapons. For such situations, the OPCW must have the capacity, and be ready at all times, to investigate the need for follow-on action by the OPCW and by individual Member States” (paragraph 7.100 of RC-1/5). The Second Review Conference reiterated this concern (paragraph 9.105 of RC-2/4), requesting the Secretariat to keep the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) informed about its readiness.
4. The Third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention made two requests of the Secretariat with respect to the conduct of a challenge inspection (CI) or an investigation of alleged use (IAU) (paragraph 9.111 of RC-3/3*, dated 19 April 2013). The first was that the Secretariat continue to improve the standard of readiness to conduct a CI or an IAU in accordance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”). The second was to keep the Council informed about its readiness and to report any problems that may arise in relation to maintaining the necessary level of readiness to conduct a CI or an IAU.
5. The Secretariat has previously submitted to the Council several Notes on its readiness to conduct a CI (EC-36/DG.5/Rev.1, dated 17 February 2004; EC-41/DG.10, dated 2 June 2005; EC-46/DG.6, dated 26 June 2006; EC-49/DG.11,



dated 1 June 2007; EC-54/DG.9, dated 25 September 2008; EC-58/DG.8, dated 28 September 2009; EC-62/DG.8, dated 22 September 2010; EC-66/DG.10, dated 8 September 2011; EC-70/DG.12, dated 12 September 2012; EC-74/DG.15, dated 25 September 2013; and EC-76/DG.11, dated 12 June 2014.

6. This Note concentrates on the activities the Secretariat has undertaken since the last update (EC-76/DG.11) for the period from 31 May 2014 to 30 May 2015, and highlights issues that still require further consideration and attention by States Parties and by the Secretariat.

Training of inspectors and operational procedures

7. During the reporting period, as a result of the pressures of ongoing contingency operations, neither CI nor IAU field exercises were conducted, primarily due to the human resources requirements of completing the successful mission to eliminate the chemical weapons declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. Nevertheless, Inspectorate training and other readiness activities in regard to contingency operations during the reporting period were conducted in a manner that recognised the many operational commonalities between CIs and IAUs.
8. Inspectorate training in 2014 focused on maintaining the mandatory qualifications required within the quality management system (QMS) for the conduct of inspection activities and for the preparation of experienced inspectors and inspection team leaders for performing inspection duties for “non-routine” missions and contingency operations such as CIs and IAUs. There was a continued focus on training inspectors for activities in non-permissive and conflict-affected environments. A new group of inspectors (Group N), consisting of 16 inspectors from all four specialities, was trained. The 14-week training programme comprised 13 general and specialist modules. It started on 3 September and continued into 2015. The 2014 Inspectorate Training Programme (ITP) commenced on 13 January and ran through 19 December.
9. The Inspectorate Division completed 2,005 equivalent training days within the ITP subprogramme. Delivery of training by inspectors required 600 equivalent training days. The programme comprised 44 individual training courses, with 48 calendar weeks involving training, and included some non-budgeted training courses such as Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments (SSAFE) training, health and safety orientation at chemical weapons destruction facilities in the United States of America, and the Level 4A radiation course. Despite this, the total number of training days was 15% lower than planned (approximately 2,400 days), largely due to the cancellation of many regular inspector courses because of team preparations and verification activities related to the Syrian Arab Republic.
10. The training held in 2014 was delivered within the territories of Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. All of the courses are highly relevant in the event of an Article IX request and indeed augmented the Secretariat’s readiness to react to such requests rapidly.
11. Drawing on lessons learned, and responding to the analysis of the mandates and missions of possible contingency operations to be conducted, the Secretariat embarked on various training activities, the value of a number of which was

confirmed in subsequent operations. In addition to regular training, such training included:

- (a) Non-destructive evaluation training;
 - (b) Pre-deployment training;
 - (c) Advanced first aid and casualty management;
 - (d) Report writing;
 - (e) Explosive remnants of war (ERW) awareness training;
 - (f) Ordnance refresher training;
 - (g) Toxic chemical training (TCT) with live agent;
 - (h) Hazardous waste emergency-response training (HAZWOPER);
 - (i) Advanced agent handling and analysis;
 - (j) Reconnaissance and sampling;
 - (k) CI introduction training for Group N conducted in Italy;
 - (l) SSAFE training; and
 - (m) Specialised pre-deployment training for operations related to the Syrian chemical weapons destruction programme.
12. A Lessons Learned Core Team was assembled, as directed by the Director-General. Its mandate was to improve readiness for future operations by conducting a lessons-learned review of the Secretariat's activities in the period from September 2013 to September 2014, relating to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme as mandated by the Council (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013). The role of the team is to improve readiness for future operations by means of the compilation of a factual account of what happened ("knowledge capture"); the identification of lessons and their subsequent review for use in the future (review also by those involved in the mission); and the identification and prioritisation of the actions necessary to implement the lessons. A full report has been submitted to the Director-General. As a consequence of this activity and previous actions by the Secretariat, an overarching contingency operations plan for the Secretariat, incorporating these lessons learned, is under development.
13. The Director-General has established and staffed a streamlined Operations Planning Group (OPG), which has replaced the earlier Contingency Operations Group and Mission Support Group structure. This group, composed of operationally experienced personnel from within the Secretariat, who are assisted by planners from the United Nations and States Parties, has been charged with the responsibility of coordinating actions related to preparing and deploying teams to conduct a number of contingency operations that the Secretariat has been called upon to perform in the Syrian Arab Republic. The OPG underwent training in the form of exercises and was employed

