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**REPORT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LAURI KUUSING OF ESTONIA  
CHAIRPERSON OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP FOR THE  
PREPARATION OF THE FIFTH REVIEW CONFERENCE TO THE CONFERENCE  
OF THE STATES PARTIES AT ITS TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION**

Mr Chairperson,  
Director-General,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

It is an honour for me as the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference<sup>1</sup> (OEWG-RC), to report to the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) on the activities of the Group.

The OEWG-RC was established at the Ninety-Ninth Session of the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) in March this year, following the recommendation of the Conference at its Twenty-Sixth Session. The Group has been tasked to conduct preparations, in cooperation with the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”), for the Fifth Review Conference, which will be convened in accordance with paragraph 22 of Article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) from 15 to 19 May 2023.

The Council at its Ninety-Ninth Session also established a Bureau of the OEWG-RC. In accordance with the practice of rotation, the Council appointed me as the Chairperson (representing the Eastern European Group), as well as the following Vice-Chairpersons: Ambassador Salima Abdelhak of Algeria (African Group), Ambassador Hidehisa Horinouchi of Japan (Asian Group), Ambassador José Antonio Zabalgoitia Trejo of Mexico (Group of Latin American and the Caribbean States), and Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast of the Netherlands (Western European and Other States Group).

Guided by the principle that any successful preparatory process must be transparent, inclusive, and predictable, I have been attaching special attention to upholding these priorities in my work. To this end, consultations with all regional groups had been conducted before I convened the first meeting of the Working Group on 7 June 2022. These consultations allowed me to become acquainted with a number of thematic priorities of the States Parties for the review process, as well as their expectations regarding the conduct of our business.

Guided by States Parties’ views, the programme of work of the Working Group from June to December 2022 has been based on a thematic approach to the review of the Convention. It has envisaged discussion on all issues considered important for the implementation of the

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<sup>1</sup> The Fifth Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.



Convention: verification, international cooperation and assistance, universality, external engagement, governance, as well as different cross-cutting topics on which the guidance of States Parties for the next five years would be valuable.

The OEWG-RC held its first meeting on 7 June 2022 and since then it has met on 10 occasions. The last meeting of the Group for 2022 will be on 14 December and that will mark the end of the first part of our preparatory work—the review part. During these 10 meetings, delegations were able to exchange views on all aspects of the implementation of the Convention as well as to listen to some 15 presentations by the Secretariat on the following themes: verification-related issues; non-routine missions; international cooperation and assistance; engagement with external stakeholders (States not Party, international organisations, the chemical industry, media, and civil society); contribution of the OPCW to the global counterterrorism efforts; and organisational governance (privileges and immunities, OPCW financing, tenure policy, geographical diversity, knowledge management, OPCW security). The presentations focused on key achievements since the Fourth Review Conference and provided food for thought regarding future challenges and priorities.

In addition, and in line with past practice, one meeting was dedicated to an interaction with representatives of the chemical industry and civil society. Furthermore, the Chairpersons of the Scientific Advisory Board and the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach were also invited to address the Working Group.

All OEWG-RC meetings were held in a hybrid format and as such, they promoted an inclusive approach facilitating the participation of National Authorities, experts from capitals and, most importantly, representatives of States Parties who are not based in The Hague. The Chairperson's Informal Summaries of Discussions were posted on the Catalyst platform of the OPCW after meetings for information of the States Parties. Furthermore, I provided regular reports to the Council at its 100th and 101st Sessions on the progress of work of the OEWG-RC.

Following on my commitment to promote predictability and transparency of the preparatory process, I conducted a second round of informal consultations with the regional groups after the October session of the Council. The consultations took place exactly half-way through the implementation of the OEWG-RC programme of work for this year and were aiming at taking stock of the process and getting acquainted with delegations' views regarding the work done so far in preparation of the Fifth Review Conference. All regional groups expressed full support to the conduct of work of the OEWG-RC and appreciation for the thematic approach of the review of the Convention that was adopted.

Aiming at building synergies with the existing consultative mechanisms, I also reached out to you, Mr Chairperson, in your capacity as the Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working on Terrorism, to discuss the progress of work of the Group in the context of the meetings of the OEWG-RC. Inspired by the example of the survey by the OEWG on Terrorism that aimed at gauging the views of States Parties on the main elements of the OPCW's efforts in countering chemical terrorism, I decided, with the support of the Bureau members, to introduce such a survey in the OEWG-RC.

The purpose of the survey is to inform the preparatory process to the Review Conference in the framework of the OEWG-RC. The survey comprises three questions that have been prepared by the Chairperson in consultation with the Bureau members, and are as follows:

- (a) What have been the key achievements of the Organisation since the Fourth Review Conference?

- (b) What recommendations should the Fifth Review Conference make?
- (c) What should be the priority areas for the OPCW in the next five years and why?

The survey will be shared with the States Parties in the coming days and the deadline for replies will be set for 24 January 2023. It is meant to facilitate States Parties' engagement in the preparatory process by providing another avenue for highlighting issues of relevance for the Review Conference. The results of the survey will be shared with the Open-Ended Working Group. I encourage all States Parties to consider the survey questions and participate in it.

Before concluding my report, I would like to focus on the future outlook as the OEWG-RC will begin the second phase of its work in mid-January 2023. A draft programme of work for the period from January to April 2023 will soon be circulated for States Parties' consideration with the aim of adopting it at the Group's meeting on 14 December 2022. It is my intention to ensure the best use of the time left before the Review Conference. Therefore in the second phase of our work in January, I will reserve some time for discussion on the position papers submitted by States Parties and the concrete ideas contained therein. Moving beyond, it is my intention to put forward the Chairperson's draft provisional text. To capture as many views as possible, the document will be based on multiple sources such as the discussions of the OEWG-RC, proposals and papers submitted by States Parties to the Working Group, the results of the survey, and presentations and papers prepared by the Secretariat.

In this context I would like to thank all delegations for their constructive participation in the first phase of our collective work to prepare for the Fifth Review Conference and to encourage to sustain the same level of engagement next year. I would like to reiterate my calls to States Parties to submit national, regional, or cross-regional papers ideally by the end of this session of the Conference to ensure their proper consideration during OEWG-RC meetings in January. Written submissions will facilitate my work in preparing the draft Chairperson's provisional text and ensure transparency towards other delegations.

Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation to the Ambassadors of Algeria, Japan, Mexico, and the Netherlands, who as the Vice-Chairpersons of the Working Group and members of its Bureau significantly contributed to its work supporting me with advice and their invaluable experience. My gratitude also goes to all OPCW regional groups and their coordinators for their openness and willingness to provide useful feedback on the OEWG-RC process. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for thoughtful and comprehensive presentations in the framework of the OEWG-RC, which set the scene for discussions among States Parties. I am also grateful for the support extended to me in steering the OEWG-RC proceedings, managing its work and for the technical assistance.

To conclude, I would like to reconfirm my goal to achieve consensus but let me remind States Parties that achieving one is a collective effort.

This concludes my report. Thank you for your attention.