

**NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT****UPDATE ON EVENTS ORGANISED BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT  
IN THE AREA OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE  
SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 2020****INTRODUCTION**

1. The aim of this Note is to provide the Member States of the OPCW with information on a four-monthly basis regarding the capacity-building activities delivered by the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) through its international cooperation and assistance programmes. These programmes support Member States’ efforts to effectively implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”), in particular Articles VII, X, and XI thereof. This Note covers the period from 1 September to 31 December 2020.
2. Despite the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Secretariat continued to deliver on its capacity-building and international cooperation mandate in support of States Parties’ efforts towards the full and effective implementation of the Convention. All activities during this reporting period, as in the previous one, were adapted to the operational restrictions imposed by the pandemic and conducted in an online format. Course evaluations conducted by participants at the end of each event have confirmed that their overall objectives were met successfully.

**IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT – ARTICLE VII****Training Course on Enforcement of the Transfers Regime for Convention Scheduled Chemicals, Online, 25 August – 18 September 2020**

3. The Secretariat, in cooperation with the World Customs Organization, organised an online training course on the enforcement of the transfers regime for Convention scheduled chemicals, which was aimed at strengthening the capacity of customs officers from OPCW Member States to implement relevant Convention provisions. More than 100 representatives of customs administrations from 38 States Parties completed the e-learning modules and participated in the live sessions. The course reached its objectives as participants learned about the Convention transfers regime, tools to identify scheduled chemicals, the reporting of imports and exports of scheduled chemicals, and practical issues in handling chemical shipments.



**General Training Course on the Convention for the Personnel of National Authorities and Stakeholders in French-Speaking States Parties, Online, 7 – 9 September 2020**

4. This online training comprised self-paced viewing of presentations, live online interactive sessions, and a live online exercise. The training course was tailored for personnel from National Authorities and relevant stakeholders who are responsible for specific tasks in relation to the national implementation of the Convention and who require additional knowledge and information. Twenty-two participants from 12 French-speaking States Parties attended.

**National Legislative Review Forums, Online, 27 October 2020 and 11 December 2020**

5. The Secretariat organised a pilot National Legislative Review Forum with a representative of the National Authority of Armenia on 27 October 2020. A second such forum was organised on 11 December 2020 with seven delegates from the National Authority of Cambodia. Participants completed a preparatory online training prior to the live online session with the Secretariat. Through this forum, States Parties received targeted support in assessing their national legislative and administrative frameworks, and in implementing their obligations under the Convention. Specifically, the Secretariat assisted States Parties in reviewing the scope of their national laws and regulations relating to the Convention, in order to identify respective gaps and needs and to discuss potential approaches to address them.

**Training Course on Legislative and Regulatory Issues in Chemical Security, Online, 13 – 20 November 2020**

6. The Secretariat organised an online training course from 13 to 20 November 2020 on legislative and regulatory issues in chemical security. The course aimed at enhancing the capacities of participants from States Parties in Asia in analysing respective national legal and regulatory frameworks, including identifying gaps and potential means to address them, and in developing appropriate chemical security measures. Participants completed specific training modules, provided information on respective national legal frameworks on chemical security, and attended an interactive session. In addition, the participants learned about the existing international legal framework on chemical security and the scope of a comprehensive national legislative and regulatory framework on chemical security. The course was attended by 49 participants from 19 States Parties, as well as by technical experts from relevant international organisations, scientific laboratories, and industry and trade associations.

**Seventh Annual Meeting of Representatives of Chemical Industry and National Authorities of States Parties to the Convention, Online, 17 – 18 November 2020**

7. A total of 65 participants, including 16 chemical industry representatives from 37 States Parties from all regional groups, attended this annual meeting of representatives of chemical industry and National Authorities, which was financially supported by the Government of Qatar. The annual meeting was attended by representatives of the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) and, for the first time, by representatives of the International Chemical Trade Association (ICTA). Two sessions with the same programme were held at different times in order to accommodate the participation of States Parties from different time zones. The meeting discussed the

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the collaboration means and modalities among national stakeholders, chemical safety and security issues, and chemical production, storage, and transport issues.

#### **Annual Meeting of National Authorities, Online, 23 – 25 November 2020**

8. The Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of National Authorities was held online from 23 to 25 November 2020. Over 175 participants from 95 States Parties, representing all regional groups, attended the meeting. Participants learned about recent developments related to Articles VI, VII, X, and XI of the Convention, policy-related issues, and priorities for capacity-building support in 2021. National Authorities across the five OPCW regions used this opportunity to share, discuss, and learn from each other's experiences, best practices, and strategies to address implementation challenges.