intensively throughout the reporting period, both for the initiation and the conduct of joint contingency operations conducted in concert with its operational partners from the United Nations, other international organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), and States Parties. This resulted in an efficient and highly responsive operational planning process for the mounting and conduct of contingency operations by the Secretariat.

14. As noted in last year's report (EC-76/DG.11), the Roster of Qualified Experts has been updated. After identifying the need for additional skills or skill sets that require augmentation related to assistance delivery operations, CIs, and IAUs, a call for nominations for qualified experts was made to the States Parties (S/1126/2013, dated 23 September 2013). As a result, 53 nominations were received from 16 States Parties with the following skill sets: forensic toxicology and pathology; investigative interviewing and evidence handling; chemical weapons epidemiology; explosive ordinance disposal; and disaster management.
15. An initial group of 15 qualified experts participated in an OPCW course from 17 to 21 November 2014, conducted in the Czech Republic. The training had a number of objectives: familiarisation with the OPCW, development of the capability to integrate with an OPCW CI/IAU team at short notice; and toxic chemical training to enhance the ability to operate in a contaminated environment.
16. By the time the OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria completed its activities on 30 September 2014, the OPCW had been able to verify the destruction of 98% of the chemical weapons declared by the Syrian Arab Republic, including all Category 1 chemicals, in less than a year. In 2014, the Director-General established an OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in response to persistent allegations of use of chlorine gas as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic. By the end of 2014, the FFM had reported with a high degree of confidence that toxic chemicals—most likely pulmonary irritating agents, probably chlorine—had been used as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic in a systematic fashion. The Secretariat's verification operations in the Syrian Arab Republic also continued, most notably those activities related to the destruction of the facilities connected to that State Party's former chemical weapons programme. The combination of significant field experience, previous training, and tested standard operating procedures is readily transferable to either a CI or IAU, should either be requested. As a further result of these activities, the Secretariat has continued to develop and maintain strong expertise in carrying out the technical activities related to an IAU. The operations have also permitted the Secretariat to continue to improve on procedural and deployment issues such as command and control, communications, information handling, the management of a large deployed team, and the executive risk assessment process.

Equipment

17. Since last year's report, the Secretariat has informed States Parties of the procurement of a number of additional items of inspection equipment that conform to the operational requirements and technical specifications approved by the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter "the Conference"). Amongst these items are new

encrypted USB¹ memory sticks and encryption devices for secure voice and data transmission between teams in the field and OPCW Headquarters. The encryption devices consist of desktop units for fixed locations, encrypted mobile phones for short missions, and special encrypted data transmitters for industrial missions and possible CIs and IAUs. Furthermore, the Secretariat has created special interview packages consisting of camcorders with external microphones, tripods, and dictaphones for the detailed interviewing of subjects. Additionally, the Secretariat is in the process of procuring new mission laptops to replace the out-of-date laptops currently in use. These items have increased the operational readiness and capabilities of the OPCW significantly, especially in respect of possible cases of CIs and IAUs.

Issues requiring further action by the Secretariat

18. The Secretariat will continue to refine its analysis of key elements to evaluate and validate in future exercises on CIs or IAUs. The initiatives and activities set out in paragraphs 12 to 16 above are part of the ongoing process to institutionalise and validate recommendations and lessons learned from previous exercises, training, and other activities.
19. Increasing dialogue on contingency operations, such as CIs and IAUs, with other relevant international organisations is ongoing. These include the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Mine Action Service, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, the World Food Programme, and the WHO. Smaller, more focused regional exercises will provide a good opportunity to ensure broader geographical coverage. In this context, the Secretariat fully appreciates the support of States Parties in providing opportunities for exercises and training, and encourages further cooperation in this regard.

United Nations laissez-passer

20. In September 2012, the United Nations Offices in Geneva (UNOG) introduced new United Nations laissez-passer (e-UNLPs) that contain biometric information. The biometric information has been introduced to reduce fraud, increase the acceptance of the document worldwide, and facilitate border procedures. These e-UNLPs are valid for a total period of five years, whereas previously the validity of UNLPs was limited to the duration of the contract of the staff member; the OPCW was granted an exceptional validity of five years only for the UNLPs of inspectors. As from December 2012, the scope of staff members eligible for UNLPs has increased substantially, with all inspection assistants (general-services category) mentioned on the consolidated list of inspectors. In urgent cases, UNOG has been able to issue UNLPs within two working days. UNOG has also introduced a new UNLP e-management system, which became operational in 2014, enabling the applicant organisation to formally track, trace, and prioritise the complete UNLP application. These measures support the readiness of the Secretariat for CIs or IAUs.

