



International Cooperation and Assistance Division

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NOTE BY THE SECRETARIAT

THE THIRD MEETING OF THE PROTECTION NETWORK AND WORKSHOP ON CIVIL PROTECTION AGAINST CHEMICAL WEAPONS THE HAGUE, THE NETHERLANDS 18 - 21 NOVEMBER 2002

1. The Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is mandated to establish, “not later than 180 days after entry into force of this Convention and maintain, for the use of any requesting State Party, a data bank containing freely available information concerning various means of protection against chemical weapons as well as such information as may be provided by States Parties” (paragraph 5 of Article X of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (hereinafter the “Convention”).
2. The Conference of the States Parties at its First Session adopted a decision to establish a data bank on protection against chemical weapons in the Secretariat, pursuant to paragraph 5 of Article X of the Convention (C-I/DEC. 53, dated 16 May 1997).
3. In addition, paragraph 5 of Article X states that the Secretariat also has the responsibility, “within the resources available to it, and at the request of a State Party, [to] provide expert advice and assist the State Party in identifying how its programmes for the development and improvement of a protective capacity against chemical weapons could be implemented”.
4. To implement the provisions mentioned in paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 above, the OPCW established a protection network in 1999, whose task was to address important issues relating to protection against chemical weapons. The membership of the network initially consisted of 18 technical experts from 16 countries who could provide such advice upon request. The first meeting of the protection network was held at the Secretariat from 4 to 5 October 1999.
5. It was envisaged that meetings of the protection network would take place on an annual basis, thus enabling the OPCW to meet the protection requirements and activities mandated to the Organisation under Article X of the Convention. Such meetings were intended to accomplish the following: to address a number of issues relating to chemical weapons protection problems; to provide an overview of developments relating to the means of detecting and controlling releases of toxic chemicals; to create a forum for interested companies and research institutions to display and demonstrate protection equipment in workshops associated with the

meetings; to maintain and improve the network of qualified experts able to assist the OPCW to carry out assistance and protection activities mandated by the Convention; and to enable the OPCW to use the information provided and the recommendations made at the meetings as a basis for providing protection advice to States Parties upon request. The second meeting of the protection network and the workshop on chemical alarms for civil protection, together with the display of equipment for protection against chemical weapons, was held in the OPCW headquarters building from 19 to 22 November 2001.

6. The network is composed of highly qualified experts in the area of protection against chemical warfare agents who can generate ideas to develop and diversify the data bank on protection. Membership of the network refers to technical expertise in the field of protection, as defined in Article X of the Convention, in accordance with which a State Party may offer or consent to providing an expert to serve in the protection network. Geographical distribution is considered as much as possible if protection experts are identified in a given region.
7. The Secretariat is planning to organise the third meeting of the protection network at its headquarters in The Hague, from 18 to 19 November 2002. Following the network meeting, a two-day workshop and an exhibition (20 - 21 November 2002) on civil protection against chemical weapons will be held. Companies and research organisations involved in the production and development of equipment for protection against chemical weapons and other toxic chemicals are invited to participate in this event. The programmes for the 18 to 21 November 2001 activities are in the preparatory stages of development.
8. The network meeting will examine and make recommendations in relation to the following: the means of strengthening and developing national and international capacities for protection against CW, and methods and mechanisms for providing advice; the role of the protection network in providing expert advice, and in helping States Parties to develop and improve their protection capacity; the Internet and other electronic media as sources of information about protection against CW and other toxic chemicals; the experience and the role of members of the protection network in the OPCW's national and international courses, as well as in international assistance operations of the Organisation; and the present status of the data bank on protection against chemical weapons. It is also expected that the meeting will discuss possible formats for the declaration of national protection programmes in accordance with paragraph 4 of Article X of the Convention.
9. The second protection network meeting made a recommendation in relation to the preparation of the "Information Package against Chemical Weapons". It was envisaged that this information package would eventually be used by the OPCW as website material on protection against CW. It is expected that further discussions about alternative approaches for reinitiating and preparing the package will be made in the forthcoming meeting.
10. During a previous workshop on chemical alarms for civil protection, the members of the protection network, participants from States Parties, and presenting companies and organisations were interested in the subject matter of that workshop, and in the associated display of detection and monitoring equipment. Thus, it was suggested

that a similar activity be organised during the third meeting of the protection network, and that these companies and organisations be provided with the space and facilities to display their protection equipment. The fact that the Secretariat intends to provide display facilities for exhibitions by interested companies for the benefit of States Parties shall not be construed to mean that the Secretariat is giving its approval to any of the displays. Companies and research organisations would be invited to contribute to the workshop at their own cost.

11. The protection network meeting scheduled for 18 to 19 November 2002 is exclusively for the members of the network. The workshop on civil protection against chemical weapons and the associated display of protection equipment are, however, open to representatives of States Parties, as well as to companies and organisations involved in developing and producing equipment for protection against chemical weapons. Both events will be conducted in the English language only.
12. Further details of the arrangements will be issued as the preparations proceed. Any questions may be addressed to the Assistance and Protection Branch, International Cooperation and Assistance Division:

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