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NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

STATUS OF THE OPCW'S CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL ANTI-TERRORISM EFFORTS

INTRODUCTION

1. As decided by the Executive Council (the Council) in paragraph 12.4 of the report of its Sixtieth Session (EC-60/3, dated 22 April 2010), and consistent with the Council's request contained in paragraph 16 of its decision entitled "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors" (EC-86/DEC.9, dated 13 October 2017), the Director-General hereby submits for the Council's consideration at its 105th Session this annual Note to keep the Council informed about the OPCW's contribution to global anti-terrorism efforts, as well as its efforts in implementing the aforementioned decisions.
2. The activities of the Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat) summarised in this Note, covering the period from 8 February 2023 to 4 February 2024, have continued to be based on the approach outlined in the decision by the Council at its Twenty-Seventh Session entitled "The OPCW's Contribution to Global Anti-Terrorist Efforts", namely, that "the full and effective implementation of all provisions of the Convention is in itself a contribution to global anti-terrorist efforts" (paragraph 1 of EC-XXVII/DEC.5, dated 7 December 2001).
3. Furthermore, in paragraph 1 of decision EC-86/DEC.9, the Council underscored the "role of the Organisation within its mandate with respect to preventing and responding to the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors to the object and purpose of the Convention" and, in doing so, provided additional impetus to the Secretariat's activities.
4. Decision EC-86/DEC.9 also recognised the important role of assistance and cooperation in support of capacity building to achieve full and effective national implementation, and in assisting States Parties in investigating and prosecuting non-State actors for crimes related to the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention), or in countering terrorism as it relates to chemical weapons (paragraphs 9 and 11 of EC-86/DEC.9). The Secretariat will continue to examine and implement cooperation and assistance for States Parties in this regard.
5. The Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) remains the primary platform for the States Parties to interact with international experts and to exchange their views on the challenges posed by chemical terrorism, as well as on ways the OPCW can further address this subject through the full and effective implementation of the Convention. In 2023, the Secretariat supported the convening of three OEWG-T meetings, as well as a table-top exercise held under the auspices of the Working Group.



THE OPCW'S SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL COUNTER-TERRORISM COOPERATION

6. In 2023, the OPCW continued its active participation in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, to which it became a signatory in 2018, and in the Compact's Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection. The OPCW acted as vice-chair of the Working Group alongside the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), under the chairmanship of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).
7. In this framework, the OPCW completed implementation of the third phase of a project to enhance interagency interoperability and public communications in the event of a chemical or biological attack, together with the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Health Organization, INTERPOL, UNICRI, and the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit. A workshop on information exchange was hosted by the OPCW in The Hague on 27 and 28 March 2023; a workshop on emergency operations centres was hosted by INTERPOL in Lyon, France on 5 May 2023; and a workshop on deployments was hosted by the OPCW at the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) on 26 and 27 June 2023.
8. The Secretariat also engaged with external partners, such as the Expert Group of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), to collaborate in strengthening States Parties' awareness of their relevant obligations, and to offer practical assistance in the areas in which the Convention and United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) are mutually reinforcing, namely, national legislation, chemical security, and customs and border control. The Secretariat contributed to regional and national workshops aimed at strengthening the implementation of resolution 1540, which had been organised by above-mentioned stakeholders in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. In its presentations, the Secretariat underscored the relevant obligations under the Convention that correspond with the resolution. At the same time, external partners supported selected OPCW activities. UNODA regional coordinators for the implementation of resolution 1540 and experts from the 1540 Committee were invited to the annual meeting of National Authorities in 2023 and to similar regional meetings in Africa and Asia.

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

Support to the policy-making process

9. The first meeting of the OEWG-T, on 6 March 2023, featured a presentation and discussion on relevant developments in science and technology and the activities of the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), as well as a discussion on a proposal to hold a table-top exercise during the course of 2023. The second meeting, on 6 July 2023, focused on the Multi-component Chemical Emergency Response Capacity-Building Exercise for the Africa Region (CHEMEX Africa), which was due to take place in Algiers, Algeria, from 23 September to 4 October 2023. At its third meeting,

on 30 September 2023, the OEWG-T received a presentation from INTERPOL concerning the Global Congress on Chemical Security and Emerging Threats, which was to be held from 16 to 19 October 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand. An update was also provided on preparations for the planned OEWG-T table-top exercise.

