



OPCW

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**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE CONFERENCE OF
THE STATES PARTIES AT ITS TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION
(FULL VERSION)**

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. I warmly welcome all delegations to the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.
2. At the outset, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Krassimir Kostov of Bulgaria on his election as the Chairperson of the Conference. I wish you success in your new and important role.
3. I wish to thank the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Yun-young Lee of the Republic of Korea, who efficiently steered the work of the Conference.
4. I also thank Ambassador Andrea Perugini of Italy for his able guidance of the Executive Council as its Chairperson during a busy and productive period. His predecessor, Ambassador Jana Reinišová of the Czech Republic, fulfilled this role with skill and dedication.
5. I welcome representatives of international organisations, industry associations, and civil society to this session of the Conference. Sustained and productive cooperation between the OPCW and its partner organisations is essential to succeeding in our common objectives.
6. Over the past year, the Secretariat has extended its efforts to expand the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention at a time of great challenge. The complete elimination of declared chemical weapons, which is a key goal of the Convention, is nearing.
7. Yet, challenges to the norms of the Convention are serious, as the use of chemical weapons in Iraq, Malaysia, Syria, and the United Kingdom has proven. The OPCW is now expected to act as a bulwark against the re-emergence of chemical weapons. This has also augmented our tasks.
8. Thousands of tonnes of toxic chemicals are produced, transported, stored, traded, and consumed daily—across the world—for entirely legitimate ends. And these legitimate activities are monitored by the Secretariat through a stringent industry inspection regime. Still, as long as re-emergence of use of chemical weapons is a reality, the risk



exists of fractions of these dangerous products, if diverted with ill intent, causing serious harm. In this context, the international community needs to ensure that no country stays outside the Convention.

9. During this session, States Parties will be requested to consider and adopt a Programme and Budget for 2020. The draft put forward to States Parties provides resources for the Secretariat to implement its activities with no increase in State Party assessed contributions.
10. Therefore, it is a key responsibility of the Conference to ensure that the Organisation has a budget in order for it to operate next year. Despite the increase in demands on its resources, the Secretariat has continued to deliver concrete and tangible results. In the context of zero nominal growth, the Secretariat has continually adapted and delivered. Yet, operational cost increases, such as inflation, may affect the implementation of the activities of the Secretariat.
11. Furthermore, due to cash pressures this year, namely because of late payments of assessed contributions, the Secretariat has already had to utilise the Working Capital Fund in September in the amount of EUR 2.5 million. I urge States Parties to pursue appropriate measures to pay their assessed contributions and reimbursements in a timely manner.
12. The OPCW was created to achieve the goals enshrined in the Convention. It is a unique instrument for the benefit of all its States Parties, built to last, and States Parties should make every effort to protect it and guarantee its independence in dealing with new challenges and risks.
13. For the first time since the entry into force of the Convention in 1997, the Conference of the States Parties is requested to approve two proposals—one by Canada, the Netherlands, and the United States of America, the other by the Russian Federation—to amend the schedules of chemicals listed in the Convention.
14. The activities of the Secretariat are broad and diverse, but the work related to the Syrian Arab Republic remains of significance for the Organisation. The Secretariat has informed States Parties about these activities through briefings in February, May, and October this year.
15. The Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) continues its work on allegations of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. On 1 March 2019, the FFM issued its final report on the incident of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Douma on 7 April 2018. The evaluation and analysis of all the information gathered by the FFM provide reasonable grounds that the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon had taken place.
16. As I have repeatedly expressed to States Parties since the briefing held on 28 May, it is in the nature of any thorough inquiry for individuals in a team to express subjective views. The overall conclusions of the inquiry, however, are based on the preponderance of objective facts. The Secretariat has, as it always does, considered and taken into account all information submitted and views exchanged. The findings of the Douma report are drawn from their analysis.

