



OPCW

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**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS EIGHTY-EIGHTH SESSION**

Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. I welcome you to the Eighty-Eighth Session of the Executive Council.
2. Allow me to begin by officially welcoming the new Chairperson of the Council, H.E. Ambassador Jana Reinišová of the Czech Republic. Her experience and professional manner will be much needed as the Council continues to address matters of high importance.
3. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the outgoing Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal of Bangladesh, for his steady guidance of the Council through a busy and critical period in its history. He has led our proceedings with great distinction and humour, and we are grateful for his efforts.

Madam Chairperson,

4. During the intersessional period, the OPCW held the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention on 26 and 27 June, at which a decision was adopted to address the threat from chemical weapons use.
5. The decision stipulated that the Secretariat shall put in place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretariat will keep the Council informed of its progress in implementing this decision.
6. At present, the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) continues its work on the allegations that have been assessed as credible. Since the Eighty-Seventh Session of the Council, the FFM has issued three reports: one on the allegations of use of chemical weapons in Ltamenah on 24 and 25 March 2017, a second on those in Saraqib on 4 February 2018, and a third on those in Al-Hamadaniyah on 30 October 2016 and in Karm Al-Tarrab on 13 November 2016. The FFM has also issued an interim report on the allegations of the use of toxic chemicals in Douma on 7 April 2018 (S/1645/2018, dated 6 July 2018 and Corr.1, dated 10 July 2018).



7. The FFM concluded that sarin was very likely used as a chemical weapon in the south of Ltamenah on 24 March 2017. It also concluded that chlorine was very likely used as a chemical weapon at Ltamenah hospital and the surrounding area on 25 March 2017. Furthermore, the FFM determined that chlorine was likely used as a chemical weapon in the Al-Talil neighbourhood of Saraqib on 4 February 2018. With regard to the incidents in Al-Hamadaniyah and Karm Al-Tarrab, the FFM cannot confidently determine whether or not a specific chemical was used as a weapon.
8. The FFM conducted three deployments related to the allegations in Douma on 7 April 2018. The interim report issued on 6 July reflected the results of samples analyses. Various chlorinated organic chemicals were found in the samples from the two sites, along with residues of explosives. The work of the FFM team is ongoing to establish the significance of these results.
9. On the subject of Syria's declared chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs), the last two stationary above-ground facilities have been destroyed. A team from the Secretariat was deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic this week to verify the destruction of these two sites.
10. Progress on the destruction of the remaining declared Category 1 chemical weapons continues, and 96.3% had been destroyed as at 31 May. In the United States of America, destruction operations resumed at the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP) on 13 June. The PCAPP Explosive Destruction System (EDS) started the second campaign of the disposal of problematic munitions on 25 June.
11. The construction and systemisation activities at the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP) and the Static Detonation Chamber (SDC) have continued. The start of operations at the BGCAPP main facility is still planned for April 2020. However, the SDC is now scheduled to begin destruction operations in the summer of 2019. At present, the United States of America has destroyed 25,154 metric tonnes (MT), or 90.6% of its declared Category 1 chemical weapons stockpile.
12. China and Japan have continued to make progress on excavations, recovery, and destruction operations. As at 1 June, over 62,600 items of abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) had been recovered, of which 49,607 ACW items had been verified as destroyed by the Secretariat. In Haerbaling, the Secretariat carried out one excavation and recovery inspection in May, one destruction inspection in June, and three storage inspections (two in March and one in June). Furthermore, the 28th tripartite meeting was hosted in Tokyo on 6 and 7 June.
13. During the intersessional period, one inspection of an old chemical weapon (OCW) was conducted at a site in the Netherlands. Whilst destruction operations of OCWs in other States Parties have made considerable progress, recoveries continue.
14. At its Eighty-Third Session, the Council requested the Secretariat to undertake a visit to the former chemical weapons storage site in Ruwagha, Libya. The security situation has not allowed this to happen; however, sampling of the site commenced on 26 March.

15. Libyan technicians, who received training from the Secretariat, were on-site at the former chemical weapons storage facility, while a Secretariat inspection team witnessed the sample collection in real time via satellite feed and satellite phone. Sampling operations concluded on 5 April with the collection of 29 samples, which were shipped to the OPCW Laboratory. The results of the analysis will be published prior to the next session of the Council. Secretariat personnel will present footage from the Libyan operation in the Ooms Room during the break on Thursday for interested States Parties.
16. Turning now to the upcoming Review Conference, the Secretariat has been assisting the States Parties to get ready for it by supporting the Open-Ended Working Group on Preparations for the Fourth Review Conference through a series of presentations and issuing a comprehensive Note (WGRC-4/S/1, dated 29 May 2018). An update of the Note will be issued before the Review Conference.
17. As part of its efforts to implement the Council's decision on "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors" (EC-86/DEC.9, dated 13 October 2017), the OPCW hosted the first Conference on Countering Chemical Terrorism on 7 and 8 June. Participants from capitals and delegations, representing more than 65 States Parties, as well as representatives from the chemical industry, non-governmental organisations, and academia attended the conference. A report on the discussions will be issued soon. This event underlined the widely shared concern about chemical terrorism and the contribution that the OPCW and the Convention can make to tackling this threat.
18. Yesterday, a meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, chaired by H.E. Ambassador Oji Nyimenuate Ngofa of Nigeria, was held at the OPCW Headquarters. The Working Group continued its deliberations, focusing on the question of international legal cooperation.
19. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) met for its Twenty-Seventh Session from 19 to 23 March. The report (SAB-27/1, dated 23 March 2018) has been circulated to States Parties, along with my response (EC-88/DG.5, dated 9 May 2018). During the session, the Board completed its report on developments in science and technology for the Fourth Review Conference. This report (RC-4/DG.1, dated 30 April 2018) provides a substantive review of scientific developments since the Third Review Conference.
20. Following the Fifty-Ninth Meeting of the Council, I tasked the SAB with providing advice on toxic chemicals that have been identified as new types of nerve agents (S/1621/2018, dated 2 May 2018). The SAB has completed its work and a report has been released (SAB-28/WP/1, dated 3 July 2018). The findings provide a factual basis on which the States Parties can discuss the relevance to the Convention of these new types of nerve agents.
21. I wish to express my appreciation to the Vice-Chairperson of the SAB, Dr Cheng Tang, who briefed States Parties yesterday on the content of the report.

