



# ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

*Working together for a world free of chemical weapons*

## FACT SHEET 3

## The Structure of the OPCW

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is the international organisation responsible for achieving the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and for ensuring the implementation of its provisions, including verification of compliance with the Convention and maintenance of a forum for consultations and cooperation among States Parties. It consists of three principal organs: the Conference of the States Parties, the Executive Council and the Technical Secretariat. The OPCW is housed in a specially built headquarters located in The Hague. Upon its establishment in 1997, the States Parties appointed Ambassador José Mauricio Bustani of Brazil as the OPCW's first Director-General. The second Director-General, Rogelio Pfirter of Argentina, served from 2002 – 2010. The current Director-General, Ahmet Üzümcü of Turkey, took office in 2010, and his second four-year term will end in 2018.

### How the OPCW is Organised

All States Parties to the CWC are automatically members of the OPCW. A State Party cannot be deprived of its membership of the OPCW, but it may have its rights and privileges restricted or suspended if there are problems with that State Party's compliance.

#### The Conference of the States Parties

The Conference of the States Parties oversees the implementation of the CWC, promotes the treaty's objectives and reviews compliance with the treaty. It also oversees the activities of the Executive Council and Secretariat. The Convention assigns the Conference the following responsibilities:

- adoption of the annual budget and establishment of the scale of contributions to be paid by States Parties;
- appointment of the Director-General;
- election of the members of the Executive Council;
- fostering of international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for peaceful purposes;
- establishment of subsidiary bodies, as necessary, for the exercise of its functions;
- review of scientific and technological developments that could affect the Convention; and
- establishment of the Voluntary Fund for Assistance.

The Conference is authorised to take measures necessary to ensure compliance with the CWC and to redress situations of non-compliance. These include restriction or suspension of a State Party's rights and privileges

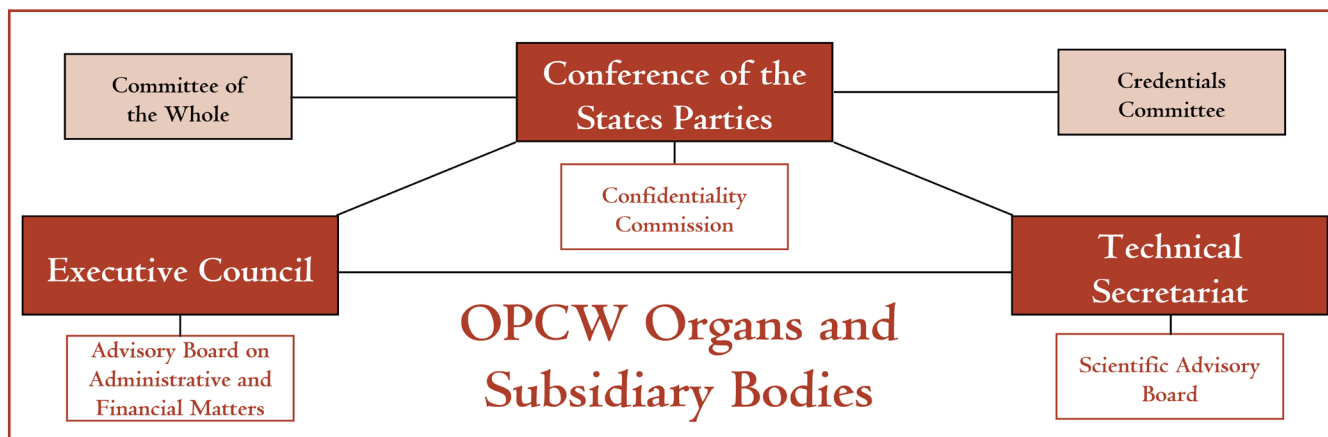
under the Convention; the recommendation to States Parties of collective punitive measures in conformity with international law and in cases of serious damage to the object and purpose of the Convention; and, in cases of particular gravity, bringing the issue to the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.