10. The OEWG-T table-top exercise took place at the ChemTech Centre on 20 and 21 November 2023. The exercise, held with financial support from the European Union, brought together 48 participants from 24 States Parties across all regions. Participants included representatives of National Authorities, the scientific community, law enforcement, emergency management, defence, and policymaking authorities. Using a scenario to emulate the course of a chemical terrorism attack across three phases (pre-attack, incident response, and investigation), participants were invited to collaboratively identify and address gaps and make recommendations for further consideration. The outcome of the exercise will be considered by the OEWG-T in 2024.

Criminalisation of activities prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention

11. The criminalisation of activities prohibited by the Convention, such as stockpiling, developing, and acquiring a chemical weapon, is a key element in preventing the use of a chemical weapon by a non-State actor. Recognising the potential for both transnational and domestic manifestations of the terrorism threat, penal legislation concerning such activities needs to be in place, and to be effective, in all States Parties.
12. The importance of States Parties' adoption of effective national legislation to criminalise acts prohibited by the Convention, as required by Article VII, has been highlighted by the OEWG-T discussions, and also prominently reflected in paragraphs 5 and 6 of decision EC-86/DEC.9.
13. Currently, 128 of 193 States Parties have reported having enacted legislation covering all initial measures. This represents notable progress since the previous year, with an increase of six States Parties reporting having enacted comprehensive implementing legislation. However, a significant global legal gap remains, as 33 States Parties have reported having legislation covering only some of the initial measures, while 32 States Parties have yet to report on the adoption of legislation.
14. The Secretariat continued to support States Parties that have yet to adopt national implementing legislation covering all initial measures. The Secretariat organised a national legislative review forum with Myanmar on 27 January and with Djibouti on 30 May 2023. These States Parties received targeted support in assessing national legislative and administrative frameworks and in implementing obligations under the Convention. Five delegates from each State Party participated in the respective forums.
15. The Secretariat participated virtually in several events under the auspices of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), UNODC and/or UNODA.
16. Noting that decision EC-86/DEC.9 encouraged States Parties "to examine their national laws to ensure that there are appropriate offences which could be used to prosecute indirect perpetrators of Convention-related crimes at the domestic level", and also requested them "to consider whether additional mutual legal assistance arrangements

would be useful in ensuring the accountability of non-State actors” (paragraphs 7 and 8), the Secretariat continued to stand ready to provide assistance and advice in this regard.

Measures to prevent the hostile use of toxic chemicals by non-State actors

17. The enhancement of global chemical security in all stages of the chemical life cycle, for instance, throughout the stages of research and development, manufacture, transport in the supply chain, storage, and disposal of toxic chemical waste, continued to serve as a useful framework for considering the OPCW’s further contribution to global efforts to prevent chemical terrorism.
18. Furthermore, decision EC-86/DEC.9, which underscored the “obligation of each State Party under paragraph 2 of Article VI of the Convention to ‘adopt the necessary measures to ensure that toxic chemicals and their precursors are only developed, produced, otherwise acquired, retained, transferred, or used’ for purposes not prohibited under the Convention” (paragraph 4), is not limited to the physical aspects of security throughout the chemical life cycle, but includes the overall management of this life cycle. This management may exist in a national chemical security programme and may include measures such as regulations, policy, and national risk assessments, as deemed necessary by each State Party.
19. The Secretariat continued to advance its global and regional capacity-building activities under the OPCW Chemical Safety and Security Management Programme. In 2023, 28 capacity-building training courses and events under Article XI of the Convention were held, benefiting 760 participants.
20. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of decision EC-86/DEC.9, which requested the Secretariat “to enhance its capacity-building programmes that facilitate the sharing of chemical safety and security best practices among States Parties”, in 2023 the Secretariat organised a series of courses on chemical safety and security, as described below. The courses focused, inter alia, on raising awareness of scheduled chemicals and supply chain safety and security strategies to prevent the misuse of dual-use and highly toxic chemicals.
21. The Secretariat organised three regional seminars on chemical safety and security management: in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, from 7 to 9 February 2023 for the Asia region; in Mexico City, Mexico from 20 to 22 June 2023 for the Latin America and Caribbean region; and online on 11 October 2023 for the Africa region. These annual seminars are designed to meet the increasing needs for specific safety and security training regarding rapidly expanding and increasingly complex chemical industries and the growing number of dual/multiple use chemicals and technologies. The objectives of the seminars were to provide tools to assess, mitigate, and respond to the risks of chemical accidents, and to prevent the misuse of dual-use chemicals in the respective regions.
22. From 21 to 24 February 2023 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the Secretariat held the second workshop on developing a set of Indicative Guidelines for Transportation of Hazardous Chemicals by Road. The objective of the workshop was to develop a non-binding guidance document on the transportation of hazardous chemicals by road through a consultative process by a group of experts in the transportation of dangerous goods. The outcome document aims to support safe and secure transportation of hazardous chemicals for States Parties whose resources are limited, by sharing best