17. While some of these diverse views continue to circulate in certain public discussion fora, I would like to reiterate that I stand by the impartial and professional conclusions reached by the FFM. As with all other FFM reports concluding that the use or likely use of chemical weapons occurred, the report on the incident that took place in Douma has been duly forwarded to the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which will examine it pursuant to its mandate. Currently, the FFM is looking into seven incidents of alleged chemical weapons use. It will report on its activities in due course.
18. The work of the Secretariat, through its Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), is to assist Syria in resolving all the gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that have arisen from its initial declaration of its chemical weapons programme.
19. To date, 22 rounds of consultations have taken place between the Secretariat and the Syrian Government. This year, three rounds of consultations have been held; the most recent took place in Damascus, from 14 to 23 October. Their outcome was reported to Executive Council at its regular sessions.
20. During the twentieth round of consultations held at OPCW Headquarters in March, the status of all outstanding issues, some of which raise serious concerns, was discussed and a plan of action was developed for each. In line with this plan, the DAT was deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic in April and October 2019. During these deployments, the DAT collected samples and received additional information from the Syrian National Authority. This information, together with the results of the analysis of samples collected, is being analysed by the DAT and the outcome will be reported to States Parties accordingly.
21. The Secretariat will continue to assist the Syrian Arab Republic in this matter. It remains the responsibility of the Syrian Arab Republic to fully comply with all its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the relevant OPCW decisions and United Nations Security Council resolutions.
22. In accordance with Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, adopted on 11 November 2016, the Secretariat conducted its fifth and sixth rounds of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in July and in November 2019.
23. During the third round of inspections in November 2018, a scheduled chemical was detected in one of the samples taken at the Barzah SSRC facilities. Upon the Secretariat's request for clarification, the Syrian Arab Republic provided an explanation in a note verbale dated 7 November 2019. The Secretariat is analysing this explanation and will inform the Council of the progress made in clarifying this issue in due course.
24. Pursuant to the decision adopted in June 2018 by the Conference of the States Parties on "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use" (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018), the Secretariat established the IIT to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons use in Syria.
25. The IIT is now fully functional and is an integral part of the Secretariat. The IIT has developed and implemented working methods for its investigations, consistent with

international standards used by international commissions of inquiry. Its structure, functioning, and procedures are designed to ensure independence, impartiality, and integrity of its work.

26. Despite the current refusal by the Syrian Arab Republic to allow the IIT to enter its territory, the IIT has been actively collecting and examining extensive and relevant information related to nine incidents. Consistent with the decision adopted by the Conference, the Secretariat will provide in due course reports on its investigations to the Executive Council and the United Nations Secretary-General for their consideration.
27. A meeting of the Steering Committee on OPCW activities related to Syria took place in Damascus last week. In line with the Convention and relevant Executive Council decisions and Security Council resolutions, the Secretariat expects activities to take place during the whole of 2020. For this purpose, the extension of the Tripartite Agreement signed between the three parties in 2014 is to be signed before the end of the year.
28. Consultation took place and progress was made in 2019 on several initiatives that reflect the Organisation's current and emerging priorities and ensure that it remains fit for purpose. In this vein, I am pleased to report that progress has been made in the project to build a new Centre for Chemistry and Technology.
29. The ChemTech Centre will enable the OPCW to develop new and improved verification tools and increase training and capacity-building activities provided to States Parties. To date, financial contributions and pledges totalling EUR 28.6 million have been received from 24 States Parties and the European Union. I thank all contributors for their generous support.
30. An additional EUR 5 million is required by July 2020 to fully fund the project and ensure that it is completed in accordance with the projected schedule. As the project will generate tangible benefits for all States Parties, I renew my appeal to all to pledge financial support for this project, regardless of the amount.
31. As the threat from chemical weapons evolves, we must continuously adjust our response. This year, the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism considered how the Secretariat's capacity-building programmes are being adapted in light of contemporary security concerns.
32. In this regard, I was pleased to share with States Parties two innovative, new programmes: one on building institutional capacity in emergency planning and chemical first response, and a second on strengthening legal frameworks to counter chemical terrorism.
33. Turning our attention to progress in chemical demilitarisation, as at 31 October 2019 a total of 68,621 metric tonnes (MT) or 97.3% of the declared Category 1 chemical weapons had been destroyed under verification by the Secretariat. This includes the destruction by the United States of America of 25,897 MT, or 93.3% of its declared Category 1 chemical weapons.

34. In April, a delegation of the Executive Council visited the destruction facility of Pueblo, in Colorado. Destruction is ongoing and should meet the deadline of 2023 communicated by the United States of America.
35. In Libya, the project to clean up the former chemical weapons site in Ruwagha is scheduled to be completed on 30 November. The Secretariat, in collaboration with the Libyan National Authority, oversaw the rinse and treatment of Category 2 chemical material and storage tanks and the treatment of 350 MT of highly acidic effluent. I wish to thank Cyprus, Finland, New Zealand, Spain, and the European Union for their generous support of this project. Its conclusion demonstrates the OPCW's ability to undertake complex chemical treatment operations in a conflict zone.
36. With regard to the destruction of abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) by Japan on the territory of China, cooperative efforts continued in 2019. As at 21 November, a total of 56,281 items of ACW out of 78,244 verified items recovered since operations began had been destroyed. A further estimated 330,000 ACW items are awaiting recovery and destruction. During the reporting period, the Secretariat conducted 12 related inspections in China.
37. In September, a delegation of the Executive Council visited China. The visit helped assess the status of efforts to destroy chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China. I also wish to commend both China and Japan for their commitment to achieving the goals of the Convention.
38. Moving now to old chemical weapons (OCW), in 2019 the Secretariat conducted eight inspections of OCWs in seven States Parties, namely, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
39. This week, the Secretariat is completing the 241 industry inspections planned for 2019. Since the entry into force of the Convention, there have been over 4,000 of these inspections. I would like to express the Secretariat's appreciation for the cooperation extended by the States Parties to ensure the ongoing smooth functioning of the verification regime.
40. In the area of international cooperation and technical assistance, 95 training courses, workshops, seminars, and other capacity-building programmes have been delivered in 2019, benefitting 2,364 participants. Here also, I wish to express the Secretariat's gratitude to the many States Parties that have provided substantial voluntary financial and in-kind contributions to our activities in this area.
41. In 2019, the Secretariat has continued to address the specific needs of African States Parties through the Africa Programme. An overview of the key activities and results of the fourth phase, which concludes this year, has been submitted to this session of the Conference as a Note entitled "The Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention" (EC-92/DG.13 C-24/DG.11, dated 9 September 2019).
42. The fifth phase of the programme will start in 2020 and will cover the next three years. Based on the fruitful consultations between the African States Parties and the Secretariat, a tailor-made concept was developed and approved by the African States

