



**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
TO THE NINETY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(FULL VERSION)**

Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. I warmly welcome all delegations to the Ninety-Fourth Session of the Executive Council.
2. At the outset, it gives me great pleasure to welcome the new Chairperson of the Council, Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez, Permanent Representative of El Salvador. I am confident that the Council will benefit from his experience and diplomatic skills.
3. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Andrea Perugini, Permanent Representative of Italy, for his able leadership of the Council throughout an active and demanding period.
4. Throughout the intersessional period, the Organisation and its Member States have endeavoured to adapt to the unprecedented challenges of the outbreak of COVID-19. As I reported to the Council at its Ninety-Third Session, at the end of January I established an internal task force, chaired by the Deputy Director-General. This body is composed of representatives from across the Secretariat and deals with the impact of the outbreak of COVID-19 on the OPCW's activities.
5. Through a Note issued on 20 March (S/1863/2020), States Parties were informed about the OPCW's operational posture, and the measures put in place to safeguard the health and safety of Secretariat staff and delegates. States Parties were provided with updated information through two additional Notes, published on 17 April (S/1870/2020) and 3 June 2020 (S/1876/2020).
6. The task force has applied an agile and flexible approach to the adaptation of the Organisation's activities to this new and evolving reality, within available resources.



7. During the intersessional period, information technology (IT) solutions have been introduced and developed across the Secretariat to allow work and activities to continue as much as is feasible. This includes secure computers and online collaboration and communication platforms. As a result, the Secretariat has made steady progress across key areas of programmatic activity.
8. Verification at chemical weapons destruction facilities has continued, thanks to modifications that ensure the health and safety of inspectors and personnel on site. The Secretariat has developed a plan, in close consultation with States Parties and the Industry Cluster, to resume Article VI inspections when circumstances allow.
9. I am pleased to share with you the news that the final design of the project to upgrade the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology, or ChemTech Centre, has been completed. Yesterday, the design was made available online to States Parties.
10. The Secretariat has continued to make progress in all areas of the Syrian chemical weapons dossier, including the release of the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on 8 April 2020 (S/1867/2020, dated 8 April 2020).
11. The Secretariat has reshaped selected international cooperation and assistance events, so that they may be hosted online.
12. Furthermore, the delivery of this session of the Council in this modality is the result of the diligent preparatory efforts of Secretariat staff, in close cooperation with States Parties, through the Bureau of the Executive Council. As we move forward, we continue to monitor the situation and to develop a phased, conditions-based plan for a gradual return to business as usual.
13. Despite this progress, the COVID-19 outbreak has further exposed the fact that a Budget based on zero nominal growth hinders our ability to adapt to unforeseen circumstances when IT investments are needed. At the beginning of the outbreak, the IT platforms and tools allowing us to shift programmatic activities online proved to be outdated. The capability to hold online meetings in a secure, stable, multilingual modality was lacking.
14. Additional capacity-building events and training were reshaped for remote delivery; however, sufficient IT infrastructure was not available to support them. As an emergency measure, the Secretariat had to acquire around 400 protected laptops for staff in order to allow them to work remotely. These acquisitions could only be financed through savings on missions that had been cancelled because of the virus.
15. I would like to underline that resorting to such measures is not sustainable. The consequences of this underinvestment have been felt in the area of cybersecurity. The Organisation has experienced a sharp and sustained increase in reconnaissance and cyberattacks since the last session of the Council.
16. As I have repeatedly highlighted to the Council, a cybersecurity programme, including modern and capable cyberdefence tools, dedicated staff, and sustainable funding is urgently needed. This need was pointed out in the presentation of the Draft Programme and Budget for 2021, which I delivered to States Parties on 3 July.

