

**NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL****UPDATE ON THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT'S READINESS TO CONDUCT
A CHALLENGE INSPECTION OR AN INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED USE****Introduction**

1. The First Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the First Review Conference”) requested the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) to “continue maintaining a high standard of readiness to conduct a challenge inspection in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, to keep the Council informed about its readiness, and to report any problems that may arise in relation to maintaining the necessary level of readiness to conduct a challenge inspection” (paragraph 7.91 of RC-1/5, dated 9 May 2003).
2. The Second Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Second Review Conference”) reiterated this request to the Secretariat (paragraph 9.90 of RC-2/4, dated 18 April 2008).
3. The First Review Conference “stressed the importance of investigations of alleged use or threat of use of chemical weapons. For such situations, the OPCW must have the capacity, and be ready at all times, to investigate the need for follow-on action by the OPCW and by individual Member States” (paragraph 7.100 of RC-1/5). The Second Review Conference reiterated this concern (paragraph 9.105 of RC-2/4), requesting the Secretariat to keep the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) informed about its readiness.
4. The Third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention made two requests of the Secretariat with respect to the conduct of a challenge inspection (CI) or an investigation of alleged use (IAU) (paragraph 9.111 of RC-3/3*, dated 19 April 2013). The first was that the Secretariat continue to improve the standard of readiness to conduct a CI or an IAU in accordance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”). The second was to keep the Council informed about its readiness and to report any problems that may arise in relation to maintaining the necessary level of readiness to conduct a CI or an IAU.



5. The Secretariat has previously submitted to the Council several Notes on its readiness to conduct a CI or an IAU (EC-36/DG.5/Rev.1, dated 17 February 2004; EC-41/DG.10, dated 2 June 2005; EC-46/DG.6, dated 26 June 2006; EC-49/DG.11, dated 1 June 2007; EC-54/DG.9, dated 25 September 2008; EC-58/DG.8, dated 28 September 2009; EC-62/DG.8, dated 22 September 2010; EC-66/DG.10, dated 8 September 2011; EC-70/DG.12, dated 12 September 2012; EC-74/DG.15, dated 25 September 2013; EC-76/DG.11, dated 12 June 2014; and EC-79/DG.12, dated 3 June 2015; EC-82/DG.12, dated 7 June 2016; EC-85/DG.13, dated 31 May 2017 and EC-88/DG.19, dated 29 June 2018).
6. This Note concentrates on the activities the Secretariat has undertaken since the last update (EC-88/DG.19), and highlights issues that still require further consideration and attention by States Parties and by the Secretariat.

The Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell, the Non-Routine Missions Core Team, the Mission Support Group, and the Situation Centre

7. Since 2016, the Secretariat has assigned a cadre of inspectors to the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell (CBCP), with the goal of strengthening States Parties' capacity to respond to the use or threat of use of chemical weapons, maintaining the Secretariat's preparedness to provide assistance and protection against the use of chemical weapons, as well as leading and supporting the conduct of non-routine missions, including CIs and IAUs, in accordance with Articles IX and X of the Convention or the mandate of the Council.
8. The Secretariat's preparedness has been further enhanced by the creation of a Non-Routine Missions Core Team. In order to maintain and enhance the Secretariat's ability to conduct CIs, IAUs, or other non-routine missions, the CBCP provides regular training to the Core Team members, drawing from staff across the Inspectorate Division and other parts of the Secretariat, on operational procedures and activities and lessons learned from past missions.
9. In order to properly manage the command and control elements of a CI or IAU or other non-routine missions, the Secretariat has developed a Mission Support Group (MSG), along with other operational working groups that meet to work through and actively pursue solutions to complex operational problems in case of a request for CI, IAU, or other contingency operation. The Secretariat has also streamlined and supplemented the former Operations Centre with new technology and appropriate staffing to create a Situation Centre (SitCen), capable of actively managing CI and IAU missions, along with the routine and other non-routine missions taking place at any given moment. The newly created SitCen provides 24-hour mission support, develops and maintains a comprehensive common operating picture, ensures secure and reliable communications, and provides information analysis to facilitate senior management decision making in support of CIs, IAUs, or any other non-routine missions.

