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**REPORT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR VUSIMUZI PHILEMON MADONSELA
CHAIRPERSON OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON TERRORISM
TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS 102ND SESSION**

1. Mr Chairperson, Director-General, distinguished colleagues, it is my pleasure to provide a brief oral report on the meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) held on 6 March 2023.
2. The meeting featured a presentation and discussion on relevant developments in science and technology and the activities of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). This was followed by a discussion on a proposal emanating from responses to the survey circulated by the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) on 22 July 2022 to hold a table-top exercise exploring further a number of issues that arose as part of the Group’s contribution to the preparatory process for the Fifth Review Conference¹.
3. In his opening remarks, the Director-General began by stating that science and technology are integral to the work of the OPCW, and that the intersection of science and chemical terrorism is a critical area for the OEWG-T to consider. Directly related to this, he noted, is the planned opening of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre), which will help the OPCW to keep abreast of scientific and technological developments. Addressing the proposal under consideration to conduct a table-top exercise, the Director-General stated that the Secretariat considers this a good idea, recalling also that two of the new activities planned for the ChemTech Centre are related to countering the threat posed by chemical terrorism. The Director-General ended by reiterating that the Chemical Weapons Convention is a unique treaty, the prohibitions of which apply not only to States, but also to natural and legal persons, and that its full implementation ensures that non-State actors are also fully covered.
4. The Working Group was then briefed by Mr Peter Hotchkiss, Science Policy Adviser and Secretary to the SAB. Mr Hotchkiss recalled the role and purpose of the SAB and described its work in preparation for the Fifth Review Conference. He noted in particular the SAB’s scientific report to the Fifth Review Conference (RC-5/DG.1, dated 22 February 2023) as well as the Director-General’s response thereto (RC-5/DG.2, dated 22 February 2023).
5. Mr Hotchkiss recalled that the SAB’s scientific report to the Review Conference contains much of relevance to the non-State actor threat, and that it concludes that the threat of non-State actors acquiring and using chemical weapons persists, either by their use of more readily accessible technologies to develop their own weapons, or by their

¹ Review Conference = Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.



opportunistic acquisition. He went on to share relevant developments in four thematic areas: technologies for transfer, delivery, and dissemination; detection and verification; chemical security; and chemical forensics. He noted several observations and recommendations made by the SAB, including that it would be useful to better understand the potential to detect and identify non-scheduled compounds that may be misused—in addition to all scheduled compounds. He also noted that the Secretariat should consider how to engage with laboratories outside its network, including the network of laboratories for the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons.

6. Participants universally acknowledged the topic as one of great relevance to countering chemical terrorism and welcomed the opportunity to be briefed on the SAB's recent activities. Several observations and questions were put by participants, on a range of topics including: the emerging field of plant biomarkers; the role of unmanned aerial vehicles; artificial intelligence; cyberattacks; the intersection of chemical and biological terrorism; the projected future role of the ChemTech Centre in this area; and how States Parties' capacities in science and technology can be further strengthened, including States Parties in Africa.
7. The Group then considered the proposal made via the survey responses that a table-top exercise or series of table-top exercises be held to build connections across relevant national entities that deal with counterterrorism, and especially to help identify gaps and challenges in areas such as capacity for prevention, response, and investigation.
8. I noted that table-top exercises of various types have frequently been held as part of the Secretariat's capacity-building activities, for example in chemical emergency response. I noted, however, that the current proposal differs from these in several ways. It would be specifically based on a scenario of non-State actor use and would focus on a number of issues which have come to the attention of the Working Group. In addition, it could be open to participation from a geographically diverse group of States Parties, from delegates based in The Hague, to policymakers, and representatives of National Authorities and other national entities as appropriate. The overall objective would be to help States Parties and the Secretariat to focus on the most important gaps and to better connect the work of the OEWG-T with the realities at a national and regional level.
9. In opening the floor for discussion on this item, I asked delegates to consider the objectives of such an exercise, as well as its scope, possible modalities—including whether States Parties could offer expertise, and the type of participation that could be sought.
10. A number of delegations intervened in support of the proposal noting, *inter alia*, that: it could be a practical way to take forward issues under consideration by the Working Group; it could help identify gaps and capabilities; it might inform capacity-building activities; it could be used as a basis for regional exercises; and that States Parties could lend expertise, for example in scenario design, facilitation, and sharing of best practices.
11. I stated my intention to hold a table-top exercise, with the support of the Secretariat, in autumn of this year. I also announced that I would circulate a concept note on the exercise in advance of the next meeting of the Working Group, which is likely to take place in July.

12. I take this opportunity to express my profound appreciation to the delegates and to the presenters for their participation.
13. The next meeting of the OEWG-T is scheduled to take place prior to the 103rd Session of the Executive Council. The date of the meeting will be communicated closer to the time.
14. Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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