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**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS NINETY-NINTH SESSION
(FULL VERSION)**

1. I warmly welcome all delegations to our first session of the Executive Council this year.
2. I wish in particular to welcome the new Chairperson of the Council, Ambassador Dr Eniola Olaitan Ajayi, Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the OPCW. Ambassador, we have been working together to prepare your candidacy. It has been a real pleasure, because I observed your many professional and personal qualities and I am confident that with your rich experience, this Council will continue to successfully fulfil its obligations under the Convention.
3. I extend my profound appreciation to Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of Morocco for skilfully steering this Council through many crucial moments during his term as Chairperson.
4. Upon his departure in January, the Council's work continued under the able guidance of the acting Chairperson, Ambassador Gudrun Lingner of Germany, to whom I also convey my profound gratitude for her generosity and competence during this period.
5. The current security environment in the world has seriously deteriorated over the past two weeks. In such dramatic circumstances, it is important to recall that the OPCW is a disarmament organisation that works for peace and international security, with humanitarian and environmental components. This is embedded in the Preamble of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In it, you, States Parties, reaffirm your determination to act with a view to achieving effective progress towards general and complete disarmament, including the prohibition and elimination of weapons of mass destruction.
6. You, States Parties, further agreed in this Preamble to contribute to the realisation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, that must have our unwavering support. These purposes and principles include friendly relations among nations, peaceful settlement of international disputes, self-determination, and refraining from the threat or use of force.
7. At the OPCW, these purposes and principles have been taken very seriously. Today, there are fears and threats of use of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons in Ukraine. Before I elaborate later in my statement on the impact of this on the Organisation's activities, I wish to share my sympathy for the victims of this armed conflict, and call for the respect of all international norms, including the Chemical Weapons Convention.



8. We meet, once again, in an adapted modality, to ensure the health and safety of all delegates and Technical Secretariat staff. Although many restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have been lifted or relaxed, the number of cases remains high.
9. We are taking a cautious approach in lifting our restrictions, in line with the Dutch Government's guidance and the Secretariat's risk assessment. We have commenced the implementation of the third phase of our roadmap on the return of OPCW staff to our premises. In this context, I welcome the engagement of States Parties, led by Germany, on the proposal for convening Council sessions or meetings in emergency circumstances.
10. During this session, the Council will decide on its new composition as of 12 May 2022.
11. We ended 2021 with several critical outcomes from the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. Decisions of substance, such as the understanding on central nervous system acting-chemicals, were adopted by the Conference. The adoption of the first ever biennial Programme and Budget for 2022–2023, with a zero-real growth-based principle, was also especially relevant. This will enable the Secretariat to conduct its mandated activities more sustainably and efficiently.
12. At the end of last year's Conference session in December, delegates had only just left the World Forum when the OPCW building was assaulted the following day.
13. During a demonstration outside the OPCW Headquarters, the building was violently stormed by more than 40 intruders, seeking media attention for their political claims. They damaged the premises and caused panic and anxiety among staff members. One of our security staff was slightly injured while trying to contain them. Although the secure area was breached, fortunately, confidential information from States Parties remained protected.
14. Through a Note issued on 6 December 2021 (S/2009/2021*), I informed States Parties immediately of this aggressive action, and of the initial measures we adopted. The Secretariat has already identified short-term steps to secure the building. We have internally earmarked EUR 810,000 from the Trust Fund for Cybersecurity and Physical Security to start reinforcing the identified weakest points in the building. Our security team has since conducted a full internal security risk assessment. The implementation of the measures identified in this assessment will require additional funding. You will be informed in due course and it will be up to you, States Parties, to decide on whether and how to finance the measures, if approved.
15. We have been in contact with the Dutch authorities. As Host Country, the Netherlands has an international legal responsibility to protect the premises around the building. In line with this responsibility, the Netherlands adopted additional surveillance measures in December, soon after the incident took place. Since then, in complement to the security assessment made by the Secretariat, the Dutch authorities have initiated their own security assessment. This work will be important to coordinate measures to be adopted inside and outside the building in the longer term. You will also have noticed a stronger police presence during this meeting outside the premises of the building. The Netherlands has been working to ensure an increased level of security, in line with the higher profile of the Organisation.