22. We have learned that one of the two individuals recently exposed to a nerve agent in the United Kingdom has passed away. The other remains in a critical condition in hospital. The OPCW stands ready to provide technical assistance if requested by the United Kingdom.
23. Furthermore, I have decided, in consultation with Ambassador Arias, to set up a small group of experts from the Secretariat to develop a draft fact sheet on new nerve agents containing initial advice and guidance on protection, specifically field detection, medical treatment, and consequence management. This draft will be circulated to States Parties for their possible inputs.
24. I am pleased to inform the Council that after an extensive search, we are currently in negotiations with the Municipality of Pijnacker-Nootdorp to procure a plot of land suitable for the construction of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology. A briefing on this project took place yesterday.
25. I would like to thank Canada and Indonesia for agreeing to co-coordinate the informal Friends of the OPCW Laboratory Group. I encourage States Parties to join and actively contribute to the work of this Group. The Laboratory project will create tangible benefits for the Secretariat and States Parties in the implementation of the Convention.
26. I also wish to extend my gratitude to the Government of Canada for announcing a contribution of CAD 7.5 million over three years to the OPCW Laboratory upgrade project in support of its aims under the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction. An additional EUR 2.5 million is currently required to fund the project for the remainder of this year. Accordingly, I would like to repeat my request to all States Parties for voluntary contributions, regardless of the size, to the trust fund that was created for this project.
27. As was the case in the 2017 Programme and Budget, the number of Article VI inspections planned for this year is 241. As at the end of June, 140 of these inspections had been carried out. This represents 58% of the 241 inspections provided for in this year's Programme and Budget.
28. In the area of international cooperation and assistance, since the last session of the Council, the Secretariat has delivered 33 courses, seminars, and workshops, including four events under the fourth phase of the Africa Programme.
29. In addition, the Secretariat has continued to provide support under the Mentorship and Partnership Programme, as well as the Fellowship Programme, the Programme for Support of Research Projects, and the Conference-Support Programme. I would like to take this opportunity to thank donor, hosting, and participating States Parties for their valuable contributions to our cooperation and assistance programmes.
30. In line with the results-oriented approach adopted by the Organisation, during the reporting period the Secretariat conducted an impact assessment of certain capacity-building programmes in the fields of national implementation and chemical safety and security. I encourage States Parties that have yet to participate in this process to do so.

31. Such efforts will enable the Secretariat to measure progress and align programmes with the needs of States Parties.
32. The provision of support to States Parties for the development and adoption of legislation implementing the Convention remains a priority. During the reporting period, the Secretariat ran tailor-made capacity-building programmes and delivered technical assistance in support of States Parties' legislative efforts.
33. To monitor its capacity-building and legislative support, the Secretariat circulated a letter to participating States Parties on the implementation of their follow-up plans. This is an important effort to ensure the effectiveness of programmes. I urge those States Parties that have not yet submitted their responses to do so as soon as possible.
34. With regard to assistance and protection, the Secretariat has continued to implement capacity-building activities in combination with its regionally-focused strategy aimed at fostering national and regional capacity to respond to chemical-related emergencies. In the reporting period, more than 300 first responders and other stakeholders from all regional groups benefitted from these activities.
35. Under the auspices of the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons, a symposium entitled "Medical Treatment of Chemical Weapons Victims: Challenges and Hopes" was held in The Hague on 28 and 29 June. The symposium was attended by 40 experts, including scientists, clinicians, and representatives of relevant international organisations, as well as non-governmental organisations. The key purposes of this gathering were to discuss various issues related to medical assistance for victims of chemical weapons and to encourage networking for the advancement of scientific collaboration in this field.
36. In the area of international cooperation, the Secretariat has continued its efforts to deliver on the three strategic programme areas under Article XI of the Convention, namely: integrated chemicals management, enhancing laboratory capabilities, and chemical knowledge promotion and exchange.
37. During the reporting period, the Secretariat organised one workshop in The Hague on the implementation of Article XI and three regional workshops in Cambodia, Chile, and Viet Nam on chemical safety and security. The Secretariat also organised analytical chemistry courses: one on analytical skills development, another for customs and forensic laboratories, one for women chemists, and one for Iraqi participants. To further enhance the role of women in promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry, a symposium on women in chemistry was organised in Canada.
38. I would like to draw the Council's attention to the issue of confidentiality and security. In the past several months, the Secretariat has observed a significant increase in the frequency and sophistication of malicious computer software directed against the Organisation. The Secretariat is taking the appropriate actions to counter these threats and a report will be issued as soon as practicable.