#### **ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION – ARTICLE X**

##### **The Chemical Emergency Response – Basic Training Course on the Wireless Information System for Emergency Responders and the Use of the Emergency Response Guidebook for First Responders in States Parties that are Members of the East African Community, 19 – 20 October 2020**

9. Emergency first responders from States Parties that are also members of the East African Community (EAC) enhanced their skills by completing an online course, held on 19 and 20 October 2020, on the Wireless Information System for Emergency Responders (WISER) and the use of the Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG). The training programme was organised by the OPCW with support from the Population Protection Institute of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic. The objective of the course was to demonstrate how WISER/ERG can provide a wide range of information on hazardous substances, including hazard identification, protective distance plotting, and containment to teams of first responders in the East African region.
10. The course was attended by 30 participants and observers from 14 States Parties. The course included synchronous (real time) and asynchronous modes of presentations. Participants received ample and comprehensive information about chemical agents: types, symptoms and effects; principles of protection against chemicals; management of emergency response-related issues like the Incident Command System; and training scenarios on the use of ERG/WISER for toxic industrial chemicals and chemical warfare agents.

##### **The Chemical Emergency Response – Basic Course on Principles of Personal Protection against Chemical Warfare Agents and Toxic Industrial Chemicals for First Responders of Latin American and Caribbean States Parties, 2 – 6 November 2020**

11. Emergency first responders from Latin America and the Caribbean learned the principles of personal protection against chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals during an online course held from 2 to 6 November 2020. The training was conducted with the support of the Hazardous Materials Unit from the Costa Rica Fire Brigade and the Faculty of Chemistry of Costa Rica University. The course was attended by military and civilian professionals from a variety of response systems, including civil defence, hazmat equipment firefighters, and CBRN military units.

12. The course was attended by 24 participants from 11 Member States, as well as observers from the Inter-American Defense Board. The training covered the types and characteristics of chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals, respiratory protection equipment and chemical suits, selection of the correct personal protection equipment, decontamination methods, and pre-hospital care after exposure to chemicals and toxic agents.

**Chemical Emergency Response – Regional Virtual Table-Top Exercise on Chemical Emergency Response for ECOWAS States Parties, 16 – 17 November 2020**

13. Emergency management planners and first response team leaders from West Africa enhanced their response capabilities against chemical warfare agents during a regional virtual table-top exercise on chemical emergency response for States Parties that are also members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The training was conducted by the OPCW in partnership with the Higher Institute of Civil Protection Studies in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on 16 and 17 November 2020. The course focused on consequence management by authorities responsible for emergency preparedness and response, and the involvement of international organisations in such an emergency.
14. A total of 32 participants from seven States Parties of ECOWAS participated in the exercise. Participants completed a table-top exercise that tested the effectiveness of operational and decision-making frameworks, communication strategies, and information sharing methods at the national, regional, and international levels when handling chemical incidents. The exercise included live sessions, and participants also worked through a crisis scenario using OPCW decisions and policies regarding response to chemical weapons use.

**Chemical Emergency Response – Online Basic Course on Emergency Response to Chemical Incidents for Member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, 23 – 24 November 2020**

15. Emergency first responders from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) enhanced their emergency response and protection capabilities against chemical warfare agents during the online basic course on emergency response to chemical incidents, held on 23 and 24 November 2020. The course was organised by the Secretariat with support by the Sudanese National Authority for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.
16. Twenty-four participants from four States Parties of the IGAD participated in the course. The course enhanced their knowledge of protection, detection, monitoring, and decontamination operations, and developed participants' skills in working in contaminated environments and in the medical management of chemical casualties. In addition, the training developed participants' basic knowledge of the effective use of incident command systems, as well as specialist applications such as WISER, the ERG, and the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP).

**Chemical Emergency Response – Basic Training Course on Protection Against Chemical Weapons (in Russian), 23 – 27 November 2020**

17. First responders from Eastern European and Asian Member States of the OPCW participated in a Russian-language version of the basic online training course on protection against chemical weapons. The training was organised by the OPCW in partnership with the International Rescue Training Centre (iRT) of the University of Civil Protection of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Belarus.
18. Thirty-five experts from seven OPCW Member States participated in the course. The course covered conceptual and practical aspects of protection against chemical weapons, giving the participants the tools to respond to incidents involving chemical warfare agents or toxic industrial chemicals.

**Chemical Emergency Response – Basic Course on Decontamination of Chemical Warfare Agents and Toxic Industrial Chemicals for First Responders of Latin American and Caribbean States Parties, 30 November – 4 December 2020**

19. First responders from Latin American and Caribbean Member States of the OPCW enhanced their capabilities in chemical warfare agent and toxic chemical decontamination procedures during an online basic course held from 30 November to 4 December 2020. The training was conducted by the OPCW and the Special Risks Brigade of the Argentine Federal Police.
20. The course was attended by 33 representatives of 12 OPCW Member States. The participants learned how to develop and implement decontamination procedures and techniques for use following incidents involving chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals.

**Chemical Emergency Response – Online Basic Course on Emergency Response to Chemical Incidents for the North Africa and Sahel Region, 7 – 10 December 2020**

21. First responders from North Africa and the Sahel increased their skills in handling emergencies involving chemical weapons and toxic industrial chemicals during an online basic course held from 7 to 10 December 2020. The course was conducted in partnership with the Government of Morocco.
22. A total of 64 representatives from eight States Parties participated in the course. The course achieved its objectives as participants enhanced their knowledge of protection, detection, monitoring, decontamination operations, and operations in contaminated environments, as well as the medical management of chemical casualties.