17. Amidst these challenges, the Secretariat remains focused on resolutely implementing our mandate and delivering for States Parties by continuing to adapt to the evolving global situation.
18. States Parties have also demonstrated their understanding and their capacity to adapt. I wish to express my gratitude to Council members and observers for their flexibility in holding this session of the Council in this adapted modality.
19. I greatly appreciate the leadership of the Chairperson of the Council in guiding the work of the Executive Council Bureau, and also acknowledge the four Vice-Chairpersons for facilitating the deliberations of the regional groups in keeping with the format of this session.
20. Fifty-three States Parties and the European Union have provided statements, including three rights of reply, as a result of States Parties' cooperative efforts.
21. I hope that this session will continue in the same spirit of flexibility and cooperation.
22. On 2 July, States Parties received reports and presentations on activities related to the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical dossier prior to this session, in lieu of the briefing by the Syrian Arab Republic normally provided to States Parties ahead of each regular session of the Council.
23. On 13 March 2020, I had informed the Syrian Arab Republic through a note verbale that all scheduled deployments and missions of the Secretariat had been postponed until further notice in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. This included missions that were to take place in the Syrian Arab Republic. Although deployments have been suspended during the intersessional period, activities remain ongoing in all aspects of the Secretariat's work related to the Syrian Arab Republic.
24. I wish to inform you that the Secretariat will adapt its reporting to the States Parties starting from the Ninety-Fifth Session of the Council. The number of reports will be reduced, to avoid duplication and overlaps that have been identified. The monthly report on the Syrian Arab Republic will remain the main document containing comprehensive information on all developments in this dossier, in particular on activities of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM), the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). This will ensure a frequent flow of information and delivery of updates, both to the Executive Council and to the United Nations.
25. On 8 April 2020, the Secretariat released the first report of the IIT (S/1867/2020), in accordance with the mandate received in the relevant decision by the Conference of the States Parties on 27 June 2018 (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018).
26. On the same date, I briefed States Parties, together with the IIT Coordinator, through a video message broadcast from the Ieper Room, due to the measures in place in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat provided the IIT report to the Executive Council immediately after the briefing, and then to the United Nations Secretary-General, for consideration (EC-94/S/5, dated 8 April 2020).

27. Additionally, on 12 May, the IIT Coordinator and I provided a video briefing to the United Nations Security Council members in New York on the report, at the kind invitation of the Estonian presidency.
28. States Parties will recall that the report concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the perpetrators of the use of sarin as a chemical weapon in Ltamenah on 24 and 30 March 2017, and of chlorine as a chemical weapon at the same location on 25 March 2017, were individuals belonging to the Syrian Arab Air Force. It is now up to the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties to decide on the next steps.
29. The IIT is continuing its investigations into other incidents and will issue further reports in due course.
30. The Secretariat will continue its work on all aspects related to potential and actual use of chemical weapons.
31. I seize this opportunity to remind States Parties of the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons and the voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Chemical Weapons, both established in 2011 by the Conference of the States Parties. I invite States Parties to consider voluntary contributions to this important fund.
32. For over six years, the DAT has continued its work to clarify gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies arising from Syria's initial declaration of chemical weapons and subsequent submissions. So far, 22 rounds of extensive consultations have already taken place. The twenty-third round of consultations, planned to begin on 15 March 2020 in Damascus, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will be rescheduled accordingly.
33. An exchange of correspondence between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Secretariat has taken place, in which I have requested further information in accordance with the plan of action for resolution of the outstanding issues, as discussed in October 2019. The Syrian Arab Republic has expressed its full readiness to continue consultations and technical meetings with the Secretariat. Currently, the Secretariat is awaiting the requested information, which will allow it to prepare the next round of consultations as soon as conditions permit.
34. As reported in the Note entitled "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team" (EC-94/HP/DG.2, dated 29 June 2020), deterioration of the samples collected by the DAT in October 2019 was observed at the OPCW Laboratory.
35. In order to address this issue, I sent a note verbale to the Syrian Arab Republic on 22 June, containing information on the measures taken by the Secretariat to document and preserve the integrity of seals applied to these samples. Representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic were invited to the OPCW Laboratory, where they received documentation and observed the integrity of the seals. It was proposed that a technical meeting be held with the experts of the Syrian National Authority to agree on the next steps.

