

**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-Fourth Session the “Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team” (EC-94/HP/DG.2, dated 29 June 2020).
3. The report updated the Council on the progress of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). It concluded that, at present, considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in the Syrian Arab Republic’s declaration that remain unresolved, the Secretariat assesses that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered as accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”), Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 (dated 27 September 2013), and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).
4. As previously reported, the Director-General sent a letter dated 21 April 2020 to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, H.E. Dr Faisal Mekdad, with a document containing an updated status of outstanding issues and the proposed plan of action for their resolution, as discussed in October 2019 during the twenty-second round of consultations. In the letter, the Director-General requested the Syrian National Authority to submit further information in accordance with this plan at the earliest opportunity. The Director-General and Deputy Minister Mekdad have since exchanged further letters regarding this request.¹ In its most recent

¹ Letters from Deputy Minister Mekdad to the Director-General dated 16 June 2020 and 25 August 2020, and letter from the Director-General to Deputy Minister Mekdad dated 26 June 2020.



letter dated 25 August 2020, the Syrian National Authority provided additional information in response to Director-General's letter dated 21 April 2020. The information concerns several issues discussed during the last three rounds of consultations. The DAT is analysing the information received and will engage with the Syrian Arab Republic further on these and all other outstanding issues. The Secretariat stands ready to deploy the DAT to the Syrian Arab Republic subject to the progress of this further engagement and the evolution of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Following its first report issued on 8 April 2020,² the IIT is continuing its investigations, subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, and will issue further reports in due course.
8. The voluntary funding requirements for 2020 for the IIT of EUR 1.2 million, as specified in the Programme and Budget for 2020 (C-24/DEC.12, dated 28 November 2019) have been met. Contributions and pledges have been received from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union.
9. In continuation of its regular briefings to States Parties on chemical weapons-related activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 2 July 2020 the Secretariat provided States Parties with a presentation to inform them of the status of the Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The Secretariat will continue to keep States Parties informed of activities and progress with regard to the Syrian chemical weapons programme through existing reporting modalities and, subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on OPCW activities, through briefings.

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"First Report by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team Pursuant to Paragraph 10 of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, 'Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use', Ltamenah (Syrian Arab Republic) 24, 25, and 30 March 2017" (S/1867/2020, dated 8 April 2020).

10. Pursuant to paragraph 12 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat has put in place appropriate measures to preserve and provide information to 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), the body established by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 71/248 (2016). All transfers of information to the IIIM are being implemented in a manner consistent with the OPCW's rules and policies on confidentiality.
11. 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.
12. Despite the impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Secretariat is continuing its capacity-building support during this period through the use of online platforms or similar means to enable States Parties to sustain their engagement, including in support of their preparedness, prevention, and response capacity.
13. 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. Accordingly, the Secretariat is working to ensure that it has the necessary capabilities to respond to such requests.
14. As reported previously, the Secretariat has been 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.
15. 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.