



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Fifth Session
20 – 22 April 2021 (Part II)

C-25/WP.1
12 April 2021
ENGLISH only

**STATEMENT BY DR JOHANNES-GEORG WEINIG
CHAIRPERSON OF THE OPCW ADVISORY BOARD ON EDUCATION
AND OUTREACH AT THE TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

During the past year, despite travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO) managed to find creative ways to carry out multiple activities. The Board continued to focus on efforts in active learning, e-learning, and educational resources for the next generation in the scope of disarmament education. With the support of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”), the ABEO was able to convene two online meetings, on 11 December 2020 and from 9 to 10 February 2021.

At the Ninth Session of the ABEO, held on 11 December 2020, the ABEO members elected a new Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for 2021. I am humbled to serve the ABEO as Chairperson during the final year of my second term working at the Board and feel honoured to serve with the current Vice-Chairperson, Mr Shahab Ud Din (Pakistan), in order to contribute to raising awareness on the mandate and work of the OPCW.

A Strategic Planning sub-working group, formed already in 2019, continued its work in 2020 on developing the ABEO’s Strategic Plan, to tightly focus on the priorities of the Board and ensure that its work is strategic and aligns with both OPCW needs and the skills of the Board. At the Tenth Session, on 9 February 2021, the Director-General of the OPCW shared with ABEO members important ideas on the direction of the work of the Board and related target audiences. Many of these ideas corresponded with the ABEO’s draft Strategic Plan. Taking into account the Director-General’s guidance, the Board members adopted the Strategic Plan and agreed on strategic priorities for the ABEO’s work during 2021. According to the ABEO Strategic Plan, target audiences include academia, civil society, and young professionals, among others.

To facilitate its work during the intersessional period, the ABEO set up again several sub-working groups focusing on concrete projects directly related to the above-mentioned target audiences, particularly industry, scientists, academia, civil society, policy makers, and young professionals.



Concrete areas of focus and future work

On 25 September 2020, the Director-General established a Temporary Working Group (TWG) on e-Learning, chaired by a Board member, Professor Rocael Hernández Rizzardini (Guatemala). The TWG is composed of ten independent experts from around the globe; five out of these ten experts are ABEO members. The first meeting of the TWG took place on 10 and 12 November 2020. Following its objectives, the TWG is currently reviewing the Secretariat's e-learning offer. Subsequently, it will provide advice on further development of e-learning modules and on a strategy for the Secretariat to develop e-learning offers with a common approach. The outcomes will be submitted through a TWG report to the ABEO and, through the ABEO, to the Director-General. The work of the TWG on e-Learning is being co-financed by the OPCW and the European Union.¹

The goal for the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) is to become a centre of excellence in research, analysis, training, and knowledge. The ChemTech Centre will increase OPCW's capabilities in several fields related to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention ("the Convention"). The ChemTech Centre itself will contribute to the acquisition, dissemination, and exchange of knowledge, expertise, and skills. The ABEO will support these goals by identifying scientists, experts, and institutions who can contribute to promoting the ChemTech Centre.

In addition, the Board will help to raise awareness of chemical safety and security, and ethical guidelines, particularly with regard to the protection of the environment and peaceful uses of chemistry, focusing on civil society, academia, and young professionals as target audiences.

The ABEO fosters a deeper cooperation with the International Cooperation and Assistance Division and the provision of advice and assistance to National Authorities. In this context, a member of the ABEO attended the Annual Meeting of National Authorities in November 2020 with a pre-recorded presentation to inform attendees about the Board's work and opportunities for National Authorities to seek advice from the ABEO on a wide range of issues, particularly in relation to academia and young professionals in chemical industry, among others. The ABEO can contribute to the dissemination of knowledge and skills in various regions and have a positive impact on capacity building of States Parties. A higher engagement of National Authorities in education and outreach activities is strongly encouraged. The aim of the ABEO is to contribute to increasing capacity building of National Authorities in the area of education and outreach. Board members, as well as observers from the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) and the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) remain available to provide advice as deemed fit.

Furthermore, within the EU Project 5B "Translation and Dissemination of Education and Outreach Tools and Materials" the ABEO is working with the Office of Strategy and Policy of the Secretariat to identify education and outreach tools and materials that can be translated and disseminated into other OPCW official languages to support outreach in various regions.

In 2019, the white board video "Did you Know?" created by Board member Dr Craig Cormick (Australia) was translated into all OPCW official languages. This year, further documents that will be translated into other OPCW languages are The Hague Ethical Guidelines Jigsaw Exercise,

¹ Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/538 of 1 April 2019 in support of activities of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the framework of the implementation of the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

created by Board member Professor Alastair Hay (United Kingdom), as well as the ABEO report on the role of education and outreach in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. The dissemination of these materials will increase the impact of OPCW education and outreach materials in non-English speaking regions.

A closer collaboration with the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) also characterises the dynamic engagement of both Boards, using the opportunity of virtual meeting formats to attend each other's sessions and to mutually contribute to each other's work. Thus, the ABEO has welcomed two SAB Board members to its last session. In addition, the ABEO has nominated two of its members as focal points to channel the communication with the SAB. The close collaboration between the two Boards will benefit the Secretariat's work by complementing efforts and finding synergies in areas of common interest with different expertise.

Conclusion

Mr Chairperson, distinguished delegates, the pandemic situation did not allow a personal presentation of this statement. Nevertheless, I do hope that you and all delegates were able to gain a deeper insight into the ABEO's dynamic work and discussions.

At the end of 2021, the ABEO will have already completed two three-year terms since its establishment in 2015. In January, the Secretariat issued a call for nominations for the ABEO with the possibility for Member States to nominate two candidates to the Board, should one of the candidates be a female, in the interest of promoting gender balance.

Seven Board members will end their second term of office by the end of 2021. Some of the outgoing and former Board members offered to build an association of ABEO alumni willing to contribute on a voluntary basis with ideas, knowledge, and skills to help the OPCW as well as the ChemTech Centre and without any obligations on the OPCW's part.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Dr Jo Husbands (United States of America) and Dr Adriana Bernacchi (Argentina) who chaired the ABEO as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, respectively, in 2020.

Before concluding, I wish to thank on behalf of the Board all States Parties that have recognised and supported the work of the ABEO with its goal of providing advice on the development of education and outreach strategies, key messages, and partnerships that support the implementation of the Convention.

I request that this statement be issued as an official document of the Conference and be published on the OPCW public website.

Thank you very much.