36. The Secretariat remains fully committed to ensuring the full implementation of all declaration requirements, and to assisting the Syrian Arab Republic with fulfilling its obligations under the Convention, the relevant decisions of the policy-making organs, and applicable United Nations Security Council resolutions.
37. At present, considering all identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies, the Secretariat remains unable to confirm that the Syrian Arab Republic has submitted an initial declaration that can be considered accurate and complete.
38. Pursuant to Council decision EC-M-43/DEC.1 (dated 24 July 2014), the mandate regarding the monitoring and maintenance of the remote monitoring systems installed at four sealed underground structures on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic came to an end in March 2020. As a result, on 11 March 2020, the Secretariat contracted a Syrian company for the removal of the monitoring equipment from the underground structures. The conduct of this activity will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on OPCW activities.
39. The FFM has been examining a number of incidents regarding allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and is awaiting sample analysis results from the latest deployments. It is also planning further deployments and will report on the results of its activities in due course.
40. In addition, during the intersessional period, the Secretariat has exchanged notes verbales with the Syrian Arab Republic and the Russian Federation regarding information related to the alleged use of chemical weapons in Aleppo on 24 November 2018. The Secretariat hosted a technical meeting with both delegations on 28 May 2020, at OPCW Headquarters. During this meeting, the Russian Federation provided some clarifications related to information in its possession. The Syrian Arab Republic is expected to provide further clarifications with regard to information it provided to the FFM. The Secretariat will continue to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic and will inform the Council in due course.
41. In accordance with Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, adopted on 11 November 2016, the Secretariat is preparing to conduct the seventh and eighth rounds of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre.
42. A Schedule 2.B.04 chemical was detected during the third round of inspections at the Barzah facilities in November 2018. An exchange of correspondence between the Secretariat and the Syrian authorities with regard to these findings has continued during the reporting period. The Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the Secretariat to close this issue.
43. As mandated by EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat has continued to regularly assess whether the security conditions on the ground permit inspections to take place at the airbases of Hama and Hmeimim. These airbases were identified by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, in its third and fourth reports, as being involved in the weaponisation, storage, delivery, and use of toxic chemicals as weapons.

44. Upon receipt of an updated assessment by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security for each of these two sites, I gave instructions for preparations for the inspections to be initiated in early March. The subsequent steps would necessarily include the Secretariat reaching out to the Syrian Government, with a view to securing additional mitigating measures, in order to reduce the risk to an acceptable level and allow the mission to take place. However, a military offensive in East Syria, in the vicinity of the airbases of Hama and Hmeimim, had subsequently intensified, causing the security situation to deteriorate. As a consequence of this development, I decided to suspend this deployment. Consequently, it was no longer relevant to contact the Syrian Government in this regard.
45. The Secretariat will continue to regularly assess the security situation at the two sites, and resume its preparations for deployment, including through contacting the Syrian Government, as soon as the situation improves and the COVID-19 situation allows for resumption of deployments.
46. At the Ninety-Third Session of the Council, I informed States Parties that the Secretariat was taking action to reduce the risks of future breaches of the confidentiality regime. The Secretariat has since completed a benchmarking exercise on the OPCW's confidentiality provisions, compared with those of six other international organisations. The results of the assessment are being analysed.
47. Furthermore, relevant units of the Secretariat are currently conducting a review and update of the Code of Conduct and related policies for addressing breaches, in line with international best practices.
48. On 22 April this year, the Government of Libya, endorsed by the United Nations Security Council, reported the alleged use of chemical weapons in Libya, on 18 April. The Secretariat has been in contact with the Libyan Permanent Representation to the OPCW and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) regarding these allegations. At present, the Secretariat is not able to draw any conclusions about the alleged use of chemical weapons on the basis of the information available.
49. As States Parties are aware, any potential deployment by the Secretariat on the territory of a State Party would require prior authorisation from the State Party concerned or a decision by the OPCW policy-making organs. The OPCW Situation Centre continues to monitor the situation. Furthermore, the Organisation continues to liaise with the Libyan Permanent Representation to the OPCW and UNSMIL.
50. I invite all States Parties to share with the Secretariat information potentially relevant to this allegation.
51. Turning to destruction, as at 30 June 2020, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by possessor States Parties of 70,883 metric tonnes (MT), or 98.03%, of all declared chemical weapons.
52. As at the same date, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the United States of America of 26,348 MT, or 94.88%, of its Category 1 chemical weapons stockpile. The United States of America plans to complete the destruction of the remaining 5.12% of its stockpile by no later than 2023.

