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OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS NINETIETH SESSION

Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. I warmly welcome all delegations to the Ninetieth Session of the Executive Council. At the outset, allow me to acknowledge the Chairperson, Ambassador Jana Reinišová, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic; I wish to extend to her my gratitude for her continued able, generous, and effective guidance of the Council's work.
2. We commence our first session of the Council this year in a spirit of hope and determination. Last year, in addition to regular meetings of the policy-making organs, States Parties convened a Special Session of the Conference. They later met at the Fourth Review Conference. These were endeavours indicating their commitment to keeping the Convention strong and relevant, especially in the face of known challenges.
3. Last year, major developments concerning the OPCW took place and the year concluded with the Fourth Review Conference, during which States Parties exchanged views on a series of important themes affecting our work. I am confident that, in 2019, we will collectively continue to forge ahead towards realising the vision embedded in the Convention.
4. On 1 March, the Secretariat released the report of the Fact-Finding Mission's investigation regarding the reported use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Douma, Syrian Arab Republic. The incident occurred on 7 April 2018. ("Report of the Fact-Finding Mission Regarding the Incident of Alleged Use of Toxic Chemicals as a Weapon in Douma, Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 April 2018" (S/1731/2019, dated 1 March 2019)).
5. In the course of its mission, the FFM conducted interviews and carried out on-site visits that enabled the collection of environmental samples and the gathering of other data. The FFM analysed the collected data and witness testimonies, as well the results of the environmental and biomedical sample analyses and toxicological and ballistic analyses from experts.
6. The evaluation and analysis carried out by the FFM provide reasonable grounds that the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon took place on 7 April 2018. This toxic chemical contained reactive chlorine; the toxic chemical was likely molecular



chlorine. The Secretariat provided a briefing on the findings of the report to States Parties last week, on 5 March.

7. The Secretariat continues to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic on all issues related to our activities in that country. I met with Dr Faisal Mekdad, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic, last November, during the Twenty-Third Session of the Conference of the States Parties. In those discussions, Dr Mekdad and I agreed to continue working to identify ways forward on relevant issues in the framework of a structured dialogue.
8. From 4 to 8 February, a delegation from the Secretariat met with representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic in Beirut, Lebanon. Through constructive discussions, both sides agreed to take a number of steps that I hope will move us forward on these issues. A briefing on these discussions and the proposed next steps was given to States Parties on 21 February. The Secretariat will continue to brief States Parties on the progress being made in our engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic before each regular session of the Executive Council.
9. In this regard, a Syrian delegation will attend a technical meeting at OPCW Headquarters from 18 to 22 March to discuss the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies arising from Syria's chemical weapons declaration. The aim of this meeting is to review the status of issues, prioritise them, and develop a road map for future activities. The Secretariat has continued its activities regarding Syria's chemical weapons declaration. The results of the work of the Declaration Assessment Team have been made available to the Council (EC-90/HP/DG.1, dated 4 March 2019).
10. In response to a note verbale from the Syrian Arab Republic dated 28 November 2018, an advance team was deployed to Damascus from 4 to 6 December 2018. Their mission was to collect information provided by the Syrian National Authority regarding an incident of alleged use of chemicals as a weapon in Aleppo on 24 November 2018. The FFM deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic from 5 to 15 January 2019 to conduct interviews and visit hospitals in Aleppo, and to receive samples provided by the Syrian national authorities in Damascus. The Secretariat is analysing the collected information.
11. Under the coordination of Ambassador Santiago Oñate, the Secretariat continues to establish the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), pursuant to paragraph 10 of Conference decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018). The recruitment process of the members of the team is under way and is currently being finalised. The IIT will become fully operational in the coming weeks. During the consultations held in February, the Secretariat presented the future activities of the IIT to the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretariat will seek to secure the cooperation of the Syrian Government in the implementation of the decision adopted by the Conference of the States Parties.
12. Further resource requirements for 2019 of approximately EUR 1.3 million to support the IIT will be met through voluntary contributions. To date, approximately EUR 400,000 has been contributed or pledged to support the IIT's work. I thank

Denmark, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for their contributions.