The Conference is composed of representatives of all Member States of the OPCW, each of which has one vote. It meets annually for one week in The Hague. Special sessions of the Conference can be convened under the following circumstances: when decided by the Conference itself, when requested by the Executive



*A session of the OPCW Conference of the States Parties*

Council, or when requested by one third of all States Parties. In 2003, 2008 and 2013 and at five-yearly intervals thereafter, the Conference has convened special sessions to review the operation of the CWC. The Conference may also meet to consider proposed amendments to the CWC.



Non-Member States (Signatory and Non-Signatory) may attend regular sessions of the Conference as observers under certain conditions, and international and non-governmental organisations may also attend if invited by the Conference. At the beginning of each regular session, the Conference elects a new Chairman and other officers, as needed, who will hold office until the next regular session.

## The Executive Council

The Executive Council is the executive organ of the OPCW and is responsible to the Conference. It promotes the effective implementation of the CWC, and compliance with it. It also supervises the activities of the Technical Secretariat. The Council cooperates with the National Authorities of Member States and facilitates consultations and cooperation among them at their request. Additionally, the Council is empowered to:

- consider and submit the draft annual budget to the Conference;
- consider and submit to the Conference a draft annual report on the implementation of the Convention, a report on its own activities and other reports as necessary or requested by the Conference;
- make arrangements and draft agendas for sessions of the Conference;
- request the convening of special sessions of the Conference; and
- conclude and approve agreements with States Parties related to protection against chemical weapons and the implementation of verification activities.

Furthermore, the Council is empowered to mediate in cases of disputes concerning compliance with the Convention. It can require an offending State Party to take remedial action within a specified time. It can also inform all States Parties of the issue, bring it to the attention of the Conference or recommend that the Conference adopt measures to redress the situation. In extraordinary cases, the Council may refer the issue directly to the UN General Assembly and the Security Council.

The Council usually convenes three regular sessions a year and special sessions can be called when needed.

Although the Convention does not call for them, the Council frequently holds meetings (as opposed to sessions) which are convened at short notice to consider specific issues. Between Council sessions, delegates meet for informal consultations to discuss issues in detail before introducing them in a regular session for consideration and adoption. Sessions of the Council are held in the leper Room at the OPCW headquarters, which is named after the Belgian town (leper) where the first large-scale use of chemical weapons took place on 22 April 1915. The chairmanship of the Council rotates annually among the five regional groups.

The Council consists of 41 members from the five regional groups. Council seats are distributed among the groups as follows: Africa, 9; Asia, 9; Eastern Europe, 5; Latin America and the Caribbean, 7; and Western European and Others Group, 10. One seat is also assigned on a rotating basis to a State Party in the Asian or the Latin American and Caribbean groups. The Conference elects Council members nominated by the regional groups with due regard to ensuring an equitable geographical distribution, the significance of national chemical industries and political and security interests. A specified proportion of the members from each regional group are to be from States with the group's most significant national chemical industries. Council members serve two-year terms, with the Conference annually electing/re-electing half of them.

## The Technical Secretariat

The Technical Secretariat assists the Conference and the Council in performing their tasks and carries out the verification measures provided for in the CWC. The Secretariat is made up of about 500 staff members recruited from over 80 States Parties. Around 60 percent are employed in the Inspectorate and the Verification Divisions. Most staff members in the professional category may only work for the Secretariat for a maximum of seven years, making the OPCW a non-career organisation. Among its duties, the Secretariat:

- prepares and submits the draft budget to the Council;
- prepares annual reports on the implementation of the Convention;

- handles day-to-day communications to and from Member States (including declarations);
- disseminates information on the CWC through seminars and public relations activities;
- provides technical assistance to States Parties to enable better implementation of the CWC;
- negotiates verification agreements with Member States, subject to approval by the Council;
- conducts on-site inspections;
- assists development by Member States of programmes to protect against chemical weapons; and
- supports and fosters international cooperation in chemistry for peaceful purposes.

The Director-General is responsible for ensuring that the Secretariat fulfils its mandate in an efficient and cost-effective manner, cultivating an effective working relationship between the Secretariat and the Member States, and promoting universal OPCW membership. He or she also reviews inspection reports and ensures the confidentiality of sensitive information provided by Member States. Under the Director-General's supervision, the Office of Confidentiality and Security implements the confidentiality regime within the Secretariat and ensures the physical security of OPCW information, computer systems and facilities.