53. China and Japan have continued bilateral consultations to make progress on the excavation, recovery, and destruction of abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) at various sites in China. Destruction operations and related activities such as excavations and recoveries have been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As at 30 June 2020, around 83,650 items of ACWs had been recovered, of which 57,701 ACWs had been destroyed. The Secretariat remains in close contact with China and Japan regarding the latest developments on ACW matters.
54. The Secretariat is developing a plan to resume Article VI inspections once circumstances allow. This plan will take into account national measures in place to combat the spread of COVID-19, as well as the health and safety of inspectors.
55. The Secretariat has begun consultations with National Authorities, including through the Industry Cluster, in order to identify the parameters within which Article VI inspections could be resumed. However, as announced to States Parties during the intersessional period, it will not be possible to complete all 241 Article VI inspections in 2020, due to the impact of the COVID-19 virus. Those inspections that are not conducted before the end of this year will be prioritised in 2021.
56. The Secretariat has also been developing and delivering training activities for inspectors through online modalities, including e-learning training modules that are delivered across knowledge-sharing platforms.
57. The OPCW Situation Centre continues to monitor the global COVID-19 situation so as to enable the Secretariat to resume all currently suspended activities once conditions permit.
58. The Conference of the States Parties, at its Twenty-Fourth Session, adopted two decisions to amend the schedules of chemicals listed in the Convention (C-24/DEC.4 and C-24/DEC.5, both dated 27 November 2019). The changes entered into force for States Parties on 7 June 2020, following the timelines laid out in Article XV of the Convention.
59. The first declaration following the entry into force is the annual declaration on anticipated activities (ADAA) for 2021, which is due by 2 October 2020. The Secretariat stands ready to assist States Parties, through their National Authorities, with their ADAA preparations, as well as all aspects of the implementation of these changes.
60. The Secretariat has made steady progress with the ChemTech Centre project. Following completion of the design of the building, the Secretariat initiated the construction tender process in June.
61. The Secretariat intends to contact States Parties very soon, to obtain their ideas, specific needs, proposals, and suggestions in order to prepare a dossier of possible projects that can be carried out at the Centre as soon as the construction is completed. These projects would be implemented in the field of, inter alia, international cooperation and assistance, and could encompass activities such as scientific research programmes, lectures, and visits from academics.

62. Although the Secretariat remains committed to adhering as closely as possible to the target cost and timelines, adjustments may be necessary as the project progresses, including in the light of the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.
63. To date, financial contributions and pledges totalling EUR 30.5 million have been received from 43 States Parties and the European Union, and through personal contributions. I sincerely thank all contributors for their generous support.
64. An additional EUR 3.0 million is needed to fully fund the project, without which the ChemTech Centre project will have to be adjusted. During the intersessional period, the Secretariat has made significant efforts with States Parties to obtain the required funds.
65. Additionally, I have sent more than 100 personalised letters in different languages to presidents, chairpersons, directors, and chief executive officers of private companies, chemical industry associations, scientific societies, and foundations around the world to seek their financial support.
66. Yet, more time is needed to secure the necessary resources. I renew my appeal to all States Parties from all geographical regions to pledge financial support for this project, with amounts that suit their situation.
67. A video that provides a 3-D virtual reality tour of the ChemTech Centre has been made available to States Parties online.
68. States Parties can obtain further information on the status of the project in a Note issued by the Secretariat in advance of this session of the Council (S/1881/2020, dated 30 June 2020).
69. The donor wall to recognise all current and future contributors is now on display in the Delegates' Lounge and will be relocated to the ChemTech Centre upon completion of the project.
70. The International Cooperation and Assistance Division has initiated the necessary work to adapt its programmes to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. I wish to underline that this has been done within the limited technological and financial resources at our disposal.
71. Several courses have been redesigned, and new ones will follow, for online delivery. The Division is looking into ways to develop online training courses, interactive courses, e-learning modules, collaborative learning, and virtual courses, with the support of the Information Services Branch.
72. These online activities will not replace existing programmes. They will supplement them and allow the Secretariat to continue delivering its assistance and expertise to States Parties in line with its mandate. The Secretariat will keep States Parties informed of developments in due course.
73. On 3 July, I presented the Draft Programme and Budget for 2021 to States Parties. The draft Budget seeks to strike a balance between the constraints of the current global situation and the steady loss of purchasing power of the OPCW Budget.

74. The Secretariat is proposing to use a portion of the 2018 cash surplus that resulted from late receipt of some assessed contributions from States Parties that could not be used in time. This portion of the cash surplus would fund activities in 2021 to bridge the widening gap between assessed contributions and the costs of programmatic delivery.
75. However, this situation is not sustainable. Ultimately, if such constraints remain, States Parties will have to choose between programmatic priorities in order to adapt the focus of the Programme and Budget to the reality.
76. All programmatic activities should be supported by the Secretariat's IT capabilities and protected by its cybersecurity defences. The COVID-19 outbreak has highlighted the importance of modern and resilient information technology, tools, and systems to effectively respond to new challenges.
77. The Draft Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2021 incorporates elements on cybersecurity for States Parties to consider. As I have repeatedly highlighted to the Council, the Secretariat is facing an unprecedented number of increasingly sophisticated and targeted cyberattacks. Measures must be put in place to mitigate the current unacceptable risk of loss of confidentiality and integrity of information.
78. The Secretariat's persistent lack of funding to strategically invest in modern information and communications technology infrastructure, software, security controls, and personnel has resulted in a significant security deficit.
79. I thank States Parties for their voluntary contributions to the trust fund that has been established for improvements in cybersecurity. However, the growing number of hostile and potentially detrimental threats we are facing cannot be addressed with these resources alone. Elements of the Programme and Budget for 2021 aim to mitigate the Organisation's targeted cyberattacks and gradually bring our cyberdefence capabilities in line with international best practices.
80. As at 30 June 2020, the collection level for 2020 assessed contributions was 62.35%, compared to 53.74% on the same date last year.
81. Notably, cash inflows are considerably lower than forecast and, should this situation continue, the Working Capital Fund may have to be utilised within this quarter to maintain operational liquidity. I urge States Parties that have not yet paid their outstanding contributions to do so, at the earliest, and in full.
82. The Forty-Eighth Session of the Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF) was held remotely from 2 to 5 June.
83. The ABAF considered a number of issues, including the Organisation's financial position, the report of the Office of Internal Oversight, and the External Auditor's report.
84. The Secretariat's response to the ABAF's report (ABAF-48/1, dated 5 June 2020) has been made available to States Parties in advance of this session of the Council (EC-94/DG.22, dated 6 July 2020).