16. I noted the claims of the demonstrators in relation to the use of white phosphorous or white phosphorous-like elements. For several years, the Secretariat has been following and receiving claims and allegations of use of munitions containing white phosphorous, in different parts of the world. White phosphorus is an incendiary and smoke agent used in military operations. As such, it is not prohibited under the remit of the Chemical Weapons Convention, as the design of these weapons and their purpose are not dependent on its toxic properties, but on its thermic properties. Therefore, it falls under the purposes not prohibited under paragraph 9 of Article II of the Convention.
17. In case of misuse, white phosphorous may fall under the purview of various instruments regulating the use of these types of weapons. This includes the 1980 United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), which bans the use of incendiary weapons against civilian populations. Moreover, requests for a Secretariat engagement must come from States Parties, and must comply with the appropriate procedures and take place through the proper involvement of the OPCW Conference of the States Parties or Executive Council. For its part, the Secretariat will continue to monitor allegations.
18. I am pleased to inform you that the construction of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) continues to be on schedule and with controlled costs, despite the pandemic, rising inflation, and scarcity of construction materials. We have started to organise visits of groups of ambassadors to the construction site, which are limited for safety reasons. This way, you will all have the possibility to personally witness the evolution of the building, whose structure is already completed. A Note by the Secretariat (S/2026/2022, dated 17 February 2022) has been issued to provide details on the progress of the project.
19. To date, financial contributions and pledges of EUR 33.8 million have been received from 53 countries, the European Union, and other donors. I thank you for your continued support. Your contributions amount to the equivalent of half of the annual budget of the OPCW. This demonstrates the relevance you attribute to this project.
20. The ChemTech Centre will benefit the States Parties in five main areas:
 - (a) more space for capacity-building and international cooperation activities;
 - (b) enhanced laboratory capabilities;
 - (c) high-level training area for experts of Member States and Secretariat staff;
 - (d) a modern and secure equipment store that will allow users to calibrate, test, and train using adequate tools; and
 - (e) a venue for cooperation and outreach activities.
21. A first Note on possible programmatic activities to be carried out at the ChemTech Centre was circulated to all States Parties ahead of this Council (S/2034/2022, dated 1 March 2022). The outlined activities incorporate inputs provided by you, States Parties, over the past 18 months when I held informal consultations both at regional level and bilaterally. As the Secretariat informs States Parties in the Note, reflection within the Secretariat and discussions with States Parties will continue. The intention is to present you, later this year, with a set of more detailed projects proposed for implementation at the ChemTech Centre.

22. Some of the proposed new programmes are subject to extrabudgetary funding. Their implementation will depend on available financial, and human resources. For this purpose, I wish you to consider allowing the Secretariat to use part of the contributions for hiring experts to conduct certain dedicated activities. Having highly qualified staff in the Secretariat is key to the success of the Organisation and it will also be crucial to making full use of the ChemTech Centre.
23. In January, we reached the symbolic threshold of 99% of declared chemical weapons stockpiles verified as destroyed. The United States of America, the last possessor State, is expected to destroy its final stockpiles in 2023, as planned.
24. In the area of international cooperation and assistance, since the last session of the Council 36 capacity-building events have been conducted online, benefitting 1,679 participants from all geographical regions.
25. Turning to the Syrian chemical weapons dossier, an informal briefing, in two extensive identical sessions, was provided to States Parties on 23 February ahead of this session of the Council.
26. I have further shared with all States Parties the most recent letters exchanged between myself and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Head of the National Authority of the Syrian Arab Republic, Faisal Mekdad.
27. On 24 and 31 January, the Secretariat issued two reports by the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) on use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, which have been shared with States Parties. The first report (S/2017/2022*, dated 24 January 2022) concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that scheduled chemicals of the family of mustard agents were used in Marea on 1 September 2015, resulting in more than 50 injured persons. While information had been found regarding a similar incident two days later, on 3 September, the results of analysis of all available data obtained did not allow the FFM to establish whether or not chemicals were used as a weapon in this incident.
28. The second report (S/2020/2022, dated 31 January 2022) concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that a chlorine cylinder was used as a chemical weapon in the town of Kafr Zeita, on 1 October 2016, causing 20 persons to suffer from suffocation and breathing difficulties.
29. The Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) is already looking into these reports. It will consider whether they provide sufficient material to launch investigations into identifying the perpetrators involved in these incidents. In the meantime, the IIT continues to make progress on its current investigations. Its next report will be issued in due course.
30. The Secretariat is planning the next rounds of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in the course of this year. They will be carried out pursuant to paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, adopted on 11 November 2016. As States Parties were informed, during the third round of inspections at the Barzah site of the SSRC in November 2018, a Schedule 2.B.04 chemical was detected. The Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the Secretariat to close this issue. The last inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities took place at the end of last year. The report of these inspections will soon be finalised.

31. The Secretariat, through the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), has continued its efforts to ensure that the Syrian Arab Republic clarifies the shortcomings in its initial declaration. Since April 2021, the Secretariat has been reaching out to the Syrian National Authority to schedule the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the DAT in Damascus, which had initially been proposed to take place from 18 May to 1 June 2021. This deployment has not taken place yet, despite extensive efforts by the Secretariat.
32. This delay, of now 10 months, was initially caused by the absence of a response from the Syrian Arab Republic, and subsequently because of the repeated refusals of the Syrian National Authority to issue a visa to one DAT top expert. I recall that allowing full and unfettered access for personnel designated by the Secretariat has been requested of the Syrian Arab Republic through the decisions of this Council and by United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).
33. I also wish to recall the decision adopted by the Conference at its April 2021 session entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC.9, dated 21 April 2021) suspending certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Conference decided that these rights will be reinstated once I have reported that the Syrian Arab Republic has completed the requested measures adopted in the July 2020 Executive Council decision. To date, the Syrian Arab Republic has not completed any of these measures.
34. With a goal of restoring compliance in the shortest time possible, last June I invited Minister of Foreign Affairs Faisal Mekdad to an in-person meeting, which is still in the preparatory stages. An initial agenda has been negotiated, and we are awaiting the Syrian Arab Republic’s position on the latest version submitted to it on 20 December 2021. Once the general agenda is agreed, engagement will continue on the details and annotations for each agenda point. Considering the tone of the letters I have recently received, which have been shared with you, without a change in approach and attitude from the Syrian side, it will be difficult to expect any positive outcome from such a high-level meeting.
35. For its part, the Secretariat continues to implement its mandates under the Convention, the decisions of the policy-making organs, and the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.
36. Regarding the Navalny case, I have no new developments to share with you at this stage from the Secretariat’s perspective. The Secretariat cannot deploy a technical assistance visit (TAV) to the Russian Federation if that country continues to request that the TAV be conducted in contravention of some of the basic rules and applicable procedures for these activities, such as guaranteeing the independence of the TAV team.
37. For their part, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, and Sweden, together with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on behalf of 45 States Parties, have initiated a series of requests for clarification under the procedure foreseen under Article IX of the Convention.
38. Referring to destruction-related activities, cooperation between the United States of America and the Secretariat during the intersessional period has ensured the uninterrupted verification at chemical weapons destruction facilities. These activities have been conducted based on modifications that ensure the health and safety of inspectors and personnel on site.