13. The decision that underpins the IIT (C-SS-4/DEC.3) reflects the priority that States Parties give to upholding the global ban against chemical weapons. At the end of last year, States Parties signalled the need for the Convention to evolve and adapt to the shifting security landscape and evolving threats.
14. The Chemical Weapons Convention was signed in 1993 and entered into force in 1997. With the subsequent lapse of so much time and developments in fields of relevance, the need to review the Annex on Chemicals was to be expected. Last year, for the first time in its history, the Secretariat received such proposals. The Secretariat evaluated the proposals thoroughly, professionally, and independently, in accordance with the process and timelines set out in Article XV of the Convention.
15. Since the last regular Session of the Council, two meetings of the Council – the Sixty-Second on 14 January and Sixty-Third on 25 February – have been convened to examine these proposals. During these meetings, the Council made recommendations on each of the proposals and the process is now following the timelines laid out under Article XV of the Chemical Weapons Convention.
16. This development illustrates the concerns expressed by States Parties that security-related challenges are on the rise. The need to address them for the sake of our collective security has become imperative.
17. Yesterday, experts from Germany presented a case involving the production and stockpiling of ricin, a Schedule 1 agent, to the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism. I thank Germany for sharing its valuable experience. Such briefings add substance to our endeavours for enhancing the role of the OPCW in countering terrorism. I further thank States Parties for their involvement in the work of this essential working group.
18. Upgrading the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store to become a Centre for Chemistry and Technology will be critical to meeting these challenges. I am pleased to report that progress is continuing on this important initiative. The contributions received or pledged to date total approximately EUR 22 million. I wish to thank the Government of the Netherlands, our Host Country, which has pledged the financial support needed to acquire the land for the new centre. I wish also to extend my gratitude to the governments of Belgium, Canada, Estonia, France, Italy, Japan, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Spain, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as the European Union, for their generous pledges and contributions. This project will create tangible benefits for the international community and I renew my appeal to all States Parties to support it. A briefing on this project will take place tomorrow.
19. Central to our capacity to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons is our ability to attract, maintain, and develop a team of high calibre experts and specialists in the Secretariat. A highly trained work force will at all times be needed to anticipate and to deal with contingencies, including the possible use of chemical weapons. Additionally, we will have to be technically prepared for the possibility of new possessor States joining the Convention. The existing tenure policy has made it

increasingly difficult to recruit and to retain qualified, skilled, and experienced staff, particularly in specific technical areas.

20. In 2018, the Secretariat engaged independent experts to assess the impact of the tenure policy on the OPCW (EC-89/DG.28, dated 2 October 2018). The report of those experts puts forward a number of recommendations to ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of the tenure policy at the OPCW. I have listened carefully to States Parties on the challenges related to the tenure policy and ways to address them. The Secretariat stands ready to assist States Parties by producing a Note outlining ways to adapt this policy to reflect our organisational reality. It is important for States Parties to engage in a structured discussion and provide a basis for action by the policy-making organs before the end of the year.
21. In this connection, I also wish to inform you that the Deputy Director-General and I have carried out, since our arrival, extensive preliminary internal consultations with our Division Directors and Branch Heads in order to determine the resource requirements for the Organisation going into 2020. The information and data gathered will, in accordance with past practice, be shared with you and channelled into the 2020 budget preparation process. In this context, it is important to note that the United States of America is on track to meet the planned completion date for the destruction of its remaining stockpile. Together with other routine and contingency missions supported by the Inspectorate and Verification Divisions, destruction-related activities will require adequate resources. The Secretariat will keep States Parties apprised of any developments ahead of budget consultations.
22. Construction of the main plant at the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP) is now complete. Destruction operations at this facility are expected to begin in autumn 2019. Construction work and systemisation for the Static Detonation Chamber now stand at 98.5% and 93% completion, respectively, and this facility is scheduled to begin destruction operations in summer this year. The Secretariat conducted an initial visit to the BGCAPP in January.
23. In terms of the overall figure for destruction, 96.8% of declared chemical weapons had been destroyed as at 31 January 2019.
24. China and Japan have continued to make progress on excavations, recoveries, and destruction of abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) at various sites in China. As at 31 December 2018, around 71,750 items of ACWs had been recovered, of which approximately 52,500 ACWs have been verified by the Secretariat as destroyed.
25. At the Haerbaling site, the Secretariat carried out follow-up inspections of destruction operations and verified the destruction of 13,243 ACW items. A further estimated 330,000 ACW items are awaiting recovery and destruction. Preparations for the Harbin mobile destruction facility have been progressing and destruction operations are anticipated to begin on 27 April 2019.
26. Clean-up of the former chemical weapons site in Ruwagha, Libya, continues. The Secretariat, in collaboration with the Libyan National Authority, is overseeing the project to rinse, treat, and destroy Category 2 chemical material tanks and 350 metric tonnes of highly acidic effluent. I thank Cyprus, the European Union, Finland, New Zealand, and Spain for their generous support to this project.