Operational procedures and training of inspectors

10. Inspectorate training in 2018 and 2019 continued to maintain the mandatory qualifications required under the Quality Management System for the conduct of inspection activities and for the preparation of inspectors and inspection team leaders to perform inspection duties for “non-routine” missions, such as CIs and IAUs, or other non-routine missions. There was a continued focus on training inspectors for activities in non-permissive and conflict-affected environments.
11. In 2018, a group of six rehired Team Leaders joined the OPCW and completed all mandatory training in order to fulfil the required standards. Four of the six Team Leaders were appointed as members of a core group for CIs and IAUs. In 2018, the CBCP coordinated or delivered 1,906 training days, inclusive of the mandatory initial training and refresher courses. The training programme comprised 49 individual training courses, and participants included inspectors and Secretariat staff members. A number of inspectors and staff attended several training courses, some of which were part of the Secretariat’s capacity-building programmes organised for States Parties.
12. The CBCP regularly conducts the Secure and Safe Approaches in Field Environments (SSAFE) training course, which is a requirement of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security for operations in high-risk environments. The most recent training courses, based on the lessons learned during the OPCW’s recent non-routine missions, were conducted in February, April, and October 2018 and March 2019, in cooperation with the United Nations System Staff College in Turin, Italy, under the supervision of the OPCW SSAFE instructors. The courses comprised a sequence of different scenarios in high-risk environments that might occur in CIs, IAUs, or other non-routine missions, simulating real situations. A total of 21 members of the Secretariat participated in these courses, both in the form of initial training or as a refresher module. As at 22 May 2019, 72 inspectors and other staff members had the SSAFE certification, which qualifies them for operations in the high-risk environments that may be present during CIs, IAUs, or other non-routine missions.
13. As reported previously, the Secretariat has embarked on other relevant training activities. In addition to regular training, the courses that are particularly relevant to CIs, IAUs, or other non-routine missions include:
 - (a) non-destructive evaluation training;
 - (b) use of self-contained breathing apparatus;
 - (c) command and control of operations;
 - (d) explosive remnants of war awareness training;
 - (e) toxic chemical training with live chemical warfare agents;
 - (f) reconnaissance and sampling; and
 - (g) advanced negotiations and report writing.

14. New training programmes have also been implemented, aimed at reinforcing the Secretariat's capabilities to conduct non-routine missions by enhancing the inspectors' current skill sets. These started in 2016 and continued throughout 2017, 2018, and 2019. These programmes include the forensic awareness training courses provided by the Netherlands Forensic Institute, criminal investigation techniques training provided by the Institute for International Criminal Investigations, and interview skills training in 2018 and 2019.

Non-routine missions

15. As previously, the experience gained during the preparation and conduct of recent missions such as the OPCW Mission in Syria, OPCW fact-finding missions, technical assistance visits (TAVs), and Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM) field exercises has helped the Secretariat to continue to improve procedural and short-notice deployment issues. Moreover, there has been a focus on command and control, communications, information collection and analysis, management of a large deployed team, and executive risk assessment processes, which are skills applicable to a CI or an IAU. To enhance preparedness for a CI, the Secretariat conducted in-house CI refresher trainings, two workshops (February and March 2019), and a table-top exercise in May 2019. Participants were selected from various divisions, including the Inspectorate, the Verification Division, the Office of the Legal Adviser, and the Office of Strategy and Policy. To enhance preparedness for an IAU, the Secretariat conducted an in-house training. All trainings were aimed at providing an updated assessment of the fundamentals of CI and IAU in Articles IX and X, as well as Parts X and XI and the relevant elements of Part II of the Verification Annex to the Convention (hereinafter "the Verification Annex"), as well as experiences and lessons learned from recent contingency operation deployments. The table-top exercise was developed to present the participants with the challenges of analysis and decision making for a range of complex issues that could be expected in a CI scenario. The CI workshops and table-top exercise were supported by representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
16. From 7 to 21 July 2018, the Secretariat conducted a contingency operation exercise in Canada, as a part of Precise Response exercise organised by Canadian Armed Forces. The exercise included the participation of 4 members of the Inspectorate Non-Routine mission core team. The scenarios were prepared and delivered by Canadian Armed Forces. During the exercise, the participants took part in two weeks of field training which included working in toxic environments with live chemical agents, field reconnaissance and investigation of an incident involving the use of toxic chemicals, digital photography, development of a sampling strategy, and taking samples and preparation for transport of samples for off-site analysis.
17. From 4 to 8 March 2019, the Secretariat conducted a reconnaissance and sampling training in Rijswijk. The training covered topics such as reconnaissance and sampling techniques and documenting the scene by using digital photography. Training was conducted for 10 members of the Inspectorate Non-Routine Mission Core Team.