39. As of 28 February 2022, the Secretariat had verified the destruction of a total of 71,652 metric tonnes (MT), or 99.1%, of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles. The destruction of remaining chemical weapons stockpiles is on track to achieve the goal of completing the destruction in 2023.
40. The Secretariat, with the Chairperson of the Council and with the United States of America, will evaluate how to conduct the Executive Council visit that has again been postponed because of the pandemic and is still planned to take place this year. In this respect, the United States circulated a Note ahead of this session inviting States Parties to an online event in March to continue informing States Parties about the destruction, as an additional transparency measure.
41. For 2022, 180 Article VI chemical industry inspections are mandated. This will be part of the phased return to the normal level of inspections. Border-related COVID-19 measures undertaken by States Parties to fight the effects of the pandemic are understandable. Yet, I am bound to report to this Council that this situation impacts our inspections plan, as the Secretariat will not be able to carry out all planned 180 inspections this year.
42. I started my opening statement with a word on the developments in Ukraine. This situation will also have direct impact on our activities. Ukraine has several declared chemical industry sites on its territory. Also, the closing of the Russian Federation's airspace for flights from Europe will mean longer and more expensive flights to reach Asia to deliver our activities, including inspections. The Secretariat has started assessing the possible impact of these measures and will keep States Parties informed.
43. Moving to abandoned chemical weapons (ACW), as of 28 February 2022 more than 60,000 of the 89,836 declared ACW on the territory of China have been reported as destroyed. Owing to existing COVID-19 measures, no ACW inspections have been carried out in China since the last session of the Council. The Secretariat continues to liaise with both China and Japan regarding the verification of ACW in China.
44. Since the last session of the Council, the Secretariat conducted four old chemical weapons (OCW) inspections in Belgium, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
45. As we draw closer to realising the disarmament goal of the Convention, we must increase our focus on preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons use.
46. The Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism is an important platform for States Parties to engage on this agenda. The last meeting of the Group took place on 22 February. During that meeting, the Secretariat presented a Note on the status of the OPCW's contribution to global anti-terrorism efforts in 2021 (EC-99/DG.7, dated 14 February 2022) as well as on the contribution of the OPCW Africa Programme in countering chemical terrorism. I thank Ambassador Vusimuzi Madonsela of South Africa for his leadership as Chairperson of the Group.
47. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) will continue to assist the Organisation in keeping pace with scientific and technological change. The SAB's latest report (SAB-33/1, dated 18 November 2022), and my response to it (EC-99/DG.16, dated 2 March 2022), have been shared with all States Parties.

48. The Twelfth Session of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO) was held from 8 to 10 February in an online modality. The Board's new composition reflects geographical diversity and gender balance: all geographical groups are represented and, for the first time in its history, seven out of the 15 Board members are female experts. This is a notable contribution to the achievements we celebrate today on International Women's Day.
49. I wish to congratulate Mr Shahab Ud Din and Dr Graciela Gonzalez for their election as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the ABEO for 2022. I look forward to the concrete outcomes of the Board's work. The report on the ABEO's operation from 2019 to 2021 (EC-99/DG.10, dated 17 February 2022) is being submitted to the Council at this session for its consideration.
50. Next month, we commence a period of major milestones for the Organisation. We start on 29 April, with the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention and the establishment of the OPCW. I encourage States Parties to observe the anniversary at national level in a way they deem suitable.
51. The Secretariat is planning an event comprising two seminars on the morning of 20 May to mark the occasion. The seminars will provide an opportunity to look back and to look forward. Detailed information will be shared with States Parties in due course. I have to express my sincere gratitude to the European Union for providing the financial support that will allow us to carry out such an important activity. The Secretariat will provide States Parties with information regarding the anniversary to enhance the visibility of this landmark occasion. This material can be easily used or adapted across your own official social media accounts and beyond.
52. In January 2023, we will commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the Convention in Paris.
53. In May 2023, the OPCW will hold the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and set its strategic direction for the next five years. Following the decision of the Conference last December, this session of the Council will establish the Open-Ended Working Group on the Preparations for the Fifth Review Conference. I welcome the decision of the Eastern European Group to present Ambassador Lauri Kuusing of Estonia for the position of Chairperson of the Working Group.
54. Once the Open-Ended Working Group has been officially created, it will start its activities, through meetings and consultations, to hear views from all States Parties and relevant stakeholders. States Parties will be expected to produce position papers, or group papers, to guide the deliberations. While States Parties are the drivers of the review process, the Secretariat will support the Chairperson and all the preparations.
55. In the same year 2023, we expect to inaugurate the new ChemTech Centre. The future sustainability of the Organisation will depend on our ongoing adaptation. The ChemTech Centre will be the core tool for accelerating this process. The Centre will be crucial in increasing our ability to attract and to retain the necessary expertise to fulfil our mandates and to be well prepared to face the new threats.