Parties. The concept will be formally submitted to the Council at its Ninety-Third Session.

43. At the end of today, this year's OPCW-The Hague Award will be presented. As you know, this award is a legacy of the OPCW receiving the 2013 Nobel Prize for Peace. The award, which was jointly established in 2014 by the OPCW and the City of The Hague, recognises individuals and institutions that make an outstanding contribution towards the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This year's three recipients have contributed meaningfully to the Chemical Weapons Convention, making progress in permanently eliminating chemical weapons while promoting chemistry for peace. I look forward to seeing you at this evening's ceremony.
44. The Scientific Advisory Board held its Twenty-Eighth Session in June, with a focus on its next science and technology review process. The Board's temporary working group on investigative science and technology held three meetings in 2019 and is currently drafting its end-of-mandate report, which will provide me with recommendations.
45. This year was a year of transition in terms of senior management. I am pleased to report that women now hold 50% of positions in the Secretariat's senior management structure, while ensuring due consideration of geographical distribution.
46. The continued relevance of the OPCW in contributing to peace and international security was clearly demonstrated when I was invited to address the United Nations Security Council earlier this month. I used the occasion to underscore the complementarity of the missions of the OPCW and the United Nations. In response, the Security Council reaffirmed in a presidential statement its strong support for the Convention. It also expressed its strong conviction that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons should be held accountable, calling on all States Parties to the Convention to fully comply with their obligations, and calling upon all States that have not yet done so to join the Convention without delay.
47. The OPCW has been successful because States Parties have chosen to make it so. In the process, they have established an exemplary model for multilateralism. Your continuing commitment and support are critical to the international community's preparedness to meet contemporary challenges. I can assure you that you can count on the commitment, independence, and expertise of the Secretariat to assist you in this shared endeavour.

Chemical demilitarisation and verification

United States of America

48. The United States of America has two remaining chemical weapons destruction facilities: the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP) in Colorado and the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP) in Kentucky.
49. As at 31 October, the Secretariat had verified the destruction of 93.26% of Category 1 chemical weapons declared by the United States of America. Destruction of the remaining 6.74% is scheduled for completion by 2023.

50. Destruction operations at the PCAPP are ongoing. The PCAPP Explosive Destruction System (EDS) concluded destruction operations in December 2018. The Secretariat completed the final inspection report of the PCAPP EDS on 4 April 2019.
51. Construction of the BGCAPP Static Detonation Chamber (SDC) is complete and destruction operations are planned to begin in early 2020. The BGCAPP SDC began destruction operations on 7 June.
52. The Secretariat together with the United States of America continues to develop an optimisation concept for the two destruction facilities to minimise costs while still fully meeting the verification requirements of the Convention. Updates to the PCAPP and BGCAPP facility agreements and modifications to the agreed detailed plans for verification were provided to the Council at its Ninety-Second Session.

Declarations

53. The timeliness of submissions of annual declarations on past activities (ADPA) has improved significantly. Ninety-one percent of States Parties submitted their annual declarations on past activities (ADPA) for 2018 on time.
54. Ninety-six percent of States Parties submitted their 2020 annual declarations on anticipated activities (ADAA) for Schedule 1 facilities by the 2 October 2019 deadline. Ninety-five percent of States Parties submitted their ADAA for 2020 for Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 facilities by the 1 November 2019 deadline. I thank States Parties for their timely submissions.

Secure information exchange

55. As at 31 October 2019, 59 States Parties had completed registration and configuration procedures through the Secure Information Exchange (SIX) system. The Secretariat has been making improvements to the security and usability of the system, including the addition of two-factor authentication and a new user interface.

Tools for the identification of scheduled chemicals.

56. In August, the Secretariat released the 2019 versions of the Handbook on Chemicals and the Online Scheduled Chemicals Database. These tools have been updated to include scheduled chemicals newly declared by States Parties and scheduled chemicals which were registered by the Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) from 2014 to 2017.