39. Turning now to technology, a new website for the OPCW has been developed. I wish to express my thanks to everyone who provided inputs through consultations, surveys, and testing to ensure the website meets the needs of the OPCW's stakeholders for the years to come. Before we launch the website near the end of July, please join us for a demonstration this Friday in the Ooms Room.
40. As reported to the Council at its last regular session, work on the enterprise resource planning (ERP) system was delayed. The design of the core solution was subject to review in March 2018 and is being finalised with a view to enabling a go-live of the core solution in late 2018. The implementation of the talent management component of the ERP system is ongoing and the component will be delivered in 2018.
41. Last week I presented the draft Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2019, which is now available (EC-89/CRP.1, dated 6 July 2018). To ensure cost-effectiveness, the Programme and Budget has once again been formulated following the principles of results-based management and zero-nominal growth. As is the practice, budget consultations will be forthcoming.

Madam Chairperson,

42. This concludes my update; the full text of my statement will be circulated. I would now like to share with the Council some personal reflections.
43. A few days from now I will conclude my tenure as Director-General and hand over charge to Director-General designate Ambassador Fernando Arias.
44. These last eight years have been significant for the Organisation and memorable for me personally. Having dedicated a substantial part of my professional life to the cause of this Organisation, it is but natural for me to look at the balance sheet.
45. The Convention and this Organisation are manifestations of the international community's resolve to eliminate completely chemical weapons from the world and to prevent their re-emergence. That is also the essence of our work at the Secretariat.
46. We would do well to remind ourselves of the great contribution that you, the States Parties, have collectively made in advancing the cause of international peace and security. And it is only you who can ensure that the protections of the Chemical Weapons Convention continue to remain effective for all of us.
47. Few international bodies can show a record of successes such as those that belong to the OPCW.
48. It is only in the area of chemical weapons that there exists a comprehensive legal regime against the development, production, stockpiling, or use of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.
49. Verification is integral both as an assurance against activities prohibited under the Convention and to provide oversight of the destruction of existing stockpiles. With 96% of those having been eliminated, a historic moment awaits us.

50. Habits of routine can cause us to forget that the story of the Convention is not ordinary but epochal. It represents not only a singular contribution to disarmament and non-proliferation, but also a contribution to the diffusion of civilised norms of behaviour without which peace and progress remain elusive. The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the OPCW in 2013 fully recognised this merit.
51. The strong, vibrant, and adaptable OPCW of today has been 21 years in the making. Over the years, hundreds of dedicated individuals and the commitment of States Parties have created the systems to implement the various facets of the Convention and to place the Organisation on a strong footing for the future.
52. If the verification regime has enhanced our sense of security, our international cooperation programmes have created goodwill and a culture of interaction conducive to maintaining our advance towards defined goals.
53. Time brings change. The environment for our work and our mission is today far different from what it was when I took over. We were then required to adapt the Organisation to a new operational paradigm.
54. Progressively, the reduced workload of verification of destruction impacted the distribution of our resources and the structure of the Secretariat. The OPCW's relevance in the post-destruction phase began to be questioned. Some estimates of levels of funding that were being mentioned would have been inadequate to maintain a viable international organisation.
55. It was important to maintain course. The Convention embodies a commitment to ensure that chemical weapons are not only destroyed, but that they never re-emerge. Serving this permanent goal needed to be balanced against temptations of drastic retrenchment.
56. Preserving the specialised skills, knowledge, and experience of the Organisation and maintaining an adequate capacity to cater to the possibility of new States declaring chemical weapons were and remain critical. Without these, the Organisation would falter in adequately delivering on its core business.
57. Starting in 2011 with the Advisory Panel on Future Priorities of the OPCW, a dialogue was established and work was undertaken in order to make the Organisation fit for purpose. Several retreats were organised. Today, we are in a position to clearly identify the road map and to give content to a vision that will serve the norms of the Convention well into the future.
58. We have succeeded in maintaining an effective and efficient Organisation that guarantees that mechanisms to promote the norm and to enforce the prohibition are always available to the international community.
59. Today, while our deliberations continue to address future priorities, we do so with confidence and a sense of purpose.
60. We are, however, also confronted as never before by the challenge of protecting the fundamental norms of the Convention.

61. The use of chemical weapons in Syria in 2013 was a defining moment for the OPCW. It eventually led to our mission in Syria. Its success is owed to States Parties and the European Union with their generous contributions and to the dedication of OPCW and United Nations staff.
62. Subsequently, our work in Syria has been crucial in strengthening the authority of the Convention. The Fact-Finding Mission and the Declaration Assessment Team have demonstrated the high level of expertise and professionalism of the Secretariat.
63. At the beginning of our involvement in Syria, we knew we were at a major crossroads. While our work is justifiably regarded as being of a technical nature, the governance environment of the Organisation, namely, the oversight of States Parties, is by definition political.
64. The context of our work in Syria has been no different. The OPCW is a microcosm reflecting the realities of the wider world. It cannot forever remain immune from external subjective preferences and influences.
65. We can only hope that the larger tragedy of Syria will soon end; that the international community and the Syrian people will find a path to peace. On our part, we need to find a way of bridging any divides that may damage the OPCW.
66. We need to revert to the cooperative spirit, for ours is not a single-point agenda. Old threats persist. New ones pose grave challenges.
67. The OPCW is indispensable to the world by virtue of its aims and objectives. It has been made strong through the hard work and commitment of both the Secretariat and the States Parties. This makes me hopeful without any doubts about the future of the Organisation.
68. To continue on the path of progress and consolidation, I would invite this Council and the States Parties to consider a few additional areas for attention and investment of resources.
69. The Technical Secretariat has consistently demonstrated its ability to shoulder ever-diversifying tasks and responsibilities. It is important to look at ways and means of reinforcing its capacity and capabilities.
70. A well-defined and substantive role for the Organisation in dealing with chemical terrorism is facilitated by the decision adopted by the Executive Council entitled "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors". It is a vital step in establishing the parameters for the Organisation to contribute substantively towards preventing and responding to the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors.
71. We have laid the foundations for greater collaboration between international organisations, for the nature of terrorism dictates global and concerted action.
72. Disarmament and non-proliferation are the two pillars of the Convention that serve the core security interests of our entire membership.