85. Tenure policy is an important aspect of the OPCW's organisational governance.
86. We have already extended assistance to the new co-facilitators, Ambassador Matthew Neuhaus of Australia and Ambassador Laura Dupuy of Uruguay, in their endeavour. They will explore ways of introducing more flexibility in the current system, so that the Secretariat can make the best use of available talent, experience, and expertise, while preserving the non-career nature of the Organisation.
87. I wish to recall that, compared to other organisations with a non-career nature, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, the OPCW has the most stringent regime of all. This puts us at a disadvantage in, inter alia, our efforts to attract and retain the most competent individuals in the field of disarmament. It is especially true as we continue to face the use of sophisticated tools and techniques provided by science and technology.
88. With regard to direct cooperation between States Parties and the Secretariat, a bilateral agreement on privileges and immunities between Ecuador and the OPCW entered into force on 12 May 2020.
89. Experience has demonstrated the operational value of these agreements. I invite States Parties that have not yet concluded or ratified an agreement on privileges and immunities to do so at the earliest opportunity.
90. This intersessional period has brought unique challenges for the OPCW. The Secretariat has not ceased to deliver for States Parties, despite the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak. As a result, the Secretariat has continued to issue reports to the Council for its consideration. We look forward to hearing States Parties' views on these reports.
91. At the same time, it is imperative to look beyond the immediate impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and analyse the broader environment in which we operate. It is apparent that this environment has become more polarised, and more complex, since the OPCW started its operations 23 years ago.
92. That applies to all global disarmament efforts, as well as to the overall security situation in the world. It is worrisome to witness both the shape and current state of play related to the legal framework in the global arms control and disarmament area.
93. The time has come to reflect on how best to adapt our Organisation to this security context, as the moment of destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles is well within our reach. It is essential to ensure that the Secretariat continues to deliver useful services to all of you, Member States, in achieving the Convention's goals. You can count on the Secretariat's unwavering commitment to assisting you in this process.

Chemical demilitarisation and verification

Status of destruction of declared stockpiles

United States of America

94. The United States of America has two remaining chemical destruction facility sites: the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP) in Colorado, and the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP) in Kentucky.
95. The Secretariat has maintained its verification activities at these chemical weapons destruction facilities (in accordance with Notes EC-94/S/1, EC-94/S/2, EC-94/S/3, and EC-94/S/4, all dated 6 April 2020). Cooperation between the United States of America and the Secretariat has ensured uninterrupted verification of these activities during the intersessional period under modifications that ensure the health and safety of inspectors and personnel on site.
96. The destruction operations at the PCAPP main plant are ongoing. Three Static Detonation Chambers (SDC) are being installed in order to expedite the destruction operations at this facility.
97. Regarding the BGCAPP site, the destruction operations at the SDC are ongoing. At the main plant, the first campaign was concluded on 12 May, and on 21 May the facility started a planned period of inactivity.

Abandoned chemical weapons

98. Four new Controlled Detonation Chambers (CDCs) are being installed at the Haerbaling destruction site in China to expedite the destruction of ACWs. Construction and civil engineering operations to host the new CDC at the Haerbaling destruction site are ongoing.

Old chemical weapons

99. During the intersessional period, all verification activities at old chemical weapons sites were suspended due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Secretariat is in contact with the relevant National Authorities to assess when verification activities could resume.