27. As in previous years, 241 Article VI inspections are planned to take place in 2019. Of these, 11 are planned at Schedule 1 facilities, 42 at Schedule 2 plant sites, 19 at Schedule 3 plant sites, and 169 at other chemical production facilities.
28. Since the Eighty-Ninth Session of the Executive Council, the Secretariat has delivered 22 courses, seminars, and workshops in support of States Parties' efforts for the effective implementation of the Convention. This includes activities in the areas of national implementation, assistance and protection, and fostering the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes. The Secretariat has also continued to address the needs of African States Parties within the framework of the fourth phase of the Africa Programme.
29. Six seats on the Scientific Advisory Board are now open for nomination (S/1702/2018, dated 10 January 2019). I encourage States Parties to consider putting forward suitable experts for this important advisory body by 30 August. I also wish to congratulate Mr Cheng Tang and Dr Christophe Curty for their election as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for 2019.
30. The Advisory Board on Education and Outreach met from 26 to 28 February. I wish to congratulate Dr Jean Pascal Zanders and Dr Jo Husbands for their election as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for 2019. This year, the Board will develop practical tools for education and outreach, promote active learning, and evaluate the Secretariat's e-learning courses.
31. In December, the Secretariat launched the OPCW UpClose short video series, a youth outreach initiative co-funded by the European Union. The videos inspire the next generation to think about careers in international affairs and provide information on the work of the Organisation. Each video is subtitled in the six official languages of the OPCW. The videos were promoted through a multi-channel social media campaign that reached over 3.5 million people in its first month. This initiative is the OPCW's most successful social media campaign to date.
32. Finally, I wish to thank the outgoing Directors of the Inspectorate, Verification, the Secretariat for the Policy-Making Organs, and the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO), Mr Marcelo Kos, Mr Philippe Denier, Mr Konstantin Gavrilov, and Mr Alberto Dojas, respectively, for their valuable contribution to the OPCW. I warmly welcome Mr Evandro Nogueira, Ms Carolyn Browne, and Mr Vasily Titushkin; the recruitment of the new Director of the OIO is ongoing. I have full confidence that their previous experience as scientists as well as diplomats will benefit the Secretariat and the Organisation.

Madam Chairperson,

33. My report to the Council at its Ninetieth Session is detailed. The full text of my statement will be circulated to delegations as an official document of this session.
34. Thank you for your attention.

Chemical demilitarisation and verification

35. As at 31 January 2019, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by possessor States Parties of 68,176 MT, or 96.7% of all declared Category 1 chemical weapons.

United States of America

36. As at the same date, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the United States of America of 25,453 MT, or 91.7%, of its Category 1 chemical weapons stockpile. Destruction operations of mustard agent-filled projectiles and the reconfiguration of mortars at the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP) are ongoing. The energetic components removed from these reconfigured munitions have been regularly shipped to and destroyed at the PCAPP's non-contiguous Static Detonation Chamber, located in Anniston, Alabama.
37. The Explosive Destruction System at the PCAPP carried out its second campaign for the destruction of problematic munitions from 25 June to 5 December 2018, during which 365 problematic chemical weapons were destroyed.

Syrian Arab Republic

38. The Secretariat has verified the destruction of all 27 chemical weapons destruction facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. The continuous remote monitoring system installed in the four former CWPFs located in underground facilities is operating normally. Secretariat representatives visited the five destroyed underground structures in November 2018 to verify the integrity of the installed interior plugs.
39. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5 (dated 11 November 2016), the Secretariat conducted the third and fourth rounds of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in November and December 2018, respectively. Samples were taken during both inspections for analysis in OPCW designated laboratories. Once the results of this analysis have been received, the Secretariat will report on the results of both inspections to the Council.

Old chemical weapons

40. During the intersessional period, five inspections were conducted at different old chemical weapons (OCWs) sites in France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Whilst destruction operations of OCWs have made considerable progress, recoveries continue to be made.

