

**NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT****INVITATION TO SUBMIT EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR PARTICIPATION IN
THE OPCW LABORATORY TWINNING INITIATIVE****Purpose**

1. The Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) of the OPCW wishes to inform Member States of its Laboratory Twinning Initiative, which is aimed at improving the technical competence of laboratories in Member States whose economies are either developing or in transition and which intend to improve their performance in the OPCW Proficiency Tests in view of achieving OPCW designated status. The Twinning Initiative is being proposed by the International Cooperation and Assistance Division (ICA) within the framework of implementation of Article XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”). It is essentially based on the need to strengthen the national capacities of Member States in the fields of chemical analysis and chemical monitoring under the Convention regime.
2. In this preliminary phase, expressions of interest from laboratories in Member States will be collected with the purpose of creating the initial partnerships and necessary information base in the Secretariat, in order to further define activities to be carried out within the Initiative and to determine participants.

Introduction

3. In its decision entitled “Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI” (C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011), the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) at its Sixteenth Session mandated the Secretariat to support analytical laboratories in gaining the OPCW designation. In particular, it stated that training programmes could be used “to lay the basis for further development of the designated laboratory system by improving the analytical capabilities of laboratories in those parts of the world that do not currently possess a designated laboratory” (sub-subparagraph 2(a)(iv) of C-16/DEC.10).
4. The Secretariat has been instrumental in supporting Member States’ capacity in analytical chemistry through a number of ICA programmes aimed at enhancing laboratories’ capabilities. Such programmes include:
 - (a) analytical skills development courses (training for analytical chemists);



- (b) the Equipment Exchange Programme (facilitation of donation and transfer of equipment); and
 - (c) the Laboratory Assistance Programme (customised support for individual laboratories).
5. A number of laboratories and institutions working in the field of analytical chemistry in Member States have also been benefitting from other ICA capacity-building programmes in the area of chemical knowledge promotion and exchange, namely:
- (a) the Research Projects Support Programme (grants to support small scale research activities); and
 - (b) the Fellowship Programme (formerly known as the Internship Support Programme) (support for mobility of researchers and laboratory technical staff).

Scope of the initiative

6. In view of Conference decision C-16/DEC.10 and the increasing demand from Member States to support national laboratories aspiring to achieve OPCW designated status, the Laboratory Twinning Initiative is aimed at enhancing the capacity of aspiring laboratories by facilitating partnerships and cooperation with other, more advanced laboratories in different Member States that possess, or formerly possessed, OPCW designated status and wish to share their experience and offer support.
7. The proposed Initiative will follow the “twinning” model, whereby more experienced laboratories (hereinafter “Assisting Laboratories”) will mentor, with the support and coordination of the Secretariat, less experienced laboratories aspiring to achieve OPCW designated status (hereinafter “Assisted Laboratories”).
8. Assisted laboratories should be located in Member States whose economies are either developing or in transition; they must possess an advanced technical status that would enable them to become competitive in the OPCW proficiency testing in the near future.
9. The activities proposed under the Initiative will be carried out within the framework of laboratory twinning action plans, which will be prepared for each pair of laboratories to be twinned. Such action plans may include activities supported by the Secretariat under the existing capacity-building programmes (see paragraphs 4 and 5 above), and could also include additional activities proposed by the Secretariat for the Initiative on an ad hoc basis.
10. Such additional ad hoc activities could include the following:
- (a) mentorship visits: visits of approximately one-week by an expert or small group of experts from the Assisting Laboratory to the Assisted Laboratory. The purpose of the visits would be to mentor managerial and technical staff of the Assisted Laboratory on the implementation of specific analytical protocols and procedures, the use and maintenance of equipment, quality control, etc. The visits may include theoretical lectures, training, and consultations related to the participation in OPCW proficiency testing; and

- (b) support to infrastructures: the Secretariat supports the participation of Assisted Laboratories in OPCW proficiency testing by covering costs related to the acquisition of consumables, references, small repairs, or spare parts.
11. The Assisting Laboratories are expected to share knowledge and expertise with the Assisted Laboratories, as well as to provide, free of charge, any other assistance useful for participation in OPCW Proficiency Tests and analysis of Convention-related chemicals. They are also encouraged to promote international cooperation with Assisted Laboratories beyond the scope of the Twinning Initiative in the areas of the peaceful applications of chemistry.