56. The altered patterns of social and economic life imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic have led to several global trends. A wave of employee resignations has affected virtually every sector. Like other public institutions, the OPCW has not been immune to these developments. In fact, at present, because of a higher-than-average rate of resignations in recent months, the OPCW has fewer filled fixed-term posts than at any time since 1997. This in turn has required a surge in recruitment activities, which has placed greater strain on the remaining staff.
57. This trend has underlined the importance of ensuring that the OPCW remains appropriately resourced, to continue to attract top talent, amid increasing competition from private and public sector organisations. To address this issue, the Secretariat is implementing several measures, including a regulatory framework for flexible working arrangements. This will more closely align us with similar organisations, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).
58. More broadly, we will sometimes need to retain the best performing and skilled staff members. This issue is directly related to recruitment and tenure.
59. Last year, important discussions on tenure took place within the framework of the facilitations on organisational matters. Ambassador Dupuy of Uruguay, who recently left, and Ambassador Neuhaus of Australia have been generously devoting their time and efforts to conducting these facilitations. I welcome the appointment of Ambassador Elizabeth Ward of Panama who will continue this task with Ambassador Neuhaus.
60. Beyond our human resources, the Organisation is also using its financial capabilities to the fullest. As of 1 January 2022, the OPCW began implementing its first-ever biennial budget. For the first time in over a decade, States Parties authorised an increase in regular budgetary financing for the OPCW on a zero-real growth basis. This will help to address years of erosion in the Organisation's increasingly tenuous financial position because of inflation. That decision was particularly prudent, as we start a year that is heavily influenced by historically high inflation rates, including in the OPCW's Host Country.
61. Although the current biennium budget has placed the OPCW on more solid budgetary footing, delayed payments of assessed contributions by States Parties remains a concern. It is as vital as ever that States Parties meet their financial obligations promptly and in full.
62. We approach the milestones I have mentioned taking stock of our achievements. At the same time, we are mindful of the significant tasks ahead in our common mission.
63. When tested, the international norm against the use of chemical weapons remains strong. This is because you, the States Parties, through the policy-making organs, continue to take action, as you deem fit, to strengthen and safeguard the Convention. And for its part, you can count on the Secretariat to continue to deliver all the mandates it receives from you, with conviction and loyalty to the Convention.

CHEMICAL DEMILITARISATION AND VERIFICATION

Status of destruction of declared stockpiles

United States of America

64. The United States of America has two remaining chemical weapons destruction facility (CWDF) sites: the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP) in Colorado, and the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP) in Kentucky.
65. The BGCAPP main plant continues the destruction of VX-filled rockets and rocket warheads. The BGCAPP static detonation chamber (SDC) completed its destruction campaign of HD-filled projectiles in September 2021 and will be closed as a CWDF. The SDC will be modified to destroy drained rocket warheads and will be declared as a non-contiguous extension of the BGCAPP.
66. The PCAPP main plant continues to destroy HD-filled projectiles. Three SDCs are currently undergoing systemisation and will be used to augment destruction operations.
67. As for the remaining stockpile, as at 31 January 2022 the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the United States of America of 26,941 MT, or 97.52%, of its Category 1 chemical weapons stockpile. The United States plans to complete the destruction of the remaining 2.48% of its stockpile by the agreed deadline.
68. The Secretariat has maintained its verification activities at both destruction facilities in accordance with Notes EC-94/S/1, EC-94/S/2, EC-94/S/3, and EC-94/S/4 (all dated 6 April 2020). Cooperation between the United States of America and the Secretariat has ensured the uninterrupted verification of these activities during the intersessional period on the basis of modifications that ensure the health and safety of inspectors and personnel on site. In September 2021 verification activities resumed under the pre-pandemic conditions.

Abandoned chemical weapons

69. The destruction of the chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China is scheduled to continue, based on the agreed destruction plan. Excavation, recovery, and destruction operations in Haerbaling resumed in May 2021. Activities at other sites remain suspended because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspections related to these activities will be rescheduled and take place, if conditions allow, in consultation with the concerned States Parties. As at 28 February 2022, a total of 89,836 items of ACW had been recovered, of which 60,033 items had been reported as destroyed.
70. The thirty-fifth trilateral meeting between China, Japan, and the Secretariat was held online on 18 November 2021. The objectives of trilateral meetings are to ensure transparency, to discuss technical and practical issues, to implement projects in accordance with the appropriate verification measures, and to plan for future activities.