**Chemical Emergency Response – Online Basic Course for Asian States Parties, 7 – 10 December 2020**

23. First responders from Asian States Parties participated in an online basic training course on chemical emergency response from 7 to 10 December 2020, held in conjunction with the National Authority and the Fire and Rescue Department of Malaysia. The course bolstered national capacities to respond to incidents involving chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals, and forms part of the OPCW's efforts to implement Article X of the Convention on assistance and protection.

24. Fifty-nine participants from 12 OPCW Member States benefitted from the course through pre-recorded presentations, demonstration videos, downloadable learning material, and live coaching sessions, all of which covered topics such as protection, detection, rescue, decontamination, reconnaissance, and evidence collection in contaminated areas. The participants were also briefed about the technical support available from the Secretariat.

**Chemical Emergency Response – Basic Training Course on Protection Against Chemical Weapons (in Russian), 14 – 18 December 2020**

25. First responders from Eastern European and Asian Member States of the OPCW participated in the second Russian-language version of the basic online training course on protection against chemical weapons. The training course covered the conceptual aspects of protection against chemical weapons.
26. For this second course, 25 participants gained proficiency in planning and designing responses for protection, detection, rescue, and decontamination operations in contaminated areas. In addition, the course allowed for an examination of response tools used during incidents involving chemical warfare agents or toxic industrial chemicals. Attendees also learned about the OPCW technical support available to Member States in such emergencies.

**Chemical Emergency Response – Online Refresher Course: Operational Training for the Instructors and Experts from States Parties of the East African Community on Chemical Emergency Response, Planning, and Management, 15 December 2020**

27. Emergency response trainers from Member States of the OPCW that are also members of the EAC strengthened their teaching skills during an online refresher course for instructors. The refresher course was organised by the OPCW with support from the Population Protection Institute of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic.
28. Twelve previously trained experts practiced their pedagogical skills by providing lectures on types and effects of chemical weapons, as well as protection, sampling, and decontamination methods. Attendees further built on the competencies established during previous trainings provided by the OPCW in the area of chemical emergency response, planning, and management.

**INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION – ARTICLE XI**

**Two Courses on the Enhancement of Laboratory Skills at the Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (VERIFIN), Online, Helsinki, Finland, 7 – 11 September 2020**

29. The two online courses were aimed at enhancing the laboratory skills of participating States Parties in chemical weapons-related liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS) and laboratory quality management (LQM). Seven analytical chemists from seven States Parties whose economies are developing or in transition attended the courses.

**Wuppertal Course – Explosion Protection and Error Management 2020, Online, 7 – 30 September 2020**

30. The University of Wuppertal in Germany, in partnership with the OPCW, held an online course on explosion protection and error management. The course included e-learning and live sessions with experts from the University of Wuppertal, and benefitted 24 participants from OPCW Member States in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. A wide range of stakeholders participated, including representatives from governments, National Authorities, the chemical industry, and academia.

**Intersessional Online Training for the Associate Programme 2020, Online, 21 September – 2 October 2020**

31. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a series of training modules were launched online as part of the Associate Programme. The interactive programme offered 36 professionals from 35 Member States enhanced knowledge of the Convention, practical advice about its implementation, and chemical industry best practices. The online training is planned to become the prerequisite for participation in future editions of the fully fledged Associate Programme.

**Review and Evaluation Workshop of the Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI (C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011), Online, 2 November 2020**

32. On 2 November 2020, the Secretariat organised, through an online platform, the fifth edition of the “Review and Evaluation Workshop of the Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI” (C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011). Ninety participants from 51 States Parties, representing National Authorities, Permanent Representations, and relevant stakeholders, participated in the workshop. The aim of the workshop was to facilitate discussions and the exchange of views among States Parties and relevant stakeholders to further advance the full implementation of Article XI of the Convention.

**Advanced Course on Chemical Safety and Security Management for East and South-East Asian Member States, Online, 17 November 2020**

33. The Secretariat organised the online training programme on chemical safety and security management for East and South-East Asian Member States on 17 November 2020. The programme was focused on the scenario-based approach to process safety and security management, as well as hazardous chemical supply chain security management strategies aimed at the prevention of chemical accidents and incidents. Participants from government agencies, academia, chemical industries and the defence sector attended this four-hour event. The programme was attended by 21 participants from eight Member States.

**Workshop on Toxic Chemicals in the Environment: from Understanding Pollution and its Impact to Removal and Verification Techniques, Online, 25 – 26 November 2020**

34. The “Workshop on Toxic Chemicals in the Environment: from Understanding Pollution and its Impact to Removal and Verification Techniques” was held online on 25 and 26 November 2020. The workshop, held in cooperation with the International Foundation for Science (IFS), provided an opportunity for scientists who had previously benefitted from OPCW and joint OPCW-IFS funding to successfully present their research and other achievements, as well as to engage in discussions with the OPCW and IFS on their relevant programmes, and provide feedback for the evaluation of these programmes. The workshop was attended by 15 participants, two of whom were observers, representing universities and research institutions in 13 States Parties.