Inspector training

41. During the reporting period, the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell of the Inspectorate Division provided, coordinated, or participated in 21 individual training courses. The courses comprised 622 inspector/trainee days and 207 instructor days, and included a total of 283 participants.

42. Two inspector refresher training courses were conducted to update inspectors on the latest verification policies, as well as OPCW safety and confidentiality regulations.
43. From 26 November to 7 December 2018, two advanced health and safety specialist inspectors conducted the offshore medic course refresher held at the Nottingham University Hospital in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
44. During the reporting period, the United States of America provided two refresher courses on hazardous waste operations and emergency response (HAZWOPER), a requirement under United States regulations for individuals who operate within the United States CWDFs.
45. From 3 to 5 December 2018, a sampling and analysis training course for inspection team leaders was conducted at OPCW Headquarters and at the OPCW Laboratory in Rijswijk.
46. From 4 to 6 December 2018, seven inspection team leaders were provided with a three-day refresher training course. From 10 to 14 December 2018, they underwent a toxic chemical training refresher course, organised with the support of the Serbian Ministry of Defence at the CBRN¹ Centre in Kruševac, Serbia.
47. From 14 to 18 January 2019, the Institute for International Criminal Investigations provided a training course to 12 members of the Inspectorate. The purpose of this course was to analyse information and evidence and to build and strengthen the capacity of staff to conduct open-source research.
48. From 5 to 8 February 2019, the Inspectorate conducted an in-house challenge inspection (CI) refresher training course for selected inspectors. The participants were provided with an updated assessment of the fundamentals of CIs, as well as experiences and lessons learned from recent contingency operation deployments.
49. From 11 to 22 February 2019, the Inspectorate conducted specialised courses in the theory and practice of non-destructive evaluation techniques in the Netherlands and Belgium.
50. On 18 February 2019, the Inspectorate conducted in-house refresher training on investigations in cases of alleged use of chemical weapons (IAUs) for selected inspectors. This course served to strengthen the Secretariat's capabilities to conduct IAUs.
51. From 11 to 15 March 2019, a cross-divisional operational planning course is being held at OPCW Headquarters as an initial step towards improving the Secretariat's preparedness for possible non-routine missions.
52. I would like to thank Canada, Serbia, Slovakia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America for the technical and in-kind support provided during the reporting period for these training modules for inspectors.

¹ CBRN = chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear.

Declarations

53. Regarding the submission of initial declarations, only one State Party, Tonga, has yet to submit its initial declaration under both Article III and Article VI of the Convention. The Secretariat continues to work with this State Party for the submission of its initial declaration.
54. In relation to annual declarations, the Council has received a status report on the timely submission of declarations under Article VI for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018 (EC-90/DG.6, dated 16 January 2019) for consideration at this session.
55. The timeliness of submissions of annual declarations on past activities (ADPAs) has remained consistent over the last five years. As at 31 December 2019, 83% of States Parties with declarable facilities and/or declarable activities had submitted their ADPA for 2017 on time. I encourage States Parties to submit their next ADPA for 2018 before the deadline of 31 March 2019.
56. In the case of annual declarations of anticipated activities (ADAAs), 96% of States Parties with declarable facilities and activities submitted at least part of their ADAAs for 2019 on time.
57. The Secretariat has released the 2018 version of two OPCW tools for the identification of scheduled chemicals: the Handbook on Chemicals and the online scheduled chemicals database. These tools have been expanded to include scheduled chemicals declared by States Parties to the Secretariat between 2014 and 2017, as well as those scheduled chemicals registered by the Chemical Abstracts Service during the same time period. Both updated tools are now available on the OPCW website.

Article VI inspections

58. As in previous years, the number of Article VI inspections planned for this year is 241. Of these, 11 are planned at Schedule 1 facilities, 42 at Schedule 2 plant sites, 19 at Schedule 3 plant sites, and 169 at other chemical production facilities (OCPFs). The Secretariat is confident that the programme of inspections will once again be fully implemented this year.
59. As at the end of February 2019, 50 Article VI inspections had been carried out. This figure includes nine at Schedule 2 plant sites, three at Schedule 3 plant sites, and 38 at OCPF plant sites. This represents 21% of the 241 inspections provided for in the Programme and Budget for 2019.
60. So far in 2019, two Article VI inspections with gas chromatography–mass spectrometry sampling and analysis have been completed: at one Schedule 2 plant site and at one OCPF plant site.

