

**NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT****UPDATE ON THE SECURE INFORMATION EXCHANGE SYSTEM****Introduction**

1. The timely exchange of information between the States Parties and the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) is crucial for the effective and efficient implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”).
2. The traditional way of exchanging classified information, through diplomatic pouch, imposes logistical difficulties. These can cause delays and may, therefore, adversely affect the timely fulfilment by the States Parties of their obligations under the Convention, including the timely submission of declarations. This may also have repercussions for important activities carried out by the Secretariat, such as the evaluation of declarations and the planning of inspections.
3. To address this issue, the Secretariat has designed and put in place a system for the secure electronic transmission of classified documents, known as the Secure Information Exchange (SIX) system, in accordance with the Note by the Secretariat on this subject (S/1192/2014, dated 1 July 2014).
4. The present Note describes the current status of the SIX system and the priorities for the future of this critical communication mechanism. A previous update was provided to the States Parties last year (S/1662/2018, dated 21 August 2018).

**Overview of system utilisation**

5. As at 31 July 2019, 59 States Parties had registered for the SIX system, resulting in authorisation for 101 individual users to use the system, which can now be considered as an established system for secure communication between the Secretariat and the States Parties. An up-to-date list of registered States Parties is maintained on the dedicated section of the OPCW external server.<sup>1</sup>
6. States Parties from all OPCW regional groups are represented among the users, with 31% from the Group of Western European and other States, 29% from Asia, 18% from Latin America and the Caribbean, 16% from Eastern Europe, and 6% from Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> See the “SIX Documents” link on the left-hand side of the OPCW external server home page.



7. The number of registered States Parties has been growing steadily since the system's launch. The highest increases in the number of newly registered States Parties have been observed in the periods when States Parties are preparing and submitting annual declarations. These trends started in the first quarter of 2015 and continued from 2016 to 2019. As a result, in general, the number of annual declarations on past activities received through the SIX system continues to increase. In the 2019 declaration round for past activities, 46 declarations were submitted using the SIX system (resulting in a significant increase year over year); in 2018 this number was 46, and in 2017 this number was 33. Therefore, current trends indicate an overall increase and preference for the use of the electronic declaration transmission process, which allows States Parties to dedicate more time to the preparation of declarations and benefit from a more effective and streamlined declaration submission process.
8. Overall, the Secretariat has so far received 935 documents from States Parties through the SIX system. The majority of these documents have been annual declarations of past and anticipated activities, as well as amendments to previously submitted declarations under Article VI of the Convention. In addition, other types of documents have been received, including declarations under other articles of the Convention (Article III or Article X, for example), responses to official letters from the Secretariat, and operational documents related to the SIX system itself.
9. For the submission of documents from the Secretariat to the States Parties, in addition to the reconciliation letters, the system is increasingly being used for final inspection reports. It is also important to note that several States Parties recently expressed an interest in moving to paperless communication with the Secretariat for confidential information, where possible.

#### **Current and future activities**

10. The majority of the Secretariat's activities since the system was launched have focused on providing support to the States Parties in regard to registering and using the system and on promoting the system among the States Parties. Presentation and demonstration of the SIX system have been part of the training courses organised for National Authorities.
11. To ensure that the system is operational and available to users and for continued security, the Secretariat performs regular system updates and maintenance activities, as well as security audits, by both internal and external experts.
12. Since 2017, the SIX system has been open for the transmission of transfer discrepancy letters between States Parties, whereby the Secretariat serves as the hub for document exchange between the States Parties. The Secretariat encourages all States Parties involved in resolving transfer discrepancies to consider using the SIX system for this purpose, if they are not already doing so.
13. Concerning the use of the system for the exchange of other types of documents, the Secretariat is evaluating the potential expansion of the system's scope to include documents under other articles of the Convention (such as Articles VII and X). This analysis is in progress, focusing on legal considerations as well as any background work required to support this expansion.

**Conclusion**

14. Since it was introduced in 2014, the SIX system has demonstrated the increased efficiency it brings to the Secretariat and the States Parties. The Secretariat will continue its efforts to increase and expand the use of the system, as well as to further improve the quality of this service provided to the States Parties.
15. Further questions or comments concerning SIX can be sent to:

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