Electronic Declarations Information System

57. The Electronic Declarations Information System (EDIS) will be released before the end of 2019. EDIS will further strengthen the verification regime by making the preparation and submission of electronic declarations more effective and efficient. EDIS will include all features of the current Electronic Declarations Tool for National Authorities (EDNA), with the addition of a new module for distributed use of the system and Article III riot-control agent declarations.

Enterprise content management

58. The Secretariat continues to develop the enterprise content management (ECM) system. The ECM will improve the management of information and streamline verification business processes and other OPCW activities involving classified information. The first phase of ECM system development is complete; the system is now ready for record registration and management.

Industry verification

59. In 2019, the Secretariat was scheduled to carry out 241 Article VI inspections in 41 States Parties. By 30 November 2019, all budgeted inspections will be completed.
60. In 2019, the Secretariat carried out six Article VI inspection involving sampling and analysis activities. Of these, five were conducted at Schedule 2 facilities, while the remaining inspection was held at one other chemical production facility (OCPF). The Secretariat focused sampling and analysis efforts on inspections of plant sites highly relevant to the Convention.
61. The Secretariat continues to seek ways to make the conduct of Article VI inspections more efficient. Inter- and intracountry sequential inspections are one of the most effective ways to optimise efficiency. In 2019, 51% of Article VI inspections were conducted as part of a sequential inspection.
62. In 2019, the Secretariat broadened the types of sequential missions conducted. Historically, sequential inspections have been formed through the pairing of two sites from the pool of selected sites. This year, the Secretariat twice conducted an intercountry sequential mission in two States Parties. Additionally, the Secretariat has carried out two intracountry inspections of a Schedule 2 facility and an OCPF. I would like to thank those State Parties that have accepted receiving inter- and intracountry sequential inspections and I encourage all States Parties that have declared Article VI facilities to accept both types of inspections.
63. The Inspectorate Division has developed and tested a new digital signature tool to improve the preparation of inspection reports during Article VI inspections. This tool has been tested in five inspections in five States Parties and has proved effective. I would like to thank those States Parties that have participated in the testing.
64. A cross-divisional team recently began a fundamental review of Article VI verification process requirements. The goal is to further strengthen verification efforts by enhancing effectiveness, efficiency, and consistency. The Secretariat will utilise the regularly scheduled Industry Cluster meetings and other workshops to share its findings. I encourage States Parties to provide input to this process.
65. Cooperation with the chemical industry in 2019 focused on increasing the efficiency of Article VI inspections, capacity building in chemical safety and security, partnership building with National Authorities, education and outreach, and new trends in chemical production. I have submitted a report to the Conference detailing these activities (C-24/DG.17, dated 4 November 2019).

66. The Industry Cluster focused on a number of important issues, including the increasing number of previously inspected OCPF plant sites that are selected for subsequent inspections. In consultation with States Parties, the Secretariat made adjustments to the site selection methodology, which have been incorporated in the recent site selection process for 2020.
67. In 2019, bilateral consultations were held at the request of several delegations on industry-related topics. These consultations allowed States Parties to present their views on a number of these topics, many of which were then considered by the Industry Cluster.

Inspectorate training

68. During the reporting period, the Capacity Building and Contingency Planning Cell of the Inspectorate Division provided 37 individual training courses comprising 2,340 inspector days.
69. In September 2019, 14 new inspectors (Group R) began the initial mandatory training programme. Group R will finish its training in early December and will be ready to deploy on missions from January 2020.
70. A toxic chemical training course was held for the new inspectors, which provided them with the knowledge and skills to safely and effectively perform verification activities in a toxic environment.
71. A table-top exercise on challenge inspections was conducted for participants from the Inspectorate Division, Verification Division, Office of the Legal Adviser, and the Office of Strategy and Policy.
72. In 2019, cross-divisional operational planning courses were held at OPCW Headquarters to improve the Secretariat's preparedness for possible non-routine missions.
73. The United States of America provided Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) courses, which are mandatory under United States regulations for individuals that are working in chemical weapons destruction facilities.
74. I would like to thank Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Serbia, Slovakia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America for their technical and in-kind support provided this year to the inspector training programme.

Countering chemical terrorism

75. The Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) remains the key forum for States Parties to exchange information on the threat of chemical terrorism. I encourage States Parties to reflect on the value of the OEWG-T in our collective efforts to prevent and respond to the threat of chemical terrorism, including through enhanced information exchange.

Interagency cooperation

76. The OPCW served as a Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection, along with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI). The Working Group is currently chaired by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). Building on the results of a previously conducted project to enhance interagency interoperability and public communications in the event of a chemical or biological attack, a proposal for the project's next phase was jointly developed by the OPCW, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the World Health Organization (WHO), INTERPOL, and the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit (BWC ISU). It is expected to begin in 2020, pending acceptance by the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT).
77. Continuing its long-standing cooperation with the United Nations Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), the Secretariat and the 1540 Committee experts participated in events that focused on strengthening national legislation, chemical security, and customs regimes.
78. The OPCW also continued to partner with other international organisations in areas of common interest and benefit. For example, the Organisation cooperated with the World Customs Organization (WCO) to build the capacity of customs officials in detecting the illicit trade of chemicals, and with INTERPOL to explore how existing cooperation between the two organisations could be broadened with respect to police and other first responders.

OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store

79. There are 22 laboratories from 18 Member States in the OPCW's designated laboratory network for environmental sample analysis. Thirteen of these laboratories from 12 States Parties have signed technical agreements and are available for analysis of authentic environmental samples.
80. There are 17 laboratories from 12 States Parties designated for biomedical sample analysis. Of these, 12 laboratories from 11 States Parties have signed technical agreements and are able to conduct off-site analysis of authentic biomedical samples.
81. I encourage all States Parties that host designated laboratories but do not have active technical agreements in place to assist their laboratories in arranging agreements with the Secretariat.
82. This year, six of our partner laboratories have analysed 50 samples in support of ongoing missions. I wish to thank these laboratories and their respective States Parties for their assistance.
83. In 2019, 153 person-days of training to participants from States Parties have been given by the OPCW Laboratory.

Privileges and immunities

84. I invite States Parties that have not yet concluded a privileges and immunities agreement with the OPCW to enter into negotiations with the Secretariat. The entry into force of these agreements is a matter of importance and I encourage all those States Parties that have already signed such an agreement to undertake the ratification process.

International cooperation and assistance

85. Through its International Cooperation and Assistance Programme, the Secretariat continued to provide assistance to States Parties in the areas of national implementation of the Convention (Article VII), assistance and protection (Article X), and economic and technological development (Article XI).
86. The Secretariat has continued to implement a results-oriented approach in its capacity-building programmes, intensifying its efforts to monitor and assess the progress and impact of the programmes.

Article VII: Implementation support

87. To date, national implementing legislation has been adopted by 160 States Parties, of which 119 have legislation covering all initial measures and 41 have legislation covering some initial measures. Thirty-three States Parties have yet to report on the adoption of national implementing legislation.
88. The Secretariat continues to provide legislative assistance in support of States Parties' efforts to develop and adopt implementing legislation. Internship programmes for legal drafters and National Authority representatives were held from 4 to 8 March and from 26 to 30 August 2019 to support representatives from Maldives, the Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu. The participants developed initial draft implementing legislation and action plans to take the adoption process forward. A national legal workshop was also held for five participants from the Syrian Arab Republic from 12 to 15 November 2019.
89. From 27 to 29 May 2019, the Influential Visitors Programme was held for members of Parliament and senior officials from Togo, at OPCW Headquarters. The programme included briefings from the Secretariat and a visit to the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store. The delegation developed an action plan for the swift adoption of an implementation bill.
90. The Secretariat convened the second workshop on the role of implementing legislation in addressing threats arising from non-State actors, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 9 to 11 April 2019.
91. A pilot workshop on sharing best practices in the development of a legislative and regulatory framework on chemical security was held at OPCW Headquarters from 24 to 25 July 2019. The workshop was attended by more than 20 participants from 12 States Parties and representatives from international organisations and industry associations.

92. A general training course on the Convention was held at OPCW Headquarters from 25 February to 1 March 2019. The course was attended by 40 participants from 40 States Parties, including representatives of National Authorities and national stakeholders from all geographical regions. The programme focused on States Parties' obligations to ensure that the Convention is comprehensively implemented at the national level. The course included a visit to the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store.
93. Two training courses to assist States Parties in effectively fulfilling declarations and inspections obligations under Article VI of the Convention were held in 2019. A regional event was held in Panama from 25 to 29 March 2019 for the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC), and an international event was held at OPCW Headquarters from 2 to 6 September.
94. The Secretariat offered two subregional training-of-trainers courses for representatives of customs training institutions on technical aspects of the Convention's transfers regime. The Lao People's Democratic Republic hosted a course for States Parties in the Asia region from 16 to 19 July 2019 and Uruguay hosted a course for GRULAC States Parties from 17 to 20 September. Twenty-four representatives of 24 States Parties attended these courses, which were organised in cooperation with the WCO.
95. Four mentorship and partnership programmes were implemented in 2019: between India and Afghanistan, between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Gambia, between Togo and Morocco, and between France and Côte d'Ivoire.
96. Four regional meetings of National Authorities were held between May and July in Latvia (Eastern Europe), Mongolia (Asia), Ethiopia (Africa), and Mexico (Latin American and the Caribbean). The meetings provided an opportunity for regional National Authorities to discuss and address various topics and issues related to implementation of the Convention in each region.
97. The Twenty-First Annual Meeting of National Authorities was held from 5 to 7 November 2019 in The Hague. The meeting provided States Parties with information regarding effective national implementation and reviewed the impact of OPCW implementation support and capacity-building activities. National Authorities were briefed on recent developments under Articles VI, VII, X, and XI of the Convention and received updates on policy-related issues. The National Authorities shared their experiences and best practices regarding stakeholder engagement, industry outreach, knowledge management, and utilisation of the National Implementation Framework.
98. The Sixth Annual Meeting of Representatives of the Chemical Industry and National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention was held in Doha, Qatar, from 15 to 17 October 2019. Seventy-four participants from 25 States Parties discussed efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Article VI verification and produced specific recommendations for consideration.

