

**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL****PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION C-SS-4/DEC.3 ON
ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE**

1. The Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”), at its Fourth Special Session, adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018). In paragraph 24 of the decision, the Conference decided that “the Director-General shall provide a copy of this decision and a report on its initial implementation to all States Parties and to the United Nations Secretary-General within 30 days of this decision and thereafter provide a report on progress to each regular session of the Council”, in reference to the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”).
2. In furtherance of paragraph 7 of the decision, the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) has continued its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify all gaps, discrepancies, and inconsistencies noted in its initial declaration and subsequent submissions. The Director-General submitted to the Council at its Ninety-Second Session the “Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team” (EC-92/HP/DG.2, dated 27 September 2019). The report updated the Council on the progress of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) in analysing the information that was collected and received during the twentieth and twenty-first rounds of consultations and the related field activities, which took place in March and April 2019, respectively. The report concluded that, at present, the Secretariat remains unable to resolve all of the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in the Syrian Arab Republic’s declaration, and that it therefore cannot fully verify that the Syrian Arab Republic has submitted a declaration that can be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) and Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 (dated 27 September 2013).
3. The twenty-second round of consultations between the Syrian Arab Republic and the DAT took place from 14 to 24 October 2019 in Damascus. The outcome of this deployment, together with further information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic and/or collected by the DAT, will be reported to the Council accordingly. The twenty-third round of consultations, which had been initially planned to begin on 11 February 2020, is being rescheduled. The Secretariat is currently considering alternative dates for this deployment.



4. Consistent with paragraph 8 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, and following current practice, the Secretariat continues to update States Parties on the operations of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) through the monthly progress report entitled “Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme”, and through reports detailing the FFM’s activities and findings regarding specific incidents of alleged use of chemicals as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic.
5. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat established the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic by identifying and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those chemical weapons in those instances in which the FFM determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, and cases for which the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) has not issued a report. The IIT is conducting its investigations, has reached out to States Parties requesting their cooperation, and is in the process of concluding its work on the first incidents under investigation.
6. As previously reported, in exchanges of letters between the Director-General and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr Faisal Mekdad, the Syrian Arab Republic has indicated its refusal to recognise decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 and to accept any of the implications and effects of the decision. On 23 October 2019, the Director-General sent a further letter to Deputy Minister Mekdad, reiterating that cooperation from the Syrian Arab Republic is expected in regard to the decision, and inviting the Syrian authorities to provide the IIT with information relevant to its investigations. On 18 December 2019, the Director-General sent an additional letter to Deputy Minister Mekdad including a note from the IIT seeking the cooperation of the Syrian authorities with the IIT’s work, as mandated by paragraph 7 of Article VII of the Convention.
7. Following voluntary contributions made to support the IIT’s work since the issuance of the previous report, the voluntary funding requirements for the IIT of EUR 1.3 million, which were specified in the Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2019 (C-23/DEC.10, dated 20 November 2018), and of EUR 1.2 million, specified in the Programme and Budget for 2020 (C-24/DEC.12, dated 28 November 2019) are considered to have been met. Contributions and pledges have been received from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union.
8. In continuation of its regular briefings to States Parties on chemical weapons-related activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 3 October 2019 the Secretariat briefed States Parties on the activities of the DAT, FFM, and IIT, as well as on the biannual inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre. The Secretariat will continue to keep States Parties informed of activities and progress with regard to the Syrian chemical weapons programme through briefings and existing reporting modalities.

9. As laid out in paragraph 12 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat is working to put in place appropriate measures to preserve and provide information to the body established by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 71/248 (2016), as well as to any relevant investigatory entities established under the auspices of the United Nations. In this regard, the Secretariat has signed a memorandum of understanding with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (IIIM) regarding the sharing of information with this body. The modalities for the transfer of FFM material to the IIIM are being finalised and will be implemented in a manner consistent with the applicable rules and policies on confidentiality of the OPCW.
10. In accordance with paragraph 18 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat is developing options for further assistance to States Parties to help prevent the chemical weapons threat posed by non-State actors, and to aid States Parties' contingency planning in the event of a chemical weapons attack. Taking into consideration, inter alia, the decision of the Council entitled "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors" (EC-86/DEC.9, dated 13 October 2017), the Secretariat is building on existing activities related to preparedness, prevention, and response.
11. Pursuant to paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Director-General, if requested by a State Party investigating possible chemical weapons use on its territory, can provide technical expertise to identify those who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons.
12. The Director-General submitted a Note to the Conference at its Twenty-Third Session entitled "Report Pursuant to Paragraph 20 of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018) on Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use" (C-23/DG.17, dated 15 November 2018). This report, in part, outlines the Secretariat's efforts to establish the capability to respond to requests for assistance under paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3.
13. The Secretariat intends to achieve this objective, primarily by implementing a series of capacity-building measures to expand the existing skills of relevant Secretariat staff. These measures include, inter alia:
 - (a) training to further build investigative capabilities in areas such as crime scene management, witness interviews, evidence collection, and forensics;
 - (b) the procurement of relevant software and equipment; and
 - (c) the revision of job descriptions to include skills and expertise that generally are not available within the Secretariat and that may be applicable to activities under paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3.

14. Steps to implement the above-mentioned measures are being taken in the hiring of inspectors for the conduct of routine missions and related routine tasks. During the latest recruitment process, the Secretariat sought inspectors who are qualified for routine missions and tasks and also have expertise relevant to the implementation of paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3 and to the conduct of non-routine missions. This practice will be continued with the subsequent recruitment processes.
15. A key goal of the Secretariat in planning and implementing such capacity-building measures will be to have a core capability to provide technical expertise to investigations under paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3 before the end of the anticipated period during which the IIT will be operational. During the period of the IIT's operations, the IIT will engage in the transfer of knowledge to relevant Secretariat staff to increase their investigative skills and expertise. These knowledge management-related activities will complement the aforementioned capacity-building efforts.
16. Also pursuant to paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, and as an additional component of Note C-23/DG.17, the Director-General submitted to the Conference specific proposals to establish independent, impartial, expert arrangements for enlisting support, as appropriate, from outside experts with relevant qualifications and professional experience who could potentially support the Secretariat's response to a request for assistance from a State Party investigating the possible use of chemical weapons on its territory.
17. Pursuant to paragraph 21 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Director-General also submitted to the Conference at its Twenty-Third Session proposals to strengthen the implementation of the verification regime of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter "the Convention"), to provide further assistance to States Parties to enable them to implement their obligations under the Convention, to enhance chemical security, to enable international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention, and to further strengthen the capabilities of the Secretariat. These proposals were presented in a Note entitled "Report on Proposals and Options Pursuant to Paragraph 21 of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018) on Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use" (C-23/DG.16 RC-4/DG.4, dated 15 November 2018).
18. In accordance with paragraph 22 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Director-General additionally submitted that Note to the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.
19. In furtherance of paragraph 23 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat will continue to prioritise the realisation of the universality of the Convention, on the understanding that this goal is essential to achieving its object and purpose, to enhancing the security of States Parties, and to international peace and security. The Director-General continues to call upon all States Parties to support the Secretariat's efforts in this regard.
20. In accordance with paragraph 24 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Director-General will continue to provide a report on progress in the implementation of this decision to the Council at each regular session.