Declarations

100. Since the last session of the Council, there have been no changes with regard to the submission of initial declarations, with only one State Party, Tonga, yet to submit declarations under Articles III and VI of the Convention.
101. A status report on the timely submission of annual declarations was provided to States Parties for the period from 1 January to 31 May 2020 (EC-94/DG.13, dated 24 June 2020) in advance of this session of the Council.

102. A presentation will be provided during this session of the Council on amendments and correspondence received by the Secretariat during the intersessional period regarding Article III declarations.

Article VI inspections

103. The Secretariat has developed a plan to resume Article VI inspections when the circumstances allow, which takes into account any national measures in place to restrict the spread of COVID-19, as well as the health and safety of the inspectors. The Secretariat has begun consultations with National Authorities, including through the Industry Cluster, in order to identify the parameters within which Article VI inspections could resume.
104. As efforts move forward, the Secretariat will give priority to inspections at Schedule 1 facilities, as well as Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 plant sites where initial inspections have not yet been conducted, as required under the Convention.

Secure Information Exchange System

105. The Secure Information Exchange (SIX) system has been updated. The new version includes security-related improvements and user-friendly enhancements. In addition, the SIX system is now fully integrated with the OPCW log-in platform, which is a new single-entry point for OPCW tools for States Parties. The SIX system allows the effective and efficient exchange of classified information between the Secretariat and States Parties. I encourage States Parties that have not yet signed up for this service to do so.

Inspector training

106. During the intersessional period, inspector training was partially provided through remote training modules. The Inspectorate has been enhancing the scientific and technical training catalogue, which can be delivered remotely, and is developing training courses on the new chemicals in Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention, in cooperation with the OPCW Laboratory.
107. From 14 to 24 April, five newly promoted Article VI inspection team leaders received training remotely. From 13 to 15 June, Article IV and Article V inspection team leaders received elements of their training remotely; they will receive the practical elements of the training at a later date.
108. On 2 and 3 June, 52 inspectors attended a remote Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response refresher training course provided by the United States of America.
109. Throughout June, inspectors participated in refresher training courses remotely.
110. The group of six new inspectors (Group S) that was expected to join the Organisation by 5 May 2020 will now join by 17 August 2020. Training plans for this group have been adapted to enable mission readiness by the beginning of 2021.

111. I would like to thank the United States of America for its flexibility in providing a remote training opportunity. I also thank Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, and Serbia for making forthcoming training possible under the OPCW's current COVID-19 measures.

OPCW Laboratory

112. The Forty-Sixth OPCW Proficiency Test has been completed and the results have been shared with States Parties (S/1865/2020, dated 31 March 2020). The Forty-Seventh OPCW Proficiency Test and the Fifth Biomedical Proficiency Test are currently being conducted. The fourth exercise for the analysis of biotoxins, which focuses on ricin, abrin, and saxitoxin, is nearing completion.
113. The network of designated laboratories consists of 27 laboratories from 19 States Parties. Twenty-two laboratories from 18 States Parties are designated for environmental sample analysis, and 17 laboratories from 12 States Parties are designated for biomedical sample analysis. Currently, there are nine designated laboratories for environmental sample analysis and seven designated laboratories for biomedical sample analysis that do not have a technical agreement for the off-site analysis of samples. I therefore encourage States Parties to assist their laboratories in completing such an agreement.

Changes to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the Chemical Weapons Convention

114. The Secretariat issued an Addendum to the Note S/1821/2019/Rev.1 (dated 14 January 2020) (S/1821/2019/Rev.1/Add.1, dated 20 May 2020), which provides guidance to States Parties in implementing the changes to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals. The Secretariat has also updated the online scheduled chemicals database, which is a tool for the identification of scheduled chemicals.

International cooperation and assistance

115. During the intersessional period, in-person international cooperation and assistance events were postponed, in consultation with the relevant States Parties, in light of the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 outbreak. Concurrently, the Secretariat has adapted its training modalities and will continue its capacity-building activities through alternative means, making use of modern technology.
116. From June 2020, the Secretariat has begun to offer remote capacity-building events. The Secretariat will continue to pursue such opportunities to help States Parties sustain their knowledge, capacities, and networks despite the current restrictions.

Implementation support

117. The Secretariat held its first online training course on declaration and inspection obligations under Article VI of the Convention from 15 to 24 June 2020 for States Parties in the Asia region. The training featured self-paced e-learning and live sessions with OPCW experts.