99. Two roundtable discussions on the role of parliamentarians in enhancing national implementation were held in the margins of the 140th and 141st Assemblies of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The events, which took place in Doha, Qatar, and in Belgrade, Serbia, in April and October respectively, helped to enhance understanding and awareness of the Convention among parliamentarians.

Article X: Assistance and Protection against the use or threat of use of chemical weapons

100. As of 1 November, only 64 States Parties had submitted information about their national protective programmes against the use of chemical weapons. The Secretariat maintained its support to States Parties in addressing this matter in a tailored manner. This included the introduction of a user-friendly mechanism for the submission of information required under paragraph 4 of Article X that has been incorporated in the updated version of the Assistance and Protection Data Bank, which will soon become operational.
101. I would like to highlight the importance of this confidence-building measure and strongly encourage States Parties to review the status of their obligations under Article X, in order to plan for a timely and complete submission in 2020.
102. A Symposium Declaration was published on the OPCW website in May 2019 in follow-up to the 2018 International Symposium on Medical Treatment of Chemical Weapons Victims. I encourage States Parties to make contributions to the Trust Fund for Victims of Chemical Weapons, which will facilitate the realisation of new activities to support all victims.
103. In 2019, the Secretariat organised and conducted international and regional assistance and protection training courses and capacity-building activities under Article X, jointly with the Governments of Algeria, Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Czech Republic, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia, Italy, Jordan, Malaysia, Mexico, Mozambique, Namibia, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Switzerland, Turkey, and Uganda. I would also thank the Czech Republic, Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union for their contributions to support these events.
104. Training cycles were conducted in Asia and in Latin America and the Caribbean. International training cycles were held in the Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, and Russian languages.
105. Planning meetings and workshops to assist States Parties in the development of their national protective programmes were held in Fiji (for States Parties of the Pacific Islands), Mozambique, Namibia, and Peru. Regional training courses on sampling and analysis were offered for the first time to Latin America and the Caribbean (in Colombia) and to Africa (in Algeria). Other regular specialised training courses were held in Slovakia and Poland in the field of laboratory skills, live agent training, and sampling and analysis.

106. The scope of training courses on the medical aspects of chemical emergency response was broadened in 2019. Medical training in different modalities was conducted in Ghana, China, and Qatar. In addition, the Chemical Incident Preparedness for Hospitals Project (HOSPREP) initiated in 2018 in Ankara, Turkey, is now having a tangible impact as participating medical facilities and relevant Ministries of States Parties propagate the concepts of HOSPREP at the national and local level. National follow-up programmes were supported by the Secretariat in Bangladesh and Malaysia. A second HOSPREP workshop targeting States Parties of the East African Community (EAC) was also held to further promote subregional progress in implementing Article X.
107. The Secretariat successfully continued its Instructor Development and Exchange Programme in 2019. This programme facilitates the international exchange of expertise and best practices to enhance the response capacities of States Parties and improve the OPCW's readiness to respond to requests for assistance.
108. Progress was made in strengthening capacity to respond to incidents involving chemical agents and toxic chemicals in the framework of Africa Programme. The Secretariat continued to work with regional economic communities in Africa to coordinate capacity-building in each region. In 2019, training in EAC States Parties was delivered by regionally trained instructors, an approach that will be replicated in West Africa. Initial steps are under way for a similar project in Southern Africa.
109. A table-top exercise was held in Côte d'Ivoire for States Parties of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to address regional assistance coordination. It allowed participants to test their organisational processes and consider the modalities of regional and international support in a scenario involving a major chemical incident. The Secretariat also held the first in a series of practical training courses in chemical emergency response in Ghana, with the support of Switzerland.

Article XI: Economic and technological development

110. The Secretariat has continued to develop and deliver its international cooperation programmes in three thematic areas: integrated chemicals management, enhancing laboratory capabilities, and promoting chemical knowledge.

Integrated chemicals management

111. The Secretariat hosted the fourth edition of the Review and Evaluation Workshop of the Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI at OPCW Headquarters on 1 July 2019. Sixty participants from 37 States Parties evaluated the Organisation's Article XI deliverables to ensure that they respond to stakeholders' needs.
112. Under the series of programmes on integrated chemicals management, the Secretariat organised 14 events in 13 States Parties (Algeria, Costa Rica, Germany, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the Netherlands), benefitting more than 400 participants.