Industry Cluster

61. Consultations under the Industry Cluster held this week presented a summary of Article VI inspections in 2018, the performance of the site selection methodology, and the outcome of a recent meeting of industry and National Authority representatives.

These consultations also allowed delegations to address industry-related topics discussed during the Fourth Review Conference. Further discussions on these topics are planned going forward.

Specialised information technology solutions for verification activities

Verification analytics

62. Verification analytics aims to enhance the current reporting and data analysis capabilities with new analytical methods, to provide high quality, near real-time data and to establish a simplified, transparent reporting process for users in the Verification Division and management. The Verification Division has completed the procurement of a new data visualisation and reporting platform. The new platform will progressively replace the existing tool and will start to deliver dashboards and enhanced reports to visualise the data available in the Verification Data Warehouse.

Electronic declarations tool for National Authorities

63. In September 2018, the Secretariat started the development of the next version of the electronic declarations tool for National Authorities (EDNA): the electronic declaration information system (EDIS). The EDIS will further strengthen the verification regime by bringing usability enhancements and new functionalities to the declaration preparation and submission process. The first release of the system is scheduled for 2019 and will include all of the existing EDNA features with the addition of a new user management module for distributed use of the system and Article III riot-control agent declarations.
64. The first phase of the implementation of the enterprise content management system, which aims to enhance the management of information and streamline business processes related to verification activities and other activities involving classified information, was completed in December 2018.

OPCW Laboratory

65. The OPCW Laboratory has completed the evaluation of the forty-fourth environmental proficiency test; the fourth biomedical proficiency test is ongoing.
66. The number of designated laboratories remains unchanged. There are currently 22 laboratories from 18 States Parties that are designated for the analysis of environmental samples and 17 laboratories from 13 States Parties that are designated for the analysis of biomedical samples.
67. The forty-fifth environmental proficiency test will start on 22 March with a dispatch of samples from our partner laboratory of the Bundeswehr Research Institute for Protective Technologies and NBC² Protection in Germany. At the end of 2018, the Secretariat also conducted a third exercise on the analysis of toxins, which is currently under evaluation.

²

NBC = nuclear, biological, chemical.

68. With frequent sample analysis ongoing at designated laboratories, the importance of this network continues to be high. While we see progress in the negotiation of technical agreements with laboratories, a significant number have not yet concluded such an agreement. I take this opportunity to encourage all laboratories that have not yet concluded an agreement with the Secretariat, to do so.

International cooperation and assistance

Implementation support

69. In the area of the implementation of Article VII, the Secretariat continued to provide capacity-building support to States Parties. On 28 February, the Secretariat issued a note verbale requesting updates from States Parties on their implementation of Article VII. The information received will be reflected in the three concurrent annual reports on the status of implementation of Article VII for the period from 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019. I encourage States Parties to submit their responses in a timely manner.
70. Under the Mentorship/Partnership Programme, representatives of the National Authority of Togo visited Morocco from 15 to 19 October 2018. The visit provided representatives of Togo with insights into the national implementation process under the Convention, with participants also receiving helpful advice and recommendations from the Moroccan National Authority. A visit to Togo is planned for the last week of March.
71. Two editions of the Internship Programme for Legal Drafters and National Authority Representatives were attended by participants from six States Parties: Eswatini, Maldives, the Marshall Islands, the State of Palestine, Timor-Leste, and Zimbabwe. During the programme, participants drafted implementing legislation that complies with the provisions of the Convention. As part of a results-based approach, the participants also prepared action plans and indicative road maps to take forward the adoption process.
72. The Secretariat held a general training course for National Authorities and other relevant stakeholders in The Hague from 25 February to 1 March. The course attracted over 40 participants from over 40 States Parties from all regions. The main objective of the training course is to equip participants with the necessary basic skills and knowledge for national implementation of the Convention.
73. The Secretariat continued to cooperate with international and regional partner organisations and participated in inter-agency cooperation events, including an inception workshop on the “African Union Comprehensive Model Law on Weapons of Mass Destruction Inception Workshop” in Vienna, Austria, on 13 and 14 December 2018 and the “Togo National Capacity-Building Workshop: Strengthening National Strategic Trade Control Enforcement” under the framework of United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Lomé, Togo, from 23 to 25 January 2019.