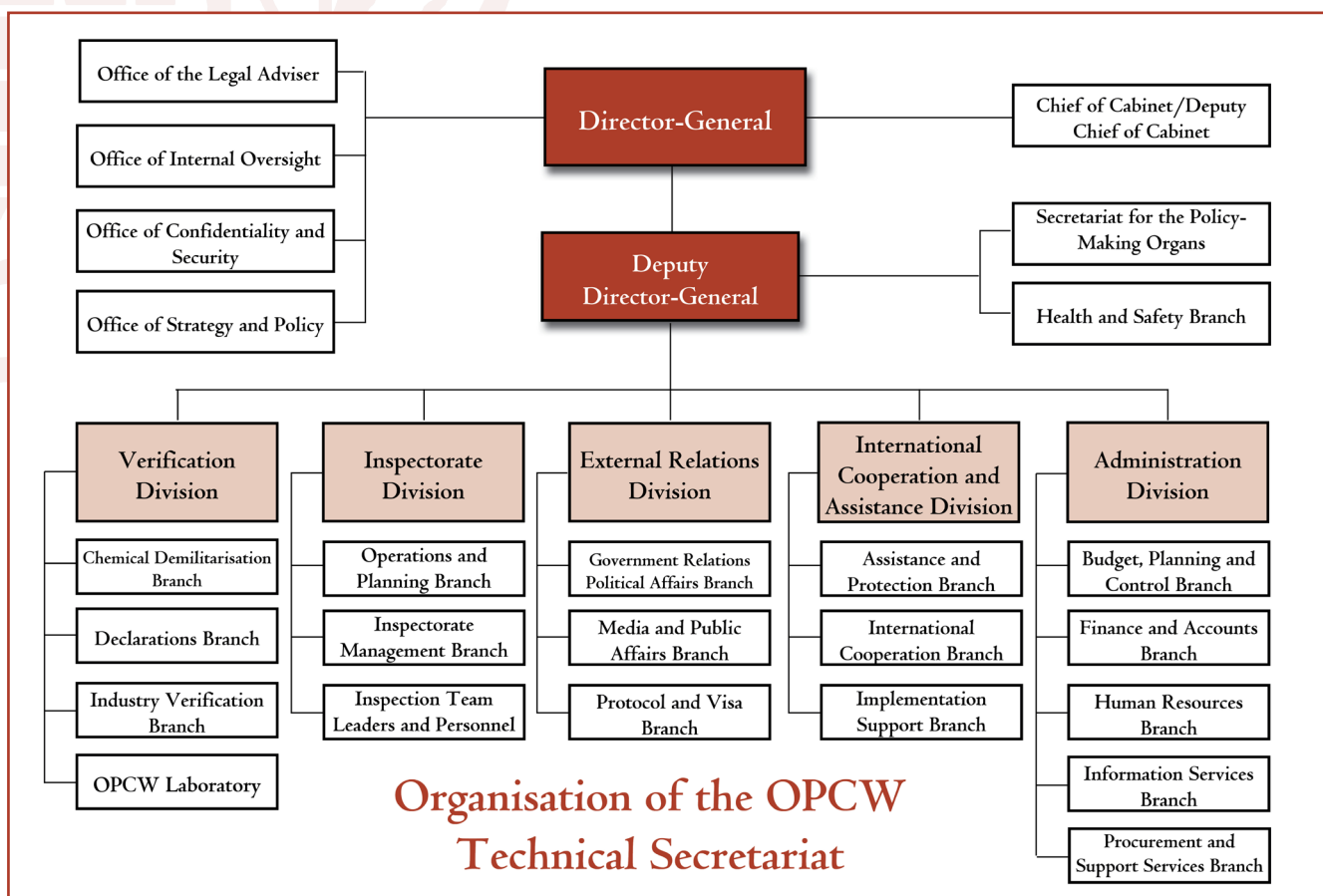
The Deputy Director-General assists the Director-General in the aforementioned tasks, chairs various internal committees and meetings and helps to manage the OPCW's verification regime. She or he also supervises the Health and Safety Branch, which provides medical and safety services to OPCW inspection teams and

takes part in evaluating assistance required by any State Party attacked with chemical weapons.