¹ USB = universal serial bus.

21. The Protocol and Visa Branch has administrative systems in place that monitor the validity of UNLPs and of the visas in them, particularly for inspectors and inspection assistants. These allow the Secretariat to ensure the timely application for new UNLPs, renewals, or extensions, thereby supporting the validity of the travel documents required for IAUs and CIs. However, readiness for IAUs and CIs could be compromised if UNLPs are not available for visa applications because the staff member is travelling with the UNLP or the UNLP is at an embassy or consulate for another visa application procedure. The UNLP could also be with UNOG for renewal, which could also in turn necessitate the replacement of the valid visas. The visa procedures take an average of one week, although they can, in some instances, be prioritised.

Issues requiring further action by States Parties

Visas

22. As the OPCW is not able to maintain visas from all States Parties that have visa requirements, new visa applications may be required to launch a CI or IAU. The time needed to obtain these visas could potentially delay the launch of a CI or an IAU, especially if UNLPs are unavailable due to travel of the staff member, a pending visa application with another embassy or consulate, or a pending UNLP application, as discussed above. States Parties that impose visa requirements on UNLP holders could consider agreeing to a waiver of the standard visa requirements for UNLP holders in the event of a CI or IAU.
23. At the same time, the Secretariat wishes to recall that, pursuant to paragraph 10 of Part II of the Verification Annex to the Convention, States Parties are under an obligation to provide designated OPCW inspectors with multiple-entry visas that are valid for at least two years. This provision is particularly important in the context of the ability of the OPCW to respond promptly to requests for a CI and/or an IAU. At the end of May 2015, 134 States Parties (69.8%) had either issued, or promised to issue, two-year multiple-entry visas, or had no visa requirements for OPCW inspectors travelling on UNLPs; 33 States Parties (17.2%) had issued multiple-entry visas valid for one year (or less); and 23 States Parties (12.0%) had either not responded or had provided incomplete general visa information that does not apply to OPCW inspectors travelling on UNLPs. Each year, the Secretariat requests States Parties to comply with the relevant provisions and to update the Secretariat on the status of visa requirements. Moreover, the Secretariat, during sessions of the Conference and other available opportunities, regularly reminds States Parties of their visa obligations.

Standing diplomatic clearance numbers

24. The Secretariat has previously reported (EC-36/DG.5/Rev.1) that the unavailability of standing diplomatic clearance numbers (SDCNs) would have an impact on its ability to obtain overflight and landing clearances in the event that a charter or a United Nations aircraft is used during a CI or IAU. As at 27 May 2015, 92 States Parties had provided SDCNs. Of this number, 49 States Parties had provided the SDCNs themselves, while 26 had provided information on expediting them in the event that a requirement arises. It should be noted that 17 of the SDCNs previously provided are

no longer valid. As at the cut-off date for this report, the Secretariat lacked valid SDCNs from 98 States Parties.

Radio frequencies

25. As at 27 May 2015, only 88 States Parties had provided frequencies or had given the Secretariat authorisation to use OPCW default frequencies, and/or had provided conditions for their use. An additional six States Parties had provided information on an expedited methodology for obtaining the necessary frequencies. This lack of information could adversely affect the ability of the Secretariat to make preparations and might even prevent an inspection team from using its hand-held radios during a CI or an IAU.

Points of entry

26. As at 27 May 2015, 108 States Parties had provided information regarding points of entry (POEs) that are to be used by mission teams. This is a decrease from the 123 reported in 2014. Eighty-two States Parties had not provided information regarding POEs that are to be used by mission teams. It is anticipated that, in the absence of the required information, the Secretariat would itself select a POE for the purpose of a CI or an IAU, as has been done in the case of some routine missions.

Conclusion

27. The full range of operational activities that have taken place during the reporting period has augmented the preparedness of the Secretariat to conduct effective CIs, IAUs, or other contingency operations at short notice. Subject to the availability of resources, future exercises should be conducted in cooperation with a variety of national and relevant international actors, with the objective of maintaining and enhancing the responsiveness and capabilities of the Secretariat in the event of a CI or IAU. The necessary readiness to conduct a CI or an IAU requires the support of States Parties to these efforts. The Secretariat reiterates its appreciation of assistance that States Parties have extended thus far, and hopes that this will continue. As in the past, the Secretariat would like to encourage Member States to come forward to jointly organise, participate in, and conduct exercises, training, and other operational activities.