113. The Secretariat successfully implemented the twentieth edition of the Associate Programme from 26 July to 27 September 2019. The programme was attended by 32 participants from 32 States Parties.
114. The Secretariat, the Government of Germany, and the University of Wuppertal celebrated the tenth anniversary of the annual Wuppertal Course on Loss Prevention and Safety promotion in the Chemical Process Industries. The tenth anniversary was celebrated through parallel courses for States Parties in the Africa, Asia, and Latin America and Caribbean regions from 23 to 27 September 2019. A total of 23 participants from 23 countries successfully completed these courses.

Enhancing laboratory capabilities

115. Nine courses in were held in four States Parties (Finland, India, Spain, and South Africa) to enhance laboratory capabilities. Four courses were held at the OPCW Laboratory. Under the Equipment Exchange Programme, the Secretariat facilitated two equipment transfers, including a gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) instrument from Germany to Tanzania and fume hoods from the OPCW Laboratory to Ethiopia.
116. An analytical chemistry course under the Africa Programme was organised in Pretoria, South Africa from 13 to 24 May 2019. The course enabled the participants to gain a sound working knowledge of GC and GC-MS analysis principles and procedures.
117. The Secretariat organised a course at the OPCW Laboratory from 8 to 12 April 2019 for analytical chemists from laboratories supporting customs services.
118. Six analytical chemistry courses were held in India, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Spain. These courses were attended by more than 80 participants.
119. The Secretariat conducted training courses at the OPCW Laboratory to build capacities in laboratories seeking to attain OPCW designated status. These courses were aimed at expanding the global network of partner laboratories that can perform the analysis of samples under the OPCW's verification regime.

Chemical knowledge promotion and exchange

120. The Secretariat has continued to provide support for scientists to participate in events related to the peaceful uses of chemistry. Twelve events were supported by the Secretariat under the Conference Support Programme. Twelve fellows were sponsored under the Fellowship Programme. Under the Programme for the Support of Research Projects, the Secretariat continued supporting small-scale research projects in States Parties to promote the development of scientific and technical knowledge in chemistry for industrial, agricultural, research, medical, pharmaceutical, and other peaceful purposes.
121. The Secretariat hosted the Fourth Symposium on Women in Chemistry at OPCW Headquarters on 24 June 2019. The theme for the 2019 edition was "Strengthening the role of women scientists for the next generation: Responsible culture in chemical safety and security management". The symposium was attended by representatives

from government, the scientific community, chemical industry, academia, and civil society. Useful ideas emerged to further strengthen capacity building and education for women chemists in this regard. I thank Canada for its financial support for this event.

122. The Secretariat organised the first edition of a workshop to develop tools and guidance on chemical safety and security management at OPCW Headquarters from 25 to 27 March 2019. The workshop was attended by 21 representatives from international and regional organisations, including the European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as well as government agencies, chemical industries and academia. The participants pledged to develop a non-binding guidance document that will identify high-risk chemicals and provide tools for chemical safety and security management for small and medium-sized chemical enterprises.

Advisory Board on Education and Outreach

123. The Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO) held two meetings this year. I am looking forward to the continued advice from the Board as well as its development of practical tools for more effective education and outreach.

External relations and universality

124. The Conference has before it the annual report on the implementation of the action plan for the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention during the period from 16 August 2018 to 15 August 2019 (EC-92/DG.16 C-24/DG.13, dated 12 September 2019). The report details activities undertaken by the Secretariat to promote universal adherence to the Convention. During the course of 2019, the Secretariat has continued to engage with representatives of States not Party to the Convention with a view to facilitating their accession to the Convention.
125. In the last 12 months, I have welcomed a number of high-level guests at the OPCW Headquarters, notably, H.E. the Right Honourable Ms Julie Payette, Governor General of Canada; H.E. Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus; H.E. Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian, Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France; H.E. Mr Andrzej Duda, President of Poland; H.E. Mr Péter Szijjártó, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary; H.E. Ms Martha Delgado Peralta, Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr Christian Leffler, Deputy Secretary-General for Economic and Global Issues at the European External Action Service; Mr Eamon Gilmore, European Union Special Representative for Human Rights; and Ms Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas, Director of UNICRI; and Ms Cindy Termorshuizen, Director General for Disarmament and Defense Relations of Canada.
126. In 2019, I paid bilateral visits to Belgium, China, Germany, Japan, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. During these visits, I had opportunities to meet with high-level government officials. I addressed a diverse range of audiences, including representatives of scientific communities, academic institutions,

government agencies, and the chemical industry. I also had an opportunity to address various international conferences, including the 22nd Annual Chemical Weapons Demilitarisation Conference in London, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; the 13th CBRNe Protection Symposium, in Malmö, Sweden; and the GLOBSEC 2019 Conference in Bratislava, Slovakia. I also attended the 2019 Munich Security Conference in Germany in February. In November, I had the opportunity to address the United Nations Security Council in New York. In the same month, I also travelled to Brussels to brief Permanent Representations based outside of The Hague.