18. From 8 to 12 April 2019, the Secretariat conducted, as a follow-up to the reconnaissance and sampling training conducted in March 2019, a contingency operation enhancement exercise at the chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) training centre in Kruševac, Serbia. The exercise was based on the experience gained in recent non-routine missions and included the participation of 13 members of the Inspectorate Non-Routine Mission Core Team. The training was delivered by members of the CBCP, in close cooperation with other units of the Secretariat. During the exercise, the participants took part in five days of field training, which included activities related to CIs and IAUs as well as other scenarios related to non-routine missions. These activities included working in toxic environments with live chemical agents, reconnaissance and sampling techniques, and documenting the scene by using digital photography.

Equipment and laboratories

19. Since last year's report (EC-88/DG.19), the Secretariat has informed States Parties of the procurement of a number of new items of approved inspection equipment that conform to the operational requirements and technical specifications approved by the Conference of the States Parties. The Secretariat has informed the States Parties of the newly procured items of approved equipment through Notes S/1657/2018 (dated 9 August 2018), S/1683/2018 (dated 30 October 2018), and S/1747/2019 (dated 2 May 2019). This additional analytical, non-destructive evaluation, and medical equipment has helped to increase the operational readiness and capabilities of the OPCW, particularly in respect of possible cases of CIs and IAUs and other non-routine missions.
20. Based on the experience gained from the deployment to non-routine missions at short notice in recent times, the OPCW Equipment Store has the necessary supplies and equipment and requisite preparedness to support an inspection team deployment within the time frames specified in the Convention, or to meet other short-notice operational requirements.
21. The Secretariat maintains a network of designated laboratories available to carry out the off-site analysis of samples in support of a CI, an IAU, or other non-routine missions. The list of designated laboratories is updated following proficiency testing. The current list of laboratories designated for the analysis of environmental samples can be found in Note S/1738/2019 (dated 27 March 2019), while the current list of laboratories designated for the analysis of biomedical samples can be found in Note S/1661/2018 (dated 14 August 2018).

Issues requiring further action by the Secretariat

22. CIs and IAUs are key deterrent elements of the Convention, aimed at eliminating the risk of production, storage, and use and threat of use of chemical weapons. Since entry into force of the Convention, no CIs or IAUs have been requested by a State Party. The Secretariat, however, needs to maintain a high degree of readiness through, inter alia, the conduct of CI and IAU exercises.

23. In December 2017, the Secretariat conducted a fully fledged contingency operation exercise (based on a RRAM request scenario), which included commonalities similar to what would happen in CIs and IAUs involving the Secretariat's Headquarters MSG, with an element of short-notice deployment. As a result of the December 2017 exercise and a similar exercise in February 2018, the Secretariat has compiled a matrix of actionable items for future training and preparedness for CIs, IAUs, or other non-routine missions. This initiative will ensure that the Secretariat's staff will be well prepared for any CI or IAU.
24. Representatives of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) participated in the OPCW contingency operation exercise as observers in December 2017. The Secretariat will continue its dialogue regarding non-routine missions with other relevant international organisations. These include the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, the WHO, and INTERPOL.
25. Taking into account the lessons learned from recent non-routine missions and exercises, additional processes were initiated to maintain preparedness to successfully conduct a CI or IAU. Internal measures by the Secretariat include the development of the skills of a relatively new workforce, and the creation and enhancement of the CBCP and an extended group of trained inspectors as the Non-Routine Missions Core Team. The Secretariat also enhanced the rapid deployment concept by selecting and training other Secretariat staff to be prepared and trained to deploy and conduct CIs and IAUs at short notice. This concept was further supported by actively adopting a "leaner team" approach, based on lessons learned from recent non-routine missions. This approach takes accumulated competencies from the Secretariat and allows for a smaller and more adaptable team to be created and deployed, with less impact on routine missions. In this context, the Secretariat fully appreciates the support of Canada, Serbia, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in providing training opportunities in 2018 and 2019.
26. Moving forward, the Secretariat will continue its efforts towards maintaining preparedness to conduct a CI, IAU, or other non-routine mission by addressing several facets of staffing, preparedness procedures, interagency cooperation, and required technological means. These future considerations include looking into the recruitment process to hire staff with the required competencies, working with other relevant United Nations agencies to facilitate knowledge sharing and interagency cooperation, developing and facilitating relevant training programmes, and using technologies to assist in the successful completion of CI and IAU missions. In this context it is important to note that the current framework for Secretariat workforce management has demonstrated limitations, particularly with regard to ensuring that the OPCW can always attract and retain the human resources necessary to address both routine and emerging requirements in an increasingly dynamic environment in which fewer and fewer potential candidates have chemical weapons experience. Thus, it will be vital to further augment the ability of the OPCW to attract and retain a talented and diverse workforce and to leverage existing resources, while at the same time ensuring an equitable geographical distribution and balanced gender representation within its staff composition.

27. The Secretariat is currently pursuing bilateral agreements with interested States Parties to provide independent air transport on short notice, in order to ensure the rapid deployment of teams. Efforts will continue to receive more support in providing independent air transport means and pre-approved flight clearances for non-scheduled aircraft to further solidify Secretariat's preparedness to conduct CIs, IAUs, or other non-routine missions in the future.

Issues requiring further action by States Parties

28. As mentioned in previous reports, the ability of the OPCW to respond promptly to requests for a CI and/or an IAU could be seriously affected by a lack of standing arrangements that require action by States Parties in accordance with Part II of the Verification Annex:
- (a) In accordance with paragraph 10 of Part II of the Verification Annex, States Parties are under an obligation to provide designated OPCW inspectors with multiple-entry visas that are valid for at least two years. As at 22 May 2019, 135 States Parties (70%) had either issued, or promised to issue, two-year multiple-entry visas, or had no visa requirements for OPCW inspectors travelling with a United Nations laissez-passer (UNLP); 31 States Parties (16%) had issued multiple-entry visas valid for one year (or less); and 27 States Parties (14%) had either not responded or had provided incomplete general visa information that does not apply to OPCW inspectors travelling on UNLPs. It may be worthwhile recalling that States Parties that impose visa requirements on UNLP holders could also consider agreeing to a waiver of the standard visa requirements for UNLP holders in the event of a CI or an IAU.
 - (b) In accordance with paragraph 16 of Part II of the Verification Annex, States Parties are under an obligation to designate the points of entry (POEs) that are to be used by mission teams. As at 22 May 2019, 135 States Parties had provided information regarding POEs.
 - (c) In accordance with paragraph 22 of Part II of the Verification Annex, States Parties are under an obligation to inform the Secretariat of the standing diplomatic clearance number (SDCN) for non-scheduled aircraft. As at 22 May 2019, 47 States Parties had provided SDCNs on a permanent basis, while 28 had provided information on expediting them in the event that a requirement arises. It should be noted that an additional 16 States Parties provide SDCNs on an annual basis.
 - (d) In accordance with paragraph 44 of Part II of the Verification Annex, inspectors shall have the right to communicate with the Headquarters of the Organisation and to use their own two-way system of communications between team members during inspections. Accordingly, States Parties must inform the OPCW of the radio frequencies available for use by the inspection teams for such purposes. As at 22 May 2019, only 86 States Parties had provided frequencies or had given the Secretariat authorisation to use OPCW default frequencies and/or had provided conditions for their use. Of these 86 States Parties, 48 updated, or confirmed or provided information on an

expedited method for obtaining the necessary frequencies in 2018. Finally, 108 States Parties have never provided any records regarding radio frequencies.

Conclusion

29. The full range of operations, field exercises, in-house workshops, and training courses that have taken place during the reporting period has augmented the preparedness of the Secretariat to conduct effective CIs, IAUs, or other non-routine missions at short notice. The Secretariat will maintain its preparedness to deploy to operations at short notice and will continue to plan and conduct exercises in cooperation with a variety of international actors, with the support of States Parties. This will enhance the preparedness and capabilities of the Secretariat in the event of a CI, IAU, or other contingency operation. The Secretariat reiterates its appreciation for the assistance that States Parties have extended thus far, and hopes that this will continue. As in the past, the Secretariat would like to encourage States Parties to come forward to jointly organise, participate in, and conduct exercises, training, and other operational activities.

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