

**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.
3. Following the twenty-third round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority, which took place from 22 September to 3 October 2020 in Damascus, the Secretariat shared with the Syrian National Authority the results of the analysis of the samples collected during this deployment from several large-volume storage containers. One of the chemicals detected in these samples was a neat chemical warfare agent, the production of which has not been declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. Its presence inside storage containers of large volume at a previously declared chemical weapons facility may imply undeclared production activities.
4. On 8 March 2021, the Secretariat received a note verbale from the Syrian Arab Republic containing explanations regarding the sample analysis results. The DAT conducted a detailed analysis of all information provided by the Syrian National Authority and assessed that the aforementioned explanations were not sufficient to explain the sample analysis results. Through a note verbale dated 16 April 2021, and in line with the established practice, the Secretariat informed the Syrian Arab Republic that a new outstanding issue would be opened and discussed at the next round of consultations with the DAT.
5. The twenty-fourth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority was conducted in the Syrian Arab Republic from 7 to 25 February 2021. During the course of these consultations, the DAT conducted technical meetings with representatives of the Syrian National Authority, visited three declared sites, and



conducted interviews regarding an outstanding issue. The Director-General issued the “Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team” (EC-96/HP/DG.1, dated 5 March 2021) to update States Parties on the outcome of these consultations and other recent activities of the DAT.

6. As previously reported, one of the remaining outstanding issues pertains to a chemical weapons production facility (CWPF) declared by the Syrian National Authority as never having been used for the production of chemical weapons. The review of all of the information and other materials gathered by the DAT since 2014, including samples, indicates that the production and/or weaponisation of chemical warfare nerve agents took place at this CWPF. Through a note verbale dated 9 March 2021, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterated that this CWPF was never used for the production of chemical weapons. In addressing the issue during the Ninety-Sixth Session of the Council, the Director-General re-emphasised that the Secretariat maintains that the Syrian Arab Republic must declare all chemical warfare agents produced and/or weaponised at this site.
7. In the course of preparations for the twenty-fifth round of consultations, which was initially scheduled to begin on 18 May 2021 in Damascus, the Director-General sent letters to the Syrian Arab Republic on two occasions to request the issuance of visas for DAT members. As the Secretariat did not receive any confirmation that the visas would be issued, the Secretariat informed the Syrian Arab Republic through a note verbale dated 26 May 2021 that the deployment had been postponed until further notice.
8. At this stage, considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the Secretariat assesses that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 (dated 27 September 2013), and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).
9. 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.
10. Between 29 March and 13 April 2021, the FFM deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic to collect information and to conduct interviews regarding an incident that took place in Kafr Zita, Hama, on 1 October 2016. The FFM is currently analysing the information collected from these and previous activities and will report to the Council on the results of its work in due course. The planning and conduct of further FFM deployments are subject to the evolution of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
11. 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.

12. On 12 April 2021, the Secretariat issued the “Second 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’, Saraqib (Syrian Arab Republic) – 4 February 2018” (S/1943/2021, dated 12 April 2021). In this report, the IIT concluded, on the basis of all the information obtained and its analysis, that “there are reasonable grounds to believe that at approximately 21:22 on 4 February 2018, during ongoing attacks against Saraqib, a military helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force under the control of the Tiger Forces hit eastern Saraqib by dropping at least one cylinder. The cylinder ruptured and released a toxic gas, chlorine, which dispersed over a large area affecting 12 named individuals”.
13. As mandated by paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the report was provided to the Council and to the United Nations Secretary-General for their consideration. The IIT is continuing its investigations and will issue further reports in due course, subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.
14. On 3 June 2021, the Director-General briefed the United Nations Security Council on the findings of the IIT report and other Syria-related activities via videoconference.
15. The voluntary funding requirements for 2021 for the IIT of EUR 1.3 million, as specified in the Programme and Budget for 2021 (C-25/DEC.7, dated 1 December 2020) have been met. Contributions and pledges have been received from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union.
16. In continuation of its regular briefings to States Parties on chemical weapons-related activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 3 March 2021 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.
17. 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.
18. 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.

19. Despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, 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.
20. 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.
21. 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 revision of job descriptions with more generic requirements regarding scientific background in order to attract a larger pool of candidates, including those that may have skills and expertise applicable to activities under paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3;
 - (c) internal review and identification of additional investigative tools and capabilities that could be useful for the Secretariat, if called to assist a State Party in identifying perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise, of chemical weapons use on its territory; and
 - (d) the procurement of relevant software and equipment.
22. In furtherance of paragraph 23 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat will continue to prioritise the realisation of the universality of the Chemical Weapons 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.