Assistance and protection

74. The Secretariat continued to consolidate and implement its established capacity-building approaches and modalities in a tailored manner throughout all

geographical regions. More than 200 first responders and different stakeholders from 62 States Parties took advantage of these training activities. I would like to thank States Parties that have contributed to the implementation of these programmes.

75. In the context of the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons, I would like to encourage contributions from States Parties to the trust fund set up for the support network, which will enable the OPCW to give continuity to the sustained progress made during 2018 with regard to activities in support of victims of chemical weapons.
76. The first workshop on major events preparation was held in Doha, Qatar, from 11 to 13 December, in which the experiences of States Parties in the organisation of high visibility events and ensuring chemical protection therein were extensively discussed.
77. A side event entitled “Benefitting from Assistance and Protection Programmes to Enhance Chemical Incident Response” was held on 23 November for participating delegations at the Fourth Review Conference.

International cooperation

78. In the area of international cooperation, the Secretariat continued its efforts to deliver on the three strategic programme areas under Article XI of the Convention, namely: integrated chemicals management, enhancing laboratories’ capabilities, and chemical knowledge promotion and exchange.
79. In the area of integrated chemicals management, the Secretariat organised seven events related to chemical safety and security management in six countries: Croatia, the Netherlands, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and Sri Lanka.
80. The Secretariat organised a workshop on green and sustainable chemistry: “Fostering Safety and Security through Innovation” at the OPCW Headquarters on 4 and 5 December 2018. The workshop was attended by 20 professionals from 18 States Parties. It provided a platform to discuss cooperation opportunities among the various stakeholders and the role of the OPCW in promoting such developments within its mandate.
81. The Secretariat organised the South Asia regional chemical management workshop in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 4 to 6 December 2018. Forty-eight experts from 10 States Parties attended the workshop, which was funded by a voluntary contribution from the United States of America.
82. The Secretariat supported 14th annual Chemical Weapons Convention workshop at the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre in Zagreb, Croatia, from 11 to 13 February 2019. This year’s workshop focused on the theme: “chemical safety and security management of dual-use chemicals”, and was tailored to National Authorities and relevant stakeholders in South-Eastern Europe.
83. Under the Chemical Safety and Security Management Programme, a capacity-building workshop was held from 26 to 28 February 2019 in Doha, Qatar, which focused on chemical safety and security risk assessment and mitigation strategies to prevent chemical accidents and potential misuse of chemicals.

84. On 26 November 2018, in the margins of the Fourth Review Conference, the Secretariat organised a side event on building a more effective and impactful capacity-building programme on chemical safety and security management. The results of an evaluation of the OPCW's chemical safety and security management programme were presented. More than 20 States Parties attended this event.
85. In the area of enhancing laboratory capabilities, four analytical skills development courses were organised in India, the Netherlands (at the OPCW Laboratory), Spain, and Tunisia.
86. Within the Laboratory Twinning Initiative, the Netherlands and South Africa signed a letter of intent to establish a formal partnership between their respective national laboratories on 30 November, during the Fourth Review Conference.
87. In the area of chemical knowledge promotion and exchange, three fellowships for Ugandan participants in Germany, South Africa, and Sweden, and one fellowship for a Brazilian participant in Switzerland were completed. Two fellowships were ongoing (Kenya–Germany and Malaysia–Finland). Two conferences in two States Parties (Croatia and India) have been sponsored under the Conference Support Programme.
88. The Secretariat also continued to support 12 research projects that are funded by the OPCW. Additionally, funding was approved for four new projects to be funded by the OPCW and five projects to be jointly funded with the International Foundation for Science.
89. The Secretariat organised an analytical chemistry course for French-speaking countries in Africa in Tunis, Tunisia, from 16 to 26 October 2018. The course was aimed at assisting analytical chemists from Africa in acquiring the necessary analytical skills related to the implementation of the Convention. The course was attended by 15 participants from 13 French-speaking African Member States. Funding was provided through a voluntary contribution from the European Union.
90. The Secretariat organised a course on analytical skills development at the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology in Hyderabad, India, from 3 to 14 December 2018. The course was attended by 19 participants from 19 States Parties.
91. The Secretariat organised the eighth edition of the analytical skills course in Spanish, focusing on the analysis of chemicals related to the Chemical Weapons Convention, in Madrid, Spain, from 22 November to 5 December 2018. The course was attended by 15 participants from 11 States Parties from the GRULAC³ region.