Funding

12. The extent, duration, and modalities of funding will be decided by the Secretariat on an individual basis for specific action plans. Funding may be provided either exclusively by the OPCW or jointly by the OPCW and another donor/funding organisation. Only expenditures intended to directly benefit Assisted Laboratories for the purpose of the Initiative will receive OPCW funding.

Eligibility

13. Laboratories in Member States that either require assistance or are willing to offer assistance are eligible to be considered for the Initiative. Such laboratories must meet the necessary requirements, as outlined below. The requirements will be assessed further to the submission of the respective expressions of interest.
14. Eligible Assisted Laboratories are those which:
- (a) have the sufficient infrastructure and resources in terms of personnel and equipment to competitively perform in OPCW proficiency testing, without the need for major investments;
 - (b) have their major focus in fields of the same type of chemical analysis techniques as those normally employed in the analysis of Convention-related chemicals;
 - (c) are likely to have experience in the analysis of Convention-related chemicals or have participated in OPCW Proficiency Tests; and
 - (d) are strongly committed to becoming competitive in OPCW proficiency testing.
15. Eligible Assisting Laboratories are those which:
- (a) are OPCW designated laboratories or have held OPCW designated status for a prolonged period of time in the past;
 - (b) agree to offer resources and to share knowledge with Assisted Laboratories regarding the analysis of Convention-related chemicals and participation in OPCW Proficiency Testing;
 - (c) have the necessary infrastructure and human resources at their disposal to offer to effectively transfer knowledge to the Assisted Laboratory; and

- (d) are firmly committed and motivated to engage in a medium- to long-term partnership in the framework of the Initiative.

Submission and evaluation of expressions of interest

16. Laboratories that intend to participate in the Twinning Initiative are requested to submit their expressions of interest using the form attached as an annex to this Note. Expressions of interest may be submitted at any time. Laboratories are requested to forward the forms either to their Member State's National Authority or Permanent Representation to the OPCW. The National Authority or Permanent Representation should endorse the form and forward it via email to the International Cooperation and Assistance Division, International Cooperation Branch, at icb@opcw.org.
17. The Secretariat will evaluate the expressions of interest submitted by the laboratories based on their technical merit and other criteria as outlined in paragraphs 14 and 15 above. It will also propose the possible combination of twinned laboratories. For this purpose, the Secretariat will establish an ad hoc selection panel to be composed of at least three staff members from different divisions, including the International Cooperation Branch and the OPCW Laboratory. The panel will be chaired by the Director of the ICA.

Drafting of action plans

18. After the evaluation of expressions of interest, the Secretariat will initiate consultations with the projected Assisted and Assisting Laboratories to establish action plans. Upon the mutual agreement of laboratories, the action plans (including the plan of activities, timelines, and budget) will be drafted by the Secretariat in consultation with and based on the inputs from both laboratories. The Secretariat will also facilitate communication between the laboratories that are to be twinned.
19. The funding and implementation of action plans will be subject to the availability of resources and will follow the timelines, procedures, and financial rules established at the Secretariat.
20. Further information may be obtained from the International Cooperation and Assistance Division, OPCW, Johan de Wittlaan 32, 2517 JR The Hague, the Netherlands (Fax: + 31 (0)70 306 3535; Email: icb@opcw.org).

Annex: Expression of interest form

Annex

OPCW LABORATORY TWINNING INITIATIVE

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM

1. Expressions of interest are to be made on this form. Before completing the form, please read the guidelines presented in the cover Note to confirm your eligibility.
2. Expressions of interest may be made at any time.
3. Interested laboratories should complete this form and send it (both as a .pdf and Word attachment) either to the appropriate National Authority in their country or to their country's Permanent Representation to the OPCW, requesting that it complete Part III of this form.
4. The National Authority or Permanent Representation to the OPCW should then submit the completed form via email to the International Cooperation Branch, International Cooperation and Assistance Division, OPCW, Johan de Wittlaan 32, 2517 JR, The Hague, the Netherlands at icb@opcw.org.