127. In 2019, the Deputy Director-General visited Peru where she opened a regional pilot workshop on national protective programmes and held bilateral meetings with high-level officials.
128. The Secretariat's website continues to be at the centre of the OPCW's digital diplomacy strategy. The website is the foremost public source of information on the OPCW and the Convention, and continues to attract new visitors through its visual appeal, accessibility, and reliable information. Traffic to the website has stabilised at around 400,000 visits per year, after increased interest in 2017 and 2018.
129. The OPCW's continuing investment in social media has resulted in an overall increase of more than 17% in the last year in our social media following, with an increase of 278% in YouTube and a 48% increase in LinkedIn. Short-form video content is playing an increasing role in engaging and informing new audiences, and greater social media promotion of career opportunities in the Organisation aims to broaden the pool of potential candidates.
130. On 22 September 2019, the OPCW participated in another edition of the annual International Open Day organised by the City of The Hague, attracting over 1,150 visitors, a 15% increase on last year. An additional 150,000 people were reached through social media. The OPCW was able to further spread its message to nearly 3,000 people during the European Union Open Doors Day held in Brussels on 4 May 2019.
131. The tenth edition of the T.M.C. Asser Institute's Training Programme on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction took place from 30 September to 4 October. Thirty-five early and mid-career professionals from 19 States Parties attended, increasing their knowledge about the diplomatic, legal, and technical aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation of chemical weapons. For the first time, the OPCW offered scholarships to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), with financial support from the European Union. They were awarded to four women from Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
132. A record number of 87 civil society organisations represented by 267 individuals have been approved to attend the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference. The growing number of applicants testifies to an increased and sustained interest in civil society participation in OPCW meetings. The OPCW, with European Union funding, was able to support 14 NGOs from developing and transitioning economies to attend the Conference.

Cybersecurity

133. In the past year, the threat of cyberattacks has increased significantly in terms of both the number of attempted attacks and the degree of sophistication. The Secretariat must have the resources necessary to meet this serious threat and I again encourage States Parties to contribute to the Trust Fund for Security and Business Continuity.

Administrative and financial matters

134. As at 31 October, the collection rate for the 2019 assessed annual contributions stood at 88.70 %. The late payment of assessed contributions continues to place limitations on the ability of the Secretariat to implement regular budget programmatic activities.
135. This reality further underlines the importance of maintaining a strong Working Capital Fund (WCF) in order to bridge cash shortfalls to ensure continuity of operations. Indeed, I would highlight to States Parties that, due to cash pressures this year, we have already had to utilise EUR 2.5 million from the WCF in September. I urge States Parties with payment delays or arrears to pursue appropriate measures to pay their assessed contributions and reimbursements in a timely manner.
136. This is all the more important as the Secretariat continues to face ongoing and significant operating cost increases within the constraints of zero nominal growth. Recent examples are the increase in United Nations salary scales for general service staff and the increase in the United Nations post adjustment rate for professional grade staff, both of which apply to OPCW staff according to our regulations. This significant increase in staff costs, in addition to continuing inflation in the costs of goods and services required by the OPCW, will further intensify the already substantial budgetary and financial pressures on programmatic implementation.
137. Following the onboarding of a number of senior staff this year, I am pleased to note that we have achieved 50-50 gender balance in the 10 top management structure positions of the Secretariat, alongside geographic distribution. This effort to further strengthen geographical and gender representation across all sectors of the Secretariat will continue and should benefit from the reinforced sourcing and recruitment strategies that we are undertaking.
138. In addition, a number of gender initiatives have been put in place, including the establishment of Gender Focal Points throughout the Secretariat, and participation in a joint Gender Training Programme with the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.
139. To enhance data-driven decision making and predictive human resources (HR) analytics, the OPCW has launched interactive HR dashboards that provide clear and actionable information that can be used to assess progress against key performance indicators as well as for external benchmarking.
140. The paramount consideration in our recruitment efforts will remain securing the highest standards of efficiency, professional competence, and integrity. This is critically important with regard to ensuring that our chemical demilitarisation expertise is maintained at the highest calibre. Accordingly, the Conference has before it a proposal to extend the authority to rehire former inspectors for up to three years

on a limited basis. This proposal is intended to ensure that the Secretariat has the necessary expertise to support the remaining foreseen demilitarisation activities through 2023.

141. At the same time, efforts are accelerating within the Secretariat to identify and retain the OPCW's vital technical expertise. Within the Administrative Division, a Knowledge Management Section has been created under the supervision of the Senior Knowledge Management Officer. Synergies have been established throughout the Secretariat, stimulating work in the area of core expertise and knowledge identification, sharing, and preservation, with continued contributions from a cross-divisional team of Knowledge Champions.

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