External relations

92. During the intersessional period, I delivered a keynote address at the European Union Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Conference in Brussels in December 2018, and met with H.E. Mr Didier Reynders, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence of Belgium. In the margins of the Munich Security Conference, I met with H.E. Ms Susanne Baumann, Federal Government Commissioner for Disarmament and

³

GRULAC = Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Arms Control; the Rt Hon Sir Alan Duncan, Minister of State for Europe and the Americas of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; and Ms Andrea L. Thompson, Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security of the United States of America.

93. Since the last session of the Conference of the States Parties, at OPCW Headquarters, I have received H.E. Mrs Adriana Mejía, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia; H.E. Mr Audun Halvorsen, State Secretary for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway; H.E. Dr Yván Gil Pinto, Vice-Minister for Europe of the Ministry of the People's Power for Foreign Relations of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; H.E. Ms Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden; and Major General Dr Johann Frank, Defence Policy Director of the Austrian Ministry of Defence.
94. A record number of 57 civil society organisations represented by some 120 individuals participated in the Twenty-Third Session of the Conference of the States Parties and in the Fourth Review Conference, marking the highest-ever civil society participation in a session convening States Parties. Similarly, a record number of 25 civil society representatives delivered statements during the general debate. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) showed exhibits and organised a variety of side events showcasing their work and highlighting issues of importance to civil society. The increased NGO participation is evidence of a growing interest of this group in participation in key OPCW events.
95. The presence of civil society was also highlighted through the promotion of a video on civil society's role in the aforementioned sessions of the Conference and in advancing the Convention. The Secretariat further publicised the sessions in the digital domain. A live webcast of the sessions attracted over 6,700 viewers, while a multichannel social media campaign provided information about the purpose of the sessions, and about the speakers and side events.

Administrative and financial matters

96. As outlined in the most recent monthly financial situation report (S/1732/2019, dated 8 March 2019) it is anticipated that the Working Capital Fund (WCF) may need to be utilised to maintain liquidity, even though the closing cash position at year-end is forecast to be positive. Use of the WCF will be dependent on whether or not the pattern of cash inflows in 2019 follows a similar pattern as in 2018. Last year, a higher than normal proportion of assessed contributions and arrears payments occurred in the later part of the year. The Secretariat continues to take measures to address the financial situation. These measures include reminding States Parties of their financial obligations, closely monitoring the implementation of the 2019 Programme and Budget, improving the robustness of the WCF, and using trust fund resources.

Gender equality

97. The Conference of the States Parties approved the amendment of Staff Regulation 4.2 to take into account considerations of gender balance when recruiting staff. A further step towards promoting gender equality at the OPCW has been the introduction of Gender Focal Points. A focal point has been elected for each Division of the

Secretariat to promote gender mainstreaming knowledge, provide advocacy, and report on progress towards gender equality in the Organisation.

Junior Professional Officer Programme

98. Following the successful launch of the OPCW Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme, I am happy to confirm that the process to place JPOs for 2019 has been launched. I encourage all States Parties to consider participating in the JPO programme.

Learning and development

99. A review is currently being undertaken with respect to how our training plans are drafted, with the goal of developing a more strategic approach aligned with evolving business needs. Active engagement with key stakeholders will be carried out to produce an improved and robust mechanism for implementation in 2020.

Enterprise resource planning

100. The Talent Management (TM) recruitment module went live in December and is now in use; the TM learning module is expected to go live this year. The final piece of the TM suite, the performance module, is expected to go live in 2020.

Information technology

101. The Information Services Branch has initiated a review of the organisational information technology (IT) strategy to ensure continued alignment of IT priorities. In addition to standardisation and outsourcing, enhanced field mobility through secure remote access to the corporate IT environment is a key focus area.
102. As I have previously highlighted to the Council, the Secretariat faces challenges with regard to cyberattacks. An appropriate cybersecurity programme, together with supporting physical security arrangements and a business continuity management system, is necessary in order to meet this challenge. Such a programme would provide an enhanced integrated, protective framework for Secretariat and State Party information. I encourage States Parties to approach the development of the 2020 regular budget with these needs in mind. I also ask that States Parties consider voluntary contributions to the trust fund that has been established for improvements in cybersecurity, physical security, and business continuity.