Declarations

71. Since the last session of the Council, there have been no changes with regard to the submission of initial declarations, with only one State Party, Tonga, yet to submit declarations under Articles III and VI of the Convention.
72. A presentation has been posted on the OPCW Catalyst portal to inform States Parties about the amendments and correspondence received by the Secretariat during the intersessional period regarding Article III declarations.
73. A report on the timely submission of declarations under Article VI of the Convention between 1 January and 31 December 2021 was provided to States Parties in advance of this session of the Council (EC-99/DG.6, dated 27 January 2022).
74. In accordance with paragraph 8 of Article VI of the Convention, I encourage all States Parties with declarable activities for 2021 to submit their annual declarations on past activities regarding relevant chemicals and facilities by the deadline of 31 March 2022.
75. Furthermore, in 2021, the Secretariat updated its resources related to the preparation of declarations by States Parties under paragraph 8 of Article VI of the Convention, namely the Declarations Handbook 2013 (revised version 3), the Handbook on Chemicals, and the “Most Traded Scheduled Chemicals” brochure, with effect from 1 January 2022 (see Note S/2018/2022, dated 25 January 2022).

Article VI verification

76. The Secretariat has coordinated with those States Parties that are scheduled to receive the largest number of Article VI inspections in 2022 to identify the basis on which planned inspections can be implemented. In some of these States Parties, multiple Article VI inspections have already been received. In others, inspections will commence in the coming month.
77. The Secretariat has carried out Article VI inspections regularly since the beginning of the year. The number of inspections completed to date against the inspection plan is on track after the first two months of the year. In seven States Parties, the entire 2022 Article VI inspection plans have already been completed. In other States Parties, COVID-related travel restrictions have prevented the completion of any Article VI inspections to date. In at least one State Party, these delays mean that the 2022 inspection plan cannot be completed. As a result, the Secretariat reports that the 2022 inspection plan cannot be completed in full. The Secretariat will continue to update States Parties about progress against the 2022 Article VI inspection plan at sessions of the Council and meetings of the Industry Cluster.

Inspector training

78. Between 18 October and 7 December 2021, four first aid initial courses and one first aid refresher course were conducted in person at the OPCW Headquarters. A total of 45 trainees (31 inspectors and 14 other Secretariat staff) received their official first aid certificates from the Red Cross.
79. In view of the many upcoming projects within the Inspectorate Division, special attention has been paid to enhancing project management competencies of staff. The PRINCE2 Foundation certification in project management by Axelos has been selected for this

purpose. The Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell organised two training sessions on 29 and 30 November and on 9 and 10 December 2021. As a result, 24 staff members were trained (12 inspectors and 12 other Secretariat staff).

80. On 7 December 2021 and 26 January 2022, one Advanced Health and Safety Inspector undertook training on pre-hospital trauma life support at the Nottingham University Hospitals in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
81. On 8 December 2021, 11 inspectors participated in mandatory inspector refresher training, which was delivered virtually.
82. On 17 December 2021, a new group of 10 inspectors (Group T) completed a 12-week initial inspector training programme. A special graduation ceremony was held online to celebrate their success and to officially welcome them as OPCW inspectors.
83. From 10 to 14 January 2022, five inspectors and two other staff members completed an online certification course for radiation protection officer industrial radiography, delivered by the Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands.
84. From 10 January to 4 February 2022, three inspectors from Group T successfully completed a mandatory analytical chemist certification course at the OPCW Laboratory in Rijswijk, the Netherlands.
85. From 17 to 21 January 2022, seven inspectors attended a five-day certification course in ultrasonic testing. Between 2 and 11 February 2022, the same group of inspectors also completed a radiographic testing certification course. Both courses were delivered by a Dutch training company.
86. On 20 and 21 January 2022, two refresher sessions of the Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training were conducted online, with support from the United States of America. Following the successful completion of the course requirements, 38 inspectors were recertified and remained deployable for missions to the United States.
87. On 14 and 15 February 2022, 12 inspectors took part in a mandatory inspection team leader training course at the OPCW Headquarters.
88. From 21 to 25 February 2022, a mobile laboratory exercise was conducted at the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO), the Netherlands.
89. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Netherlands, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America for their continuous support to inspector-related training.

OPCW LABORATORY

90. The OPCW continues to host proficiency tests (environmental and biomedical) to validate the capabilities of laboratories receiving authentic samples for analysis. The results of the Fiftieth Official OPCW Proficiency Test will be finalised in March 2022. Samples for the Seventh Biomedical Proficiency Test were dispatched in February 2022, while the Fifty-First Official OPCW Proficiency Test is scheduled for April 2022.