118. The Secretariat will continue to host implementation-support events online, including four regional meetings of National Authorities in late July and early August.
119. Following the adoption by the Conference of the States Parties at its Twenty-Fourth Session of two decisions approving changes to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention (C-24/DEC.4 and C-24/DEC.5), the Secretariat undertook a review of how each State Party has incorporated the schedules of chemicals into their national legal frameworks, as well as how those with pending legislation have incorporated the schedules into draft laws. The results of this review will be incorporated in the annual reports on the status of implementation of Article VII, which will be issued this August, and will be used to develop future capacity building and outreach support. I encourage those States Parties that have yet provided input to these annual reports to do so as soon as possible.

Assistance and protection

120. An inaugural regional basic online course on responses to chemical attacks and incidents involving toxic industrial chemicals was conducted for States Parties in the Latin America and Caribbean region (GRULAC) from 1 to 5 June 2020. This course, the first of its kind offered by the Secretariat, was organised with the Centre for Chemical Information of Peru using a tailor-made virtual classroom platform.
121. The course was delivered by experts from the Secretariat and a team of regional instructors. It provided participants with comprehensive knowledge on responses to and management of chemical attacks and/or incidents. Twenty-nine first-responders and relevant stakeholders from 15 Latin American and Caribbean States Parties (Argentina, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay) participated in this online course. The Secretariat will build on these experiences to offer similar training in other regions in the coming months.

International cooperation

122. On 2 June 2020, the Secretariat hosted a “Workshop on Assessing and Enhancing Capacity of Analytical Laboratories from African and GRULAC Member States”. This online capacity-building event was dedicated to enhancing the capacities of laboratories in the Africa and GRULAC regions. The workshop summarised progress achieved in a project of the same name funded by a voluntary contribution from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The workshop was attended by 27 participants from Brazil, Chile, Finland, Kenya, Nigeria, Spain, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
123. On 25 June 2020, the Secretariat organised an online workshop on advanced chemical safety and security management for States Parties in Asia, with a view to the implementation of the Article XI framework, which was participated in by representatives of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. This workshop focused on safety and security audit methodologies to prevent chemical accidents and incidents in chemical facilities. It also included a round-table discussion on strategies to implement Article XI mandates among regional States Parties for chemical incident and accident mitigation.

124. During the reporting period, the Secretariat continued the implementation of the fifth phase of the OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Africa Programme”), with a view to streamlining the way the Organisation addresses the needs of African States Parties coherently and holistically.
125. On 26 June 2020, the Steering Committee of the Africa Programme held its inaugural meeting online, under the chairpersonship of H.E. Ambassador Kamal Bashir Ahmed Mohamed Khair of the Sudan.
126. On 1 July 2020, the Secretariat presented a series of special project proposals in a recorded video presentation to States Parties and invited them to consider making voluntary contributions to the Africa Programme through these special projects. These address the three overarching needs areas identified for the fifth phase, namely, chemical safety and security, developing laboratory capabilities, and streamlining the national implementation of the Convention in Africa. The detailed project proposals are available on the OPCW external server.
127. On 1 July 2020, the Secretariat organised an online forum on peaceful uses of chemistry with the theme “New Norms on OPCW Capacity-Building Programme after the COVID-19 Pandemic”. Seven speakers from Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Pakistan, the Philippines, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America shared best practices in online training. Twenty participants from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam, and the United Arab Emirates participated in the forum.
128. The Secretariat has been recalibrating the Associate Programme by combining online training this year with in-person training in 2021. In addition, efforts to promote international exchange among States Parties has also been strengthened through the OPCW’s existing programmes for international conferences, academic research, and fellowships to continue to advance the peaceful uses of chemistry.
129. During the reporting period, one fellowship was completed under the Fellowship Programme; five fellowships are ongoing. Currently, there are 19 research projects ongoing that are directly funded under the Programme for Support of Research Projects.

Chemical terrorism

130. The meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) that was scheduled for 6 July 2020 was postponed due to the current COVID-19 restrictions. I thank H.E. Ambassador Oji Nyimenuate Ngofa of Nigeria, the Chairperson of the OEWG-T, for his flexibility and leadership, and I look forward to the working group reconvening at the earliest opportunity.
131. The Secretariat continues to support global efforts to counter chemical terrorism. As one of the vice-chairs of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection, the OPCW is leading a project on “Ensuring Effective Inter-Agency Interoperability and Coordinated Communication in Case of Chemical

and/or Biological Attacks”. With a view to implementing the project, the Organisation is working with our key partners, namely, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Health Organization, INTERPOL, the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, taking into account the practical limitations imposed by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Cooperation with the chemical industry