73. The other two pillars are international cooperation, and assistance and protection against chemical weapons. Together, the four pillars hold the structure of our exemplary multilateral organisation.
74. This is also true for programmes in the area of assistance and protection, where additionally, in case of a chemical weapons attack, States Parties can now call upon the OPCW's newly established Rapid Response and Assistance Mission capabilities. The establishment of this mission should be seen as another example of the adaptability of the Organisation.
75. Our recent investigative work has once again underscored the importance of science in the context of the Convention. These assignments were governed by the principles of science and the application of standard methodologies. We have raised the level of contribution by the Scientific Advisory Board and the work of its various subgroups. It is my hope that this momentum will be carried forward to ensure that the Convention and its verification regime remain in step with developments in the field of science and technology. The new Centre for Chemistry and Technology will be an important asset in this regard.
76. As an Organisation whose membership draws from across all continents and economic tiers, interest in OPCW capacity-building programmes is legitimate and important. The Convention and its objectives stand to benefit by greater attention being paid to the need for refining and enhancing such programmes.
77. In other words, further progress in strengthening all four pillars of the Convention will contribute immensely to reinforcing world-wide political support for the Convention.
78. And not just political support at the governmental level, but also at public levels, is crucial simply because ethical and moral principles are the very foundations of the Convention.
79. Knowledge about the Convention at different societal and occupational levels will generate greater awareness of how citizenry and professionals alike can participate in advancing the imperatives of peace in a globalised world. Needless to say that in this endeavour, not just the efforts of a well-resourced Secretariat, but particularly the work of bodies such as the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, occupy a prominent place.
80. In conclusion, as I leave with the best of memories and a sense of satisfaction, I wish to thank the Executive Council and States Parties, as well as other stakeholders, for the support and courtesies extended to me. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretariat staff for their contributions, their dedication, and commitment.
81. I want to express my gratitude in particular to Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao, Deputy Director-General, Bob Fairweather, Chief of Cabinet, and Aamir Shouket, Deputy Chief of Cabinet. The path we have trodden together was for a cause that is worth all the sacrifice of time and energy that it demands. I leave with contentment and gratitude, and confident in the OPCW's future because, after all is said and done, this Organisation is indispensable to all of us.

Chemical demilitarisation and verification

82. As at 31 May 2018, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the possessor States Parties of 67,867 MT, or 96.3% of all declared Category 1 chemical weapons.

United States of America

83. The PCAPP facility had destroyed 229.512 MT of mustard agent by 31 May 2018. The destruction operations of mustard agent-filled M104 and M110 155-mm projectiles resumed on 13 June 2018. The facility has continued the reconfiguration of mustard agent-filled M60 105-mm boxed munitions. The energetic components removed from these reconfigured munitions have been regularly shipped to and destroyed at the PCAPP's non-contiguous SDC, located in Anniston, Alabama.
84. On 25 June 2018, the PCAPP-EDS facility started the destruction of the 88 problematic munitions that have either been identified as rejects from the PCAPP or which were leaking in storage.
85. The BGCAPP has completed 100% of construction work, and systemisation is currently at 62.6%. Similarly to Pueblo, the United States of America will supplement destruction efforts by the use of the SDC to destroy chemical munitions considered unsafe for destruction at the BGCAPP facility. Construction work and systemisation for the SDC now stand at 93.3% and 80% complete, respectively.

Declarations

86. Since the last Council session there have been no changes with regard to the late submission of initial declarations, with only one State Party yet to submit under Articles III and VI of the Convention. Concerning the State of Palestine, the Secretariat has extended assistance to help this State Party to fulfil its obligations regarding the submission of initial declarations, which are due by 16 July.
87. In November 2017, the Secretariat sent a letter¹ to all States Parties inviting them to assess whether their declarations on riot control agents are accurate and up to date, as required by the Convention. As at today's date, fewer than 20% of States Parties have responded to this letter. I appeal to the States Parties that have not done so to review their declarations and inform the Secretariat of the results.
88. In relation to annual declarations, the Council received a status report on the timely submission of declarations under Article VI for the period from 1 January to 31 May 2018 (EC-88/DG.14, dated 20 June 2018) for its consideration at this session.
89. The timeliness of submissions of annual declarations on past activities (ADPA) has remained consistent over the last five years. As at 31 May 2018, 88% of the States Parties with declarable facilities and/or declarable activities had submitted their ADPA 2017 on time.

¹ L/VER/DEB/212700/17, dated 21 November 2017.

90. In the case of annual declarations of anticipated activities (ADAA), 96% of States Parties with declarable facilities and/or activities submitted at least part of their ADAA 2018 on time. I welcome this improvement and I call upon the States Parties to keep up the timely submission of their annual declarations.