The largest division in the Technical Secretariat is the Inspectorate. It manages the inspections required by the CWC of both military and commercial facilities around the world. In close cooperation with the Verification Division, the Inspectorate plans, conducts and manages all inspections. It consists of the inspectors and two branches: Inspectorate Management and Operations and Planning.

The Verification Division receives and assesses the data submitted by Member States in their declarations and reviews and analyses the information collected during inspections. In carrying out its work, the division works very closely with the Inspectorate to implement a credible verification regime. The division is made up of four branches: Declarations, Chemical Demilitarisation, Industry Verification and the OPCW Laboratory.

The International Cooperation and Assistance Division manages the OPCW's international cooperation and assistance activities, which facilitate the full and effective implementation of the CWC, assistance and protection against chemical weapons and the development of peaceful uses of chemistry among Member States. The division also ensures the OPCW can respond adequately to requests for assistance from Member States threatened with chemical weapons. The division has three branches: Implementation Support, Assistance and Protection, and International Cooperation.





The Office of the Legal Adviser provides legal support to the Secretariat, the OPCW policy-making organs and subsidiary bodies, and to Member States.

The Office of Internal Oversight enhances the efficiency of the OPCW's operations by conducting internal audits, investigations and assessments in the areas of finance, confidentiality and quality control.

The Office of Strategy and Policy takes a leading role in the formulation of strategy across the Secretariat and provides policy advice to the Director-General and Senior Management in relation to the seven core objectives of the OPCW.

The Secretariat for the Policy-Making Organs provides support to the OPCW's policy-making organs and subsidiary bodies by organising their sessions, providing interpretation services, preparing and translating documents, monitoring and following up on the implementation of decisions and maintaining the OPCW's editorial policy. The division includes the Language Services Branch.

The External Relations Division advises the Director-General on external relations policies, promotes universal adherence to the CWC and liaises with governments, other international organisations, the media and non-governmental organisations. The division also manages relations with the Host Country (the Netherlands) and all protocol and visa activities, of particular importance being those for inspectors going on missions. The division consists of three branches: Government Relations and Political Affairs, Media and Public Affairs and Protocol and Visa.

The Administration Division manages the Secretariat's human resources and finances, provides administrative and logistical support to the day-to-day work of the Secretariat and administers staff training and development programmes. The division also maintains the Secretariat's information systems and oversees activities and programmes at every organisational level. The division comprises five branches: Budget Planning and Control, Finance and Accounts, Human Resources, Information Services and Procurement and Support Services.

## Subsidiary Bodies

### Scientific Advisory Board

The Scientific Advisory Board was established by the Director-General to enable him to render specialised advice in the areas of science and technology relevant

to the CWC, the Council or States Parties. The Board consists of 25 independent experts who are eminent individuals from research institutes, universities, chemical industry companies and defence and military organisations. These individuals are selected by the Director-General from nominations received from Member States. The Director-General makes his selection on the basis of the nominees' expertise, taking into account the need for an equitable geographical distribution. Members can serve a maximum of two consecutive three-year terms. The Board meets approximately once a year.

### Confidentiality Commission

The Commission for the Settlement of Disputes Relating to Confidentiality, otherwise known as the Confidentiality Commission, is a

subsidiary body of the Conference. The Commission is made up of 20 members, four appointed by the Conference from each of the regional groups after being nominated by States Parties. Nominees have experience in one or more of the following areas: dispute resolution, confidentiality and verification provisions of the Convention, chemical industry, military security, data security, international law and national legal systems. Commission members serve in a personal capacity and cannot serve more than three consecutive two-year terms.

### Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters

The Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF) is a subsidiary body of the Executive Council established to provide advice on administrative and financial matters. As such, it does not have decision-making powers. Its role is to examine the draft annual programme and budget, internal oversight reports, audits and other budgetary proposals submitted by the Secretariat and to report its findings to the Council. The ABAF's members are experts of recognised standing in financial and administrative fields appointed by the members of the Executive Council.



*A flag with the logo and mission of the OPCW*

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