132. As reported in the annual Note on engaging the chemical industry associations (C-24/DG.17, dated 4 November 2019) and also at the Ninety-Third Session of the Council, the Secretariat has broadened cooperation with the chemical industry by establishing a more structured partnership with the International Chemical Trade Association (ICTA). ICTA represents the interests of over 1,300 companies worldwide that are involved in different aspects of the transfer of chemicals. Given the steady growth in the global trade of chemicals, ICTA can be both a valuable outreach partner as well as a contributor to the Secretariat’s international cooperation activities. ICTA will join the dialogue between the Secretariat and the chemical industry in the framework of the Chemical Industry Coordination Group.
133. The letters exchanged with the President of ICTA, Mr Edgar Nordmann, to lay the foundation for the aforementioned cooperation were provided to States Parties in a Note in advance of this session of the Council (S/1880/2020, dated 25 June 2020).

Education and outreach

134. The importance of establishing a temporary working group (TWG) to enhance the e-learning opportunities offered by the OPCW under the auspices of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO) was made clear by the COVID-19 outbreak. Accordingly, I intend to appoint Mr Rocael Hernández Rizzardini of Guatemala as the Chairperson of the TWG, along with other members. The TWG will combine the currently available expertise of the ABEO with other experienced e-learning professionals from academia. I look forward to receiving specialist advice from the TWG on how to re-shape and bolster the OPCW’s e-learning to better correspond to present organisational needs, as well as to the latest developments in this field.

External relations

135. During the intersessional period, no official high-level visits to OPCW Headquarters took place and official senior management travel was suspended due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This week, I will host H.E. Mr Philippe Goffin, Minister of Defence and of Foreign Affairs of Belgium.
136. During the same period, the OPCW welcomed three new Permanent Representatives, who have presented their credentials—from Germany, Qatar, and Sierra Leone.
137. A report on the credentials of representatives of the members of the Council (EC-94/DG.16, dated 25 June 2020) was made available to States Parties in advance of this session of the Council. Following the submission of this report, a technical issue was identified with the credentials of one State Party. This issue was subsequently rectified.

T.M.C. Asser Institute

138. Applications are now open for the eleventh edition of the T.M.C. Asser Institute's Programme on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, which will take place from 28 September to 2 October 2020. I encourage States Parties to promote this important event as an opportunity to build expertise in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. The OPCW, with the support of funds from the European Union, is offering up to four competitive scholarships to representatives of civil society interested in strengthening their understanding of these important issues.

Group visits and open days

139. A number of outreach activities have been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. Group visits to OPCW Headquarters by members of the public were suspended in March 2020. The EU Open House event, held annually in May, in which the OPCW participates, was postponed.
140. In light of the restrictions to in-person outreach, the Secretariat is planning an expansion of its digital activities, both to respond to current circumstances and as part of its longer-term strategy to engage key audiences.

OPCW website

141. To broaden the understanding of the OPCW and its work, more core content of the public website will be made available in all of the Organisation's official languages in the third quarter of the year. This is a significant milestone in ensuring that information about the OPCW and its activities is available in all official languages.

Administrative and financial matters

Information technology

142. During the intersessional period, the Secretariat has focused on adapting its IT capabilities to respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak.
143. Beginning in March, new laptop computers were provided to every Division of the Secretariat. These machines have allowed the Secretariat to work on many tasks remotely and have played a key role in keeping programmatic, administrative, and planning processes running smoothly.
144. In the week of 16 March, the Secretariat began introducing a new collaboration platform allowing for conferencing, online meetings, and chat-based communication across the Secretariat. After an initial six-month cost-free period, this platform will be funded by the Major Capital Investment Fund in 2020. Going forward, regular budget funding will be earmarked to support this capability.

Knowledge management

145. The OPCW relies on the expertise and knowledge of its staff. The Secretariat continues to implement continuous knowledge management—a set of processes to identify, develop, preserve, and transfer core knowledge—as well as provide relevant training for staff.

Human resources management

146. The Secretariat has put in place a new performance management and development system; components include a new work-planning framework and the new features of continuous conversations and multi-source feedback, as well as self-appraisal to strengthen the Organisation's feedback culture.
147. The training and learning system introduced at the end of last year has now been integrated into the new performance management system. The Secretariat also introduced the LinkedIn Learning content suite and launched a comprehensive resilience programme to help staff during the alternative working arrangements implemented in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.
148. With the introduction of the "Qlik Sense" analytics platform as part of the implementation of enterprise resource planning, standardised performance reports against established benchmarks have been developed for internal and external reporting. Statistics on geographical diversity and gender balance in the Secretariat have also been included in the tool.

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