Article VI inspections

91. To date in 2018, Article VI inspections involving sampling and analysis have been completed at four Schedule 2 plant sites and one OCPF² plant site. Therefore, the total number of Article VI inspections in which the GC-MS³ sampling and analysis methodology was used has reached 109 to date.
92. Consultations under the Industry Cluster held this week addressed preparations for the forthcoming Fourth Review Conference. This included discussions on the recommendations of the Scientific Advisory Board, a presentation by the International Council of Chemical Associations to the Open-Ended Working Group on Preparations for the Fourth Review Conference, and the Article VI topics open since the Third Review Conference. Delegations presented further findings from their surveys on biomediated processes, and the Secretariat stands ready to support them as they decide on the appropriate recommendation to make to the Council in this regard. The Secretariat also presented information regarding inspection frequency in light of current site selection parameters.

Inspectorate training

93. During the reporting period, the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell of the Inspectorate Division provided or coordinated 16 individual training courses. The courses comprised 450 inspector days and 202 instructor days and included a total of 181 participants. Some of the instructors were directly engaged in the Secretariat's regional or national capacity-building programmes for States Parties, such as the assistance and protection courses organised in Argentina, Bangladesh, Belarus, Nepal, and the Republic of Korea.
94. From 21 to 25 May, a team of inspectors participated in the multinational exercise "Balkan Response", which was organised by the Serbian Ministry of Defence at the CBRN⁴ training centre in Kruševac, Serbia. The exercise scenario was based on short-notice preparation and deployment of a team to conduct an investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons by a non-State actor. During the exercise, the team set up communications lines with the headquarters, performed toxic entry in the incident area to identify the extent of chemical contamination, conducted interviews with potential victims and witnesses, and reviewed relevant documents and records.

² OCPF = other chemical production facility.

³ GC-MS = gas chromatography-mass spectrometry.

⁴ CBRN= chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear.

95. From 18 to 22 June, the Inspectorate conducted a four-day contingency-operation enhancement field exercise at the same training centre in Serbia. The exercise was based on experience gained in recent actual contingency operations and was delivered to members of the Inspectorate Contingency Operations Core Team by members of the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell, in close cooperation with other units of the Secretariat.
96. From 5 to 16 March, the Inspectorate conducted specialised practical courses on non-destructive evaluation techniques, levels I and II, at the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store in Rijswijk, which were continued at training areas of the Belgian armed forces.
97. On 20 and 21 March, the instructors from the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell of the Inspectorate offered an introductory course on the use of self-contained breathing apparatus at the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store.
98. On 26 March, the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell offered an initial course on toxic plume dispersion modelling, which can be used during investigations of alleged use and by the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission.
99. From 21 to 27 April, the OPCW conducted its second course in 2018 on “Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments” (SSAFE) for inspectors and other Secretariat staff at the training area of the United Nations System Staff College in Turin, Italy, under supervision of the OPCW SSAFE instructors.
100. From 28 May to 1 June, the instructors from the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell coordinated and delivered a training course in Belgium for inspectors and other Secretariat staff on the identification of OCWs. Participants are now certified OCW experts.
101. From 11 to 15 June, the OPCW annual toxic chemical training refresher course was organised with the support of the Serbian Ministry of Defence at the CBRN training centre in Kruševac, Serbia.
102. During the reporting period, the United States of America continued to provide the refresher course on “Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response”, a requirement under United States regulations for individuals who operate within the United States CWDFs.
103. Finally, I would like to thank Belgium, Serbia, and the United States of America for the technical and in-kind support provided during the reporting period for these training modules for inspectors.

Specialised information technology solutions for verification

104. The Secretariat continues its modernisation of specialist IT solutions for verification-related routine and non-routine activities.

Enterprise content management system

105. The Verification Division continues with the phased implementation of the enterprise content management system aimed at facilitating and enhancing the management of information and at streamlining business processes related to verification-related activities and to other classified information. The first phase focuses on configuration and customisation of the system to provide initial document and records management, as well as workflow functionalities, along with additional functionalities required to support the management of information related to non-routine missions.

Data analytics tool

106. The first phase of the data analytics project was completed in May 2018, bringing together declarations and inspections data in a consolidated data warehouse. This will result in easier integration of new analytical tools or data sources to the data flows, following evolving requirements of improved reporting.

EDNA and SIX

107. In 2017, 54 States Parties prepared their annual declarations using the electronic declaration tool for National Authorities (EDNA) which equates to more than 98% of declared plant sites. Use of the Secure Information Exchange (SIX) system has increased, with a total of 56 States Parties employing it, which represents an increase of 19% in comparison to the year-end of 2017. The SIX system is now available for participating States Parties to exchange issues regarding transfer discrepancies in a fast and secure way, using the Secretariat as a hub.

International cooperation and assistance

Implementation support

108. The Secretariat continues to support bilateral cooperation between National Authorities on various Convention-related issues. Under the Mentorship and Partnership Programme, representatives of the National Authority of Cuba visited the Plurinational State of Bolivia in May and representatives of the National Authority of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland visited Nigeria in June. This initiative has proved useful to promoting peer-to-peer cooperation and aiding effective implementation.
109. A national legal workshop for Iraq on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention was held at the OPCW Headquarters in The Hague from 4 to 6 April. The workshop was designed to provide technical assistance to Iraq in order to address the gaps in its existing legislative and regulatory framework, and was attended by five representatives from the Iraqi National Monitoring Authority, the Higher Judicial Council, and the National Security Council. As part of a results-oriented approach, the Iraqi representatives also discussed the next steps they would take in order to move forward on the adoption of the new law.