91. The network of designated laboratories consists of 29 laboratories from 21 States Parties. A total of 24 laboratories from 21 States Parties are designated for environmental sample analysis, while 20 laboratories from 14 States Parties are designated for biomedical sample analysis. Currently, 13 of the 24 laboratories designated for environmental sample analysis have technical arrangements in place with the Secretariat to receive authentic environmental samples. Similarly, 12 of the 20 laboratories designated for biomedical sample analysis have technical arrangements in place to receive authentic biomedical samples.
92. Such technical arrangements are necessary to allow for the conduct of off-site analysis of samples. I therefore encourage States Parties to assist their laboratories in completing them.
93. Samples for the next exercise on the analysis of biologically derived toxins were dispatched in December 2021 and the exercise is ongoing. The Thirteenth Chemical Weapons Convention Chemical Analysis Competency Test (CCACT-13) is ongoing, and the results will be finalised in March 2022.
94. On 22 September 2021, the Fifty-Second Meeting of the Validation Group was held virtually to discuss the evaluation of new analytical data for possible inclusion in the OPCW Central Analytical Database, and to consider matters related to this database. The report of the Fifty-Second Meeting of the Validation Group was issued as document S/2001/2021 (dated 5 November 2021).

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE

95. During the reporting period the Secretariat continued to adapt to and deliver its international cooperation and assistance capacity-building activities through online modalities, while remaining committed to resuming in-person training events as soon as the circumstances permit.

Implementation support

96. On 12 October 2021, the Secretariat, in cooperation with the World Customs Organization (WCO), conducted an online lessons-learned workshop on customs training integration for States Parties from the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC). Discussions focused on challenges and good practices related to the incorporation of Convention-related modules into national customs training curricula. Twenty-four participants from 10 GRULAC States Parties took part in the workshop.
97. On 12 and 13 October, the Secretariat held the Eighth Annual Meeting of Representatives of the Chemical Industry and National Authorities of States Parties to the Convention. During the online meeting participants discussed issues related to regulatory compliance and exchanged information on approaches to chemical industry outreach. The meeting was attended by 113 representatives from 52 States Parties.
98. The Secretariat organised two online training courses on legislative and regulatory issues in chemical security, respectively for French-speaking African States Parties (16 to 21 October) and States Parties from the GRULAC region (8 to 14 December). Forty participants from 12 African States Parties completed the October course, while 53 participants from 23 GRULAC States Parties completed the December course.

99. From 23 to 26 November, the Secretariat held the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of National Authorities online. During the meeting, the Secretariat updated the participants on policy-related issues and its activities in the implementation of the verification regime, and highlighted the most important developments within its capacity-building programmes. The meeting was attended by 200 participants from 102 States Parties.
100. From 8 to 10 December, the Secretariat delivered a training course for representatives of customs training institutions in Africa. The online course gave participants an opportunity to discuss transfers-related issues with experts from the OPCW and the WCO and to identify best practices in exercising effective control over trade in toxic chemicals. The course was completed by 39 participants from 17 African States Parties.
101. From 7 to 25 February 2022, the Secretariat delivered a training course on fulfilling declarations and inspections obligations under Article VI of the Convention. The course provided participants with an opportunity to enhance their knowledge of Article VI obligations as well as a chance to share experiences and best practices related to Article VI implementation. The course was completed by 77 participants from 34 States Parties representing all regional groups.
102. Under the Mentorship/Partnership Programme, representatives of the National Authority of Mauritania visited representatives of the National Authority of Morocco from 21 to 25 February 2022. The visit provided an opportunity for each National Authority to share experiences and best practices concerning implementation of the Convention. Participants were also able to visit relevant facilities in Morocco, discuss and plan follow-up actions, build working relationships, and strengthen regional cooperation.

Assistance and protection

103. In the area of assistance and protection against chemical weapons, the Secretariat continued to deliver activities designed to help States Parties develop, inter alia, chemical emergency response plans, training programmes, and preparedness to effectively deal with chemical incidents. During the intersessional period, the Secretariat organised 17 events in this context, benefitting 789 participants representing States Parties from all regional groups.
104. From 4 to 17 October 2021, the Secretariat held a virtual course on chemical emergency management tools for first responders from the GRULAC region. The course was attended by 74 participants from 14 States Parties.
105. From 11 to 15 October, the Secretariat held an online basic assistance and protection course for first responders from all regions. Forty-one participants from 20 States Parties attended the course virtually.
106. From 11 to 24 October, the Secretariat held a virtual course on detection, identification, and sampling of chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals for first responders from the GRULAC region. The course was attended by 56 participants from 11 States Parties.