PART I. INFORMATION ON THE LABORATORY

1. Status of laboratory

1.1 Name of laboratory:

1.2 Postal address of laboratory

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Tel:..... Fax: Email:

1.3 Normal functions or mandate of the laboratory (what is its role?)

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1.4 Is the laboratory operated independently? Yes / No

If the laboratory is part of another establishment (e.g. government department, research centre, hospital, university, municipality, etc.), please specify.

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1.5 Source of financing of the laboratory: Government / private / other (please specify).

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1.6 For how many years has the laboratory been in operation?.....

2. Laboratory staff

(a)	Total number	
	(i) Part-time	
	(ii) Full-time	
(b)	Managerial level	
(c)	Professionals with university degrees	
(d)	Laboratory technicians	
(e)	Others	

3. Chemical analyses being undertaken

3.1 Purpose for which analyses are conducted (e.g. toxicological, standards, defence, food, forensic, occupational health, industrial hygiene, environmental, other)

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3.2 Types of samples (industrial and commercial products, food, water, environmental, workplace-related, other)

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3.3 Number of samples / cases per month:

3.4 In the table below, list the types of analytes in the substances analysed (substances may be chemical weapons or their precursors, toxic chemicals, hazardous wastes, discrete organic chemicals, pesticides, persistent organic pollutants, customs-related drugs and pharmaceuticals, organic solvents, toxic gases, natural toxins, food chemicals, etc.):

	Analyte (type or group)	Chemical substance	Techniques and equipment used
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			

4. Equipment (indicate equipment used with the name of the manufacturer and model)

4.1 List the major equipment available for use by the laboratory in the table below:

	Equipment	Manufacturer	Model
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
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7.			
8.			
9.			

4.2 Are there any formal relationships or agreements with equipment suppliers for maintenance and training? Yes / No

If “Yes”, please provide details

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5. Research experience

Does the laboratory conduct research (e.g. method development and validation, preparation of reference materials with reference to national or international standards, etc.)? Yes / No

If yes, please describe (e.g. list recent publications on the subject)

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6. Quality assurance

6.1 Does the laboratory have a formal quality system? Yes / No

6.2 Does the laboratory have an internal quality assurance programme? Yes / No

6.3 Does the laboratory take part in an external quality assurance programme? Yes / No

If “Yes”, please describe

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6.4 Does the laboratory take part in any type of inter-laboratory or inter-calibration activities? Yes / No

If “Yes”, please describe with results achieved

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7. Accreditation

Is the laboratory formally accredited? Yes / No

If “Yes”, by which body?

If “Yes”, describe the scope of accreditation and to which standard (e.g. ISO). If “No”, describe the type of activities for which accreditation is desired.

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8. OPCW designation

8.1 Does the laboratory possess, or has it possessed in the past, OPCW designated status? Yes / No

If “Yes”, please state when the laboratory acquired OPCW designated status and provide information on the performance in the recent OPCW Proficiency Tests.

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8.2 If the laboratory does not possess OPCW designated status, has it participated in the OPCW Proficiency Tests? Yes / No

If “Yes”, please provide details about the marks the laboratory received in the recent proficiency tests.

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9. Hindrances and problems

Describe any problems or hindrances relating to technical competence that were experienced by the laboratory when participating in the OPCW Proficiency Test.

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10. Name and contact details of the person completing the questionnaire:

Name:
Position:
Contact address:
Telephone number(s):
Fax:
Email:

PART II. TWINNING PROPOSAL

11. Proposal for twinning

11.1 Does the laboratory wish to benefit from the OPCW Twinning Initiative as an Assisted Laboratory: Yes / No

If “Yes”, please provide details (name or description of desired characteristics) regarding the proposed or possible laboratories, if any, that you would like to see act as an Assisting Laboratory under a possible action plan.

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11.2 Please specify if the laboratory wishes to provide support to Assisted Laboratories under the OPCW Twinning Initiative as an Assisting Laboratory: Yes / No

If “Yes”, please provide details (name or description of desired characteristics) of the proposed or possible laboratories, if any, that you would like to see benefit as an Assisted Laboratory under a possible action plan.

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**PART III. COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE NATIONAL
AUTHORITY OR PERMANENT REPRESENTATION TO THE OPCW**
(for National Authority or Permanent Representation use only)

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Name and title:

Signature and stamp or seal:

Date and place: