



104th Session  
10 – 13 October 2023

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**NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL****REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES  
OF THE ADVISORY BOARD ON EDUCATION AND OUTREACH  
COVERING THE PERIOD 1 SEPTEMBER 2022 TO 31 AUGUST 2023**

1. The Terms of Reference of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO), as adopted by the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) at its Twentieth Session (Annex to C-20/DEC.9, dated 3 December 2015), provide, in paragraph 18, for the submission by the Director-General of an annual report to the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) and to the Conference on the Board’s activities. This is the eighth such annual report, covering the activities of the ABEO in the period from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023. This includes the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Sessions of the ABEO, the reports<sup>1</sup> of which serve as the basis for this report.
2. In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Board at its Fifteenth Session re-elected Professor Magda Bauta Solés of Cuba as its Chairperson and elected Prof Graciela González of Argentina as its Vice-Chairperson for 2024.

**FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE BOARD**

3. The Fourteenth Session of the ABEO was held from 7 to 9 February 2023, with the customary assistance of the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”).
4. At its Fourteenth Session, the ABEO was welcomed by the Deputy Director-General, who highlighted the main priority areas of focus for the Board in light of both the finalisation of construction of the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) and the unprecedented opportunities it would offer, and the then forthcoming destruction of all declared chemical weapons in a context characterised by the rapid advances in science and technology that could have an impact on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”).
5. The Deputy Director-General referred to the important role that the ABEO and its members played in ensuring that accurate and objective information about the OPCW’s work is shared with relevant audiences such as academia, youth, parliaments, and the chemical industry.

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<sup>1</sup> ABEO-14/1 (dated 9 February 2023) and ABEO-15/1 (dated 22 June 2023).



6. The ABEO received a number of updates, including on the recent activities of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB); the modalities used by the Implementation Support Branch to engage with National Authorities; and outreach through social media and the work of the Public Affairs Branch in countering disinformation. The Head of the Human Resources Branch briefed the Board on geographical diversity and gender balance at the Secretariat, and touched upon areas of potential collaboration with the ABEO in this regard. The Board also received updates on preparations for the Fifth Review Conference<sup>2</sup> and on the implementation of educational projects. The Knowledge Management Advisor had a discussion with the Board on knowledge sharing and partnerships with academia, and on the potential options and challenges of such partnerships.
7. The Head of the Political Affairs and Protocol Branch had a discussion with the ABEO on synergies with other international organisations and updated the Board on best practices towards achieving universality of the Convention. The Board decided to prepare an inventory or compilation of relevant international organisations that had synergies in areas pertinent to the Organisation's educational and outreach activities.
8. Bearing in mind the transition of the Organisation to a new learning management system (funded by the European Union), the Board expressed its commitment to enhancing the e-learning offering of the Secretariat and to following up on the implementation of relevant recommendations from the ABEO's Temporary Working Group on E-learning.<sup>3</sup>

#### **FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE BOARD**

9. The Fifteenth Session of the Board was held from 20 to 22 June 2023. The Deputy Director-General welcomed Board members and observers and highlighted the role of the ChemTech Centre, inaugurated in May 2023, in contributing to the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons by enhancing the Organisation's research, operational, analytical, and capacity-building capabilities. The Deputy Director-General also encouraged the Board to contribute to the programmes and activities at the ChemTech Centre. During a visit to the ChemTech Centre organised for the ABEO, Board members were updated on laboratory activities and resources as well as projected activities at the ChemTech Centre.
10. The Deputy-Director General highlighted that during the Fifth Review Conference States Parties had emphasised the importance of educational activities, and the increasing role of education in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons and strengthening implementation of the Convention. She also noted the increased focus on the prevention of re-emergence of chemical weapons and the role of the Board in this regard following the complete destruction of all declared stockpiles of chemical weapons. Furthermore, the Deputy Director-General underlined the importance of the Board's expert advice for the development of a network with academic institutions, and the need to share best practices and find synergies with international organisations that

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<sup>2</sup> Review Conference = Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

<sup>3</sup> Annex to EC-98/DG.17 C-26/DG.13 (dated 16 September 2021).

share common objectives. The Deputy Director-General thanked Ms Rebecca Jovin, Chief of Office at the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in Vienna, for having accepted to participate in the Fifteenth Session of the ABEO to update the Board on UNODA's new disarmament education strategy and for exchanging views with the Board.

11. The Deputy Director-General recalled that continuous cooperation with the International Cooperation and Assistance Division, as well as strengthening the e-learning offering of the Secretariat, would continue to be priority areas for the Board. She further noted that the resumption of the ABEO briefing to States Parties, which had been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic, was key to providing States Parties with updated information that would benefit their decision-making processes through the OPCW policy-making organs.
12. The Board received an update on the Fifth Review Conference from the Director of the Office of Strategy and Policy, with a subsequent discussion on the importance that the States Parties attach to the work of the Board and on the future priority areas of work. The Board was also briefed on the current status of implementation of the project to develop a set of three introductory modules for universities, which was co-funded by the European Union and the OPCW.
13. The Board decided to update the priorities in the ABEO Strategic Plan in light of the complete destruction of all declared chemical weapons and the rapidly evolving international context, and to contribute to the dissemination of the set of introductory modules for universities. The Board noted that a coordinated strategy to develop networks with academic institutions should include an active role for National Authorities in engaging think tanks, universities, and other entities, tapping into synergies with other international organisations.

#### **INTERSESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

14. During the reporting period, ABEO members conducted multiple activities related to education and raising awareness about the Convention and the OPCW, either individually or as a group.
15. The ABEO contributed to the preparatory process for the Fifth Review Conference with a presentation on ABEO activities and future areas of work, delivered by Mr Shahab Ud Din at the Sixth Session of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fifth Review Conference, held online on 18 October 2022.
16. The Chairperson of the ABEO for 2022, Professor Magda Bauta Solés, participated on behalf of the Board in the general debate during the Fifth Review Conference, delivering a statement to inform States Parties of priority areas for the future work of the Board.
17. A side event was organised on 15 May 2023 during the Fifth Review Conference, on the premises of the World Forum, to discuss the role of education and outreach in light of the rapidly evolving current international context. The side event was attended by more than 40 representatives of Permanent Representations to the OPCW, the chemical industry, academic institutions, and non-governmental organisations.

18. The Chairperson of the ABEO for 2022 delivered a statement on behalf of the Board to the Conference at its Twenty-Seventh Session.
19. The ABEO members, based on their areas of expertise, participated in the peer review of the content of the set of introductory modules for universities.
20. The Board provided its expert advice regarding the prioritisation of the translation of educational resources based on the target audiences and the degree of specialised content contained in these materials.
21. On 21 June 2023, the Board delivered a briefing to States Parties on its activities and future priorities. States Parties highlighted the need to have a more structured dialogue with the ABEO, noting that more frequent briefings would be most welcome.
22. On 29 August 2023, the Board provided an online update on its activities and future priorities to the SAB at its Thirty-Seventh Session.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

23. The Director-General encourages the Board to continue enhancing the educational offering of the Secretariat, and to promote and contribute to the activities and programmes at the ChemTech Centre. An increased focus on specific target audiences, such as youth and women, should be taken into consideration by the Board in its work.
24. The Director-General looks forward to the Board's advice regarding the development of a network with academic institutions, tapping into synergies with other international organisations.
25. The Director-General thanks all members of the ABEO for their commitment to the Board and for their contributions, both collectively and in an individual capacity, during the period covered by this report.