110. A national awareness-raising and legislative assistance workshop on the implementation of the Convention was organised by the Ministry of Defence of Brunei Darussalam in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, on 11 and 12 April 2018. At the end of the workshop, Brunei prepared a revised draft law and committed to bringing together the relevant stakeholders to develop recommendations on the formal designation of a National Authority.
111. A general training course on the Convention for the personnel of National Authorities and relevant stakeholders was held in The Hague from 9 to 13 April 2018. The course helped to further improve the knowledge and skills of key personnel to enable them to effectively discharge their responsibilities in implementing the Convention. This year, 72 participants from 54 States Parties attended and benefitted from the course.
112. The subregional stakeholders' forum on advancing national implementation of the Convention and regional cooperation was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 24 to 26 April. This pilot activity targeted the Southeast Asian subregion with the aim of cultivating the means to enhance national implementation through available regional platforms, particularly the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Representatives of nine ASEAN countries, two ASEAN dialogue partner-States, and collaborative partners attended. The forum produced a set of recommendations for additional follow-up and implementation.
113. The regional meetings of National Authorities of States Parties in three respective regions were held in May and June: in Prague, the Czech Republic, for Eastern Europe; in Thimphu, Bhutan, for Asia; and in Marrakesh, Morocco, for Africa. The meeting in the GRULAC⁵ region had to be postponed until this week due to the volcanic eruption in the host country, Guatemala. The focus of this year's meetings included, among other things, the role of customs administration and relevant stakeholders in the trade of chemicals, the transfers regime in the implementation of the Convention, and the concept of a national framework for effective national implementation.
114. On 28 February, the Secretariat circulated a note verbale requesting States Parties to provide information on the status of their national implementation. The information will be incorporated into the annual reports on the status of implementation of Article VII of the Convention for the period from 2017 to 2018. The Secretariat has received responses from a number of States Parties. I wish to encourage those States Parties that have yet to respond to do so as soon as possible, to enable the Secretariat to accurately reflect their status of implementation.

Assistance and protection

115. During the reporting period, three regional training cycles were initiated: one in Bangladesh for the countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation in March; one in Nepal for Asian States Parties in April; and one in Panama for GRULAC States Parties, also in April. Between March and June, courses on assistance and protection were conducted in the Republic of Korea, Argentina, Brazil, Belarus, Turkey, and Switzerland.

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GRULAC = Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

116. Under the fourth phase of the Africa Programme, a planning and coordination meeting was held in Algiers, Algeria, in May with a view to identifying risks, threats, and training needs in the North Africa and Sahel region. Also, table-top exercises were conducted in Zambia in April for the Southern African Development Community.
117. The Secretariat remains committed to providing hands-on training opportunities for emergency management personnel to ensure that the specific requirements for coping with a chemical attack are considered and built into response planning. To this end, table-top exercises were organised in Indonesia for Asian States Parties in April.
118. To encourage further training at the national level and to promote the sustainability of OPCW capacity-building efforts, the Secretariat continued to implement the instructor development and exchange programme, and made full use of the “train-the-trainers” approach. With this objective in mind, an international train-the-trainers course was held in the Czech Republic in May.
119. In addition to these chemical response training events, the Secretariat also maintained its specialised programmes, equipping participants from numerous countries with specific knowledge and skills. For training in the sampling and analysis of live agents, two courses were carried out in Poland (14 to 18 May) and Slovakia (4 to 14 June). A training course on pre-hospital care was also conducted in Belarus (11 to 14 June).
120. In May, the Permanent Representation of Mexico to the OPCW informed the Secretariat of that State Party’s intention to make a contribution of EUR 5,000 to the Voluntary Fund for Assistance in line with subparagraph 7(a) of Article X of the Convention. This contribution will be made effective in the course of 2018.

International cooperation

121. Under the fourth phase of the Africa Programme, the Secretariat organised an analytical chemistry course at the Protechnik Laboratories in South Africa to enhance the abilities of regional chemists to analyse Convention-related materials. In addition, the Secretariat has distributed a questionnaire to African laboratories to assess the current capacities of the analytical laboratories in the region to analyse Convention-related materials. Furthermore, under the Fellowship Programme, sponsorship was given to three African scientists from Botswana, Cameroon, and Uganda. One African academic institution in South Africa hosted a fellow.
122. Under the Conference-Support Programme, 22 participants were sponsored by the Secretariat to take part in six scientific events and conferences organised in areas related to chemistry and Convention implementation as part of efforts related to chemical knowledge promotion and exchange. The Secretariat also continued its support of 12 research projects that are funded solely by the OPCW.
123. The Secretariat organised the third edition of the “Review and Evaluation Workshop on the Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI” (C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011) at the OPCW Headquarters on 2 May 2018. Seventy participants from 41 States Parties representing National Authorities, Permanent Representations, and relevant stakeholders participated in the workshop. The workshop provided a platform for the OPCW Member States’

representatives to share needs, experiences, lessons learned, and best practices related to the implementation of Article XI.

124. Under the Equipment-Exchange Programme, the Secretariat is in the process of identifying a beneficiary for an available fume hood.