107. From 8 to 21 November, the Secretariat conducted a virtual basic course on decontamination against chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals for first responders from the GRULAC region. The course was attended by 56 participants from 10 States Parties.
108. From 13 to 19 November, the Secretariat conducted a modular online training programme entitled “Chemical Emergency Response: Zoning and Safety Checkpoints, Reconnaissance and Sampling”, in which 59 professionals from eight States Parties participated.
109. From 23 to 25 November, the Secretariat ran an online basic course on assistance and protection against chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals for Portuguese-speaking States Parties. The course was attended by 17 professionals from six States Parties.
110. From 29 November to 2 December, a virtual course on emergency response to chemical weapons was conducted in partnership with the National Authority and the Fire and Rescue Department of Malaysia. The course attracted 79 participants from 29 States Parties.
111. From 29 November to 2 December, the first-ever online course on assistance and protection against chemical incidents for women from the GRULAC region was held. The course benefitted 77 female first-responders from five GRULAC States Parties.
112. From 1 to 3 December, the Secretariat supported Cameroon’s chemical emergency response planning in advance of its hosting of the 2022 Africa Cup of Nations football tournament. The hybrid national workshop in Yaoundé, hosted by the Government of Cameroon and attended by 54 participants, was facilitated virtually by experts from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Secretariat.
113. On 15 December the Secretariat presented the new Online Self-Assessment Tool to Member States of the Southern African Development Community. This pilot project is aimed at bolstering chemical safety and security at the regional and subregional levels. The online meeting was attended by 24 representatives of National Authorities, national institutions, and Permanent Representations from 10 States Parties.
114. As part of the Secretariat’s continuing efforts to further enhance its support to the chemical emergency response and management capacity of States Parties, a new training course aimed specifically at law enforcement officials was conducted from 6 to 17 December, in partnership with the National Authority of Italy. The course was attended by 27 professionals from 11 States Parties.
115. From 13 to 17 December, an online training course was conducted for first responders from the GRULAC region, focused on the principles of chemical emergency response to incidents involving chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals. The Secretariat conducted the training with the support of the National Authority and the Hazardous Materials Unit of the Fire Brigade of Costa Rica. This event was attended by 67 military and civilian professionals from 16 States Parties.
116. From 14 to 16 December, a specialised online course to strengthen teaching skills for emergency response trainers was conducted by the Secretariat in collaboration with the Population Protection Institute of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic. The course benefitted 31 participants from 25 States Parties.

117. From 15 to 17 December, an online training course covering decontamination of personnel and victims was held for Russian-speaking first responders. The training was attended by 59 participants from seven States Parties.
118. On 2 and 3 February 2022, the Secretariat held a virtual meeting of assistance and protection partner training centres in the African region. The meeting served as a platform for the Secretariat to discuss plans for cooperation with partner training centres in Africa in 2022 and beyond. The meeting was attended by 38 participants from partner training centres and programme donors from 14 States Parties.
119. From 15 to 17 February, a virtual assistance and protection course for instructors was conducted for 14 participants from 12 States Parties.
120. From 22 to 24 February, the Secretariat conducted a course entitled “Emergency Toxicology for Receiving Medical Facilities in Africa”. The course was attended by 16 participants from five States Parties.

International cooperation

121. In the area of Article XI implementation, the Secretariat continued to support States Parties across the three thematic areas as set by them in 2011 (C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011).

Integrated chemicals management

122. From 4 to 8 October 2021, the Secretariat, in partnership with the University of Nottingham Malaysia, organised an online workshop for States Parties from the Asian region entitled “Chemical Supply Chain: Regional Road Transport Safety and Security Management”. The workshop, which focused on the land transportation of chemicals, was attended by 75 representatives from 12 States Parties representing the chemical industry and industry associations, National Authorities, government, research institutes, and academia.
123. From 4 October to 3 December, the Secretariat, together with the Chemical Industries Association of Uruguay, co-organised an online training programme on chemical safety for Spanish-speaking States Parties from the GRULAC region. The course provided an update on the current standards, policies, and best practices in occupational safety, chemical hazards, handling, storage, and transport of chemicals and waste management. The course was attended by 15 chemistry experts from 13 States Parties.
124. From 5 to 7 October, the Secretariat organised an online analytical skills development course. The training was delivered within the framework of a twinning project between the Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (VERIFIN), as the assisting laboratory, and the Centre for Instrumental Analysis of the University of Belgrade, Serbia, as the assisted laboratory. The multi-annual project aims to enhance the assisted laboratory’s capacities with a view to successfully completing the OPCW proficiency tests to obtain OPCW designated status for the analysis of environmental samples. The course was attended by 15 participants from the Centre for Instrumental Analysis.

125. On 29 November, the Secretariat organised an online training course for Iraq on the mitigation of chemical supply chain security vulnerabilities. The event was organised in collaboration with Civilian Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) Global and was attended by 25 Iraqi participants from the chemical industry and industry associations, the National Authority, government, and academia.
126. On 13 December, the Secretariat's annual workshop on the peaceful development and use of chemistry for Asian States Parties was organised online in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Korea. The event aimed to build knowledge among Asian States Parties on advanced chemical safety and security and focused on dual-use chemicals and process safety management audit methods. The workshop was attended by 24 participants from 13 Asian States Parties.
127. On 25 January 2022, the Secretariat held an online workshop for Bangladesh on the mitigation of chemical supply chain security vulnerabilities. The workshop provided key information related to chemical supply chain security, security threats, vulnerability assessments, as well as risk management processes. The workshop benefitted 25 Bangladeshi participants from industry, academia, government, and laboratories.