OPCW Laboratory

125. The OPCW Laboratory has completed the Forty-Third Environmental Proficiency Test, with eight laboratories from eight States Parties participating. Also, the Third Biomedical Proficiency Test has been concluded, involving 22 participants from 18 States Parties. Finally, the second exercise on biotoxin analysis, which was started in December, has also been concluded. Twenty-one laboratories from 18 States Parties participated.
126. As a result, our designated laboratory system remains strong. After the last round of proficiency tests, laboratories from Pakistan and Romania fulfilled the requirements for designation; in the case of Pakistan, for the first time. Both laboratories recently received their designation certificates and I would like to congratulate them on this achievement. We currently have 22 laboratories from 18 States Parties that are designated for the analysis of environmental samples and 17 laboratories from 13 States Parties designated for the analysis of biomedical samples.
127. This network of laboratories remains critical to our mission. In the first half of 2018 up to the present date, eight of our partner laboratories have already analysed more than 100 samples in support of our various missions. With frequent sample analysis ongoing at the OPCW designated laboratories, the importance of this network continues to be high. I wish to thank those laboratories that have worked on OPCW samples recently for their assistance.
128. We also see some progress on negotiating technical agreements with laboratories. Nonetheless, 11 designated laboratories from nine States Parties have not yet entered into such an agreement with the Secretariat. I wish to take this opportunity to urge all laboratories that have not yet made an agreement with the Secretariat to actively do so.

Scientific Advisory Board

129. I would like to express my appreciation to the SAB, especially its Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, who briefed States Parties last month on their report at the meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on Preparations for the Fourth Review Conference, for the valuable contribution it has made to the preparations for the Fourth Review Conference. With a view to assisting States Parties in their preparations, particularly with regard to any policy changes that might be necessary on the basis of scientific and technological changes, I have circulated a response to the SAB (RC-4/DG.2, dated 1 June 2018).

130. Furthermore, I encourage all delegations to attend today's Science for Diplomats lunch-time side event in the Ooms Room, where the SAB will brief participants on its advice to the Fourth Review Conference regarding the Annex on Chemicals, as well as its findings related to the request for advice on new types of nerve agents relevant to the schedules.
131. With the work of the SAB becoming increasingly important in ensuring that our decision-making processes maintains the necessary levels of scientific literacy, I would like to take this opportunity to remind delegations that the deadline for submission of nominations for open positions on the SAB, 31 August 2018, is fast approaching. I also continue to encourage States Parties to consider the Secretariat's call for voluntary contributions to support the work of the SAB (S/1569/2018, dated 16 January 2018). In regard to voluntary contributions, I wish to thank Australia for its recent contribution to the SAB trust fund.

Update of OPCW tools

132. The Secretariat is preparing the next update of the OPCW tools for the identification of scheduled chemicals in order to include new chemicals declared by States Parties since 2014, as well as those that have been assigned a Chemical Abstracts Service registry number.
133. The Secretariat is also working to update the Handbook on Chemicals and the OPCW's online chemicals database to include all new chemicals with relevant identifiers, including new 2017 versions of the Harmonized System (HS) codes.

Cooperation with the World Customs Organization

134. In the area of identifying traded scheduled chemicals by allocating unique codes, the Secretariat's work with the World Customs Organization (WCO) is ongoing. As a result, in January 2017 the WCO provisionally adopted a list of 15 additional scheduled chemicals to be included in the next edition of the HS in 2022.
135. From 9 to 30 April, the WCO, under the Strategic Trade Control Enforcement Programme, conducted its "Operation Cosmo 2" in cooperation with the OPCW and other international organisations. The goal was to detect and prevent illicit trafficking of strategic goods in international supply chains, including the most traded scheduled chemicals. The Secretariat supported the WCO in this operation, by providing a liaison officer.
136. In order to allow the exchange of sensitive information during the operation, the SIX system was used as a means of secure communications between the Secretariat and the WCO.

Survey on the Implementation of National Measures regarding the Collection and Declaration of Import and Export Data for Schedule 2 and 3 Chemicals

137. As at 14 June 2018, 75 States Parties had responded to the “Survey on the Implementation of National Measures regarding the Collection and Declaration of Import and Export Data for Schedule 2 and 3 Chemicals” (S/1511/2017, dated 5 July 2017). Based on these responses, industry and traders have been identified as the primary stakeholders in data collection for trade declarations, followed by customs officials, licences, and end users. Seventy percent of States Parties using customs officials as a source for data collection have indicated in their responses that they had implemented the latest version of the HS effective from 1 January 2017, which includes the unique HS codes for 33 of the most traded scheduled chemicals. More detailed results will be found during the analysis of transfer discrepancies in the ADPA for 2017.

Engagement with the scientific community

138. Maintaining visibility within the scientific community remains a priority for the Secretariat, and since the last session of the Council I have personally addressed the leadership of the American Chemical Society and the Royal Society of Chemistry. The Secretariat has continued to provide presentations at scientific conferences, including to the toxic chemical inhalation section of the American Thoracic Society, the Green and Sustainable Chemistry Conference, and the International Conference on Pure and Applied Chemistry. In addition, the SAB has submitted its advice on sample stability and storage to a peer-reviewed scientific journal, the first such publication by the Board featuring its entire membership as contributing authors.

Privileges and immunities

139. In welcome developments, a bilateral agreement on privileges and immunities between Romania and the OPCW entered into force on 2 May and a bilateral agreement on privileges and immunities between Bahrain and the OPCW entered into force on 8 June. I take this opportunity to remind States Parties that have not yet concluded or ratified such agreements of the value of doing so at the earliest opportunity.