Enhancing laboratory capabilities

128. From 4 to 15 October 2021, the Secretariat organised three analytical chemistry courses for three groups of laboratory professionals in the field of chemistry, namely women chemists, experts from facilities supporting customs services, and professionals from laboratories interested in passing the proficiency tests to gain OPCW designated status. The courses offered an introduction to the OPCW and the Convention and provided in-depth information about sample preparation, chemical structure and properties of scheduled chemicals, and the use of analytical techniques for chemicals relevant to the Convention. The courses were attended by 45 chemists from 26 States Parties.
129. From 22 November to 3 December, the Secretariat organised an online analytical chemistry course in Spanish for the GRULAC region. The course enhanced the participants' skills in analysing chemicals related to the Convention and maintaining laboratory equipment and quality assurance systems for chemical analysis. The course was attended by 15 chemical experts from 11 States Parties.
130. From 23 to 25 November, the Secretariat and Protechnik Laboratories from South Africa jointly organised an online analytical chemistry course for African States Parties. The course enhanced the laboratory skills of 17 analytical chemists from 17 States Parties in the analysis of Convention-related substances through gas chromatography and mass spectrometry.
131. From 13 to 17 December, the Secretariat organised a series of online seminars on OPCW proficiency testing, within the framework of the project entitled "Assessing and Enhancing the Capacity of Analytical Laboratories from African and GRULAC Member States: Towards OPCW Designation", which was launched in 2019. The e-seminars were conducted for three laboratories from Chile and one from Brazil, benefitting 14 chemistry experts.

Promoting chemical knowledge

132. Under the Fellowship Programme, five fellowships were completed during the reporting period, including for one fellow from Argentina (to the Netherlands), one from Cameroon (to Germany), one from Cuba (to Italy), one from Nigeria (to South Africa), and one from Zimbabwe (to Switzerland). Six fellowships are currently ongoing, including for one fellow from Cuba (to Mexico), one from Nigeria (to the United States of America), one from Serbia (to Finland), and three from Uganda (to Finland, Germany, and South Africa).
133. Under the Programme for Support of Research Projects, the Secretariat continued to extend its assistance to small-scale research projects in States Parties to promote the development of scientific and technical knowledge in chemistry for industrial, agricultural, research, medical, pharmaceutical, and other peaceful purposes relevant to the Convention. During the reporting period, six new research project proposals were approved, including one from Poland, one from Serbia, and four from Malaysia. These projects are currently being carried out and will bring the total number of directly funded research projects to 29.

Africa Programme

134. During the reporting period, the Secretariat continued to implement the fifth phase of Africa Programme and its eight assigned objectives. Activities include the delivery of capacity-building and coordination events for the benefit of African States Parties in the areas of national implementation of the Convention, transfer controls for toxic chemicals, assistance and protection, chemical safety and security, enhancement of laboratory capabilities, and promotion of peaceful chemistry. The Secretariat also continued to raise the Programme's visibility and stakeholders' engagement. In this context, the second edition of the OPCW Africa Bulletin was published by the Secretariat on 27 October 2021.
135. On 12 November, as part of its virtual briefing to non-Hague-based Permanent Representations to the OPCW, the Secretariat updated the attendees on the developments and activities that had taken place under the Africa Programme in 2021.
136. On 15 November, the fourth meeting of the Steering Committee of the Africa Programme was conducted in a hybrid mode with the support of the Secretariat. The meeting, chaired by H.E. Ambassador Lawrence Lenayapa, the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the OPCW, reviewed the progress in the implementation of the Africa Programme since the third meeting of the Committee on 25 June 2021. The meeting was attended by 49 participants, including Steering Committee members and observers, as well as Secretariat staff and the Director-General.
137. The Committee assessed the efforts by the Secretariat to implement the Africa Programme despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee also expressed gratitude to the Programme's donors and partners for their support to Africa. During the meeting, the United States of America announced a new voluntary contribution of EUR 165,000 for a regional conference on enforcing effective customs control over the trade in toxic chemicals in Africa.

138. During the reporting period, other voluntary contributions for the Africa Programme were received from the Czech Republic, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
139. The Secretariat has also continued to maintain and develop the OPCW Africa Network to increase engagement among the Programme's beneficiaries. The Network currently consists of over 900 African chemistry professionals and other stakeholders.
140. On a separate matter, since the beginning of 2022 the Secretariat has been coordinating with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), as well as the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), to address specific assistance requests from Botswana and Sierra Leone. In this context, the Secretariat participated in an online workshop organised by UNODA on 8 and 9 February 2022 related to the implementation of resolution 1540 by Botswana, which included a review of Botswana's draft national action plan for the implementation of the resolution. Experts from the Secretariat contributed to the workshop's discussions and made specific offers of assistance to Botswana under the Africa Programme, specifically in the areas of national implementing legislation and assistance and protection.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

141. During the intersessional period, I received H.E. Mr Felix Ulloa, the Vice-President of El Salvador (22 October 2021); H.E. Marcin Przydacz, the Deputy Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland (3 November 2021); H.E. Mr Christian Guillermet-Fernandez, Vice-Minister of Multilateral Affairs of Costa Rica (7 December 2021); and Mr Jonatan Vseviov, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia (14 December 2021).
142. During the same period, the OPCW welcomed to the OPCW 18 new Permanent Representatives who have presented their credentials, from Algeria, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bulgaria, Cuba, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Lesotho, Morocco, New Zealand, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, and Zimbabwe.