External relations

140. Since mid-March, the Secretariat has received visits from 38 groups of public visitors, a total of 874 people, at OPCW Headquarters.
141. During the intersessional period, I have paid visits to the United States of America, Spain, Switzerland, Viet Nam, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Italy. In March, I briefed the United Nations Security Council in New York and met with H.E. Mr António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General; H.E. Ms Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs; and H.E. Mr Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism. I spoke at the national meeting of the American Chemical Society in New Orleans and contributed to a session on ethics in science. In the same month, I met in Madrid with H.E. Mr Alfonso Dastis, Minister of

Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain; H.E. Ms María Dolores Cospedal, Minister of Defence; and H.E. Mr Ildefonso Castro, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. I also participated in a discussion at the International Affairs and Foreign Policy Institute (INCIPE). During my March visit to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Geneva, I addressed the 138th Assembly and met with H.E. Ms Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President of the IPU; and H.E. Mr Martin Chungong, Secretary-General of the IPU. In May, I visited Viet Nam, where I met H.E. Mr Do Thang Hai, Viet Nam's Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry and Head of the National Authority; and H.E. Mr Ha Kim Ngoc, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. During this trip, I delivered a keynote address at an international conference on "Science for Development" and visited the Chemical Command Laboratory at Viet Nam's Ministry of Defence. Also in May, I travelled to London, where I held a meeting with the Rt Hon Earl Howe, Minister of State for Defence of the Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I also spoke at several locations, including the 21st International Chemical Weapons Demilitarisation Conference in London, the Royal Society of Chemistry, and a panel discussion at Chatham House. In late May, I delivered a keynote speech at the University of Rome Tor Vergata and addressed a Master's programme open day. In June, I travelled to Washington D.C., where I met with government officials of the United States, including Mr John Sullivan, Deputy Secretary of State. I also gave a keynote speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

142. Since the last session of the Council, seven new permanent representatives to the OPCW have presented their letters of credentials. These included Andorra, Eswatini, Lebanon, Montenegro, Palestine, and Thailand.
143. Applications are now open for the ninth edition of the T.M.C. Asser Institute's Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction Training Programme, which will take place from 1 to 5 October. I appeal to you to encourage diplomats from The Hague and your capitals, National Authority representatives, industry practitioners, and other early- to mid-career professionals to register via the Asser Institute's website and participate in this worthwhile training programme.

Administration and financial matters

144. In July, the Human Resources Branch (HRB) is launching an integrated approach to staff management entitled "People Strategy 2020". This approach will include the development of a comprehensive on-boarding process for new staff, leadership training, and diversity and gender initiatives such as the establishment of a gender network for women in (and aspiring to) leadership and a coaching programme for emerging female leaders.
145. The HRB has also streamlined the short-term appointment modalities, recruitment processes, and performance management. This includes redesigning the current web-based systems for recruitment and performance management to become increasingly employee-focused and less process-driven. Use of the redesigned systems will begin in the third quarter of 2018.

146. In May, the Secretariat started a comprehensive review of the tenure policy, with the intention of presenting the Conference of the States Parties at its Twenty-Third Session with an analysis of the implications of the OPCW's tenure policy, both now and into the future.
147. The OPCW has successfully established a Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programme within the Organisation, and we expect the first JPOs to join the OPCW in the last quarter of 2018.
148. As at June 30, the collection level for 2018 assessed contributions was 58.09%, compared to 77.79% on the same date last year. It is important to note that cash inflows are considerably lower than forecast and, should this situation continue, it is possible that the Working Capital Fund may have to be utilised in July—significantly earlier than the end of the year, as initially forecast. I urge States Parties that have not yet paid their outstanding contributions to do so at the earliest and in full.
149. In accordance with the extension of the Tenancy Agreement for the OPCW Headquarters building through 2028, to date landlord contributions at a total value of EUR 1.15 million have been received and credited to the Working Capital Fund. In line with the agreed modified schedule of payment (S/1493/2017, dated 4 May 2017), an additional and final payment of EUR 250,000 is expected no later than 31 January 2019.
150. In June, the Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF) met for its Forty-Fourth Session, and considered a number of administrative and financial matters (ABAF-44/1, dated 8 June 2018 and Corr.1, dated 10 July 2018), including strategic financing approaches for the Organisation. I welcome the continuing advice and support provided by the ABAF and note that the Secretariat's response to the ABAF's report has been issued (EC-88/DG.18, dated 28 June 2018).
151. As reported to the Council at its last regular session, work on the ERP system was delayed. The design of the core solution was subject to review in March 2018 and is being finalised with a view to enabling a go-live of the core solution in late 2018. The implementation of the talent management component of the ERP system is ongoing and the component will be delivered in 2018.
152. The information technology strategy that was developed in 2016 and 2017 is now delivering significant improvements in productivity tools and systems across the Secretariat. Apart from ERP, major initiatives currently under way across the Secretariat include the redevelopment of the Verification Information System, new telecommunications capabilities for field staff, and modernisation of existing systems for email, telephony, and document management.
153. Improvements over the next 12 months in collaboration technology and the Extranet shall further enhance the Secretariat's ability to serve States Parties and will include new capabilities in EDNA, SIX, and the assistance and protection databank to provide better support for the declarations cycle. Furthermore, international cooperation and assistance events will be supported with the Eventus event management system, to manage course content and attendance.