practices and technical guidance in transportation. The follow-up, online review process further refined the drafted guidelines by inviting a wider group of experts to participate in a review process, which was concluded in the online review workshop on the Indicative Guidelines on Transportation of Hazardous Chemicals by Road, held on 13 November 2023.

23. From 23 to 25 May 2023, the Secretariat, in cooperation with the Malaysian National Authority, organised the annual Forum on Peaceful Uses of Chemistry in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Forum, intended for chemists, chemical engineers, and relevant professionals from government, international organisations, industry, and academia, aimed at elevating awareness and deepening participants' understanding of chemical safety and security management towards building a culture of chemical safety and security. It also embraced the tenets of green and sustainable chemistry, highlighting its potential as a robust framework to mitigate risks associated with harmful by-products. It underscored the importance of ensuring safety and sustainability in chemical products and processes driven by the power of scientific innovation.
24. As part of its efforts to promote ethics and responsible conduct in chemical and biochemical sciences, the Secretariat held the Workshop on Policy and Diplomacy for Scientists from 21 to 23 June 2023 in the Hague. The workshop raised awareness on the goals of the Convention and the role of science and scientists in disarmament, while focusing on the dual use of science and the contribution of scientists to reduce proliferation risks, including through the promotion of ethics and education in responsible and sustainable research practices.
25. Chemical safety and security aspects were also addressed in a series of events for laboratory personnel. From 17 April to 23 June 2023, the Secretariat, in cooperation with the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry and the Chemical Industries Association of Uruguay, organised the first English-language edition of the safety training programme e-learning course. The objective of the course was to provide an update on the current standards, policies, and best practices in occupational safety and chemical hazards.
26. A workshop on general aspects of chemical safety and security in laboratories was organised for global participants in Milan, Italy, from 9 to 11 May 2023, addressing practical aspects of the management of chemical laboratory infrastructure. The workshop focused on best practices and knowledge about hazardous chemicals and related risk assessments, personal protective equipment, emergency management, environmental impacts, and sustainability.
27. Aspects of chemical safety and security management were addressed during the Seoul Workshop on the Peaceful Development and Use of Chemistry for Member States of the OPCW in the Asia Region, organised jointly with the Republic of Korea from 17 to 19 October 2023. The workshop, which promoted the peaceful uses of chemistry and the enhancement of capacities in chemical safety and security in the Asian region, included an in-depth discussion about dual-use chemicals, chemical management regulatory regimes, as well as a "know-your-customer" approach in enhancing chemical security.

28. From 27 March to 13 April 2023, the Secretariat conducted an online training course on fulfilling declarations and inspections obligations under Article VI of the Convention. The course enhanced participants' knowledge of Article VI obligations and fostered an exchange of experiences and best practices among delegates in relation to Article VI implementation. The training also provided delegates with practical guidance to facilitate receiving and escorting OPCW inspections. A total of 35 participants from 24 States Parties attended.
29. From 27 to 29 June 2023, the Secretariat held a general training course on the Convention for the personnel of National Authorities and relevant stakeholders for States Parties in the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC). Participants improved their understanding of the obligations set out in the Convention and the skills related to implementing them. The course equipped personnel of National Authorities with enhanced knowledge on aspects of the Convention which are central to monitoring the cross-border movement of toxic chemicals, including the verification regime and mechanisms for the transfer of chemicals. Participants also discussed developments in science and technology and their implications for implementation of the Convention.
30. From 23 to 25 May 2023 in Brazzaville, the Congo, the Secretariat, in cooperation with the World Customs Organization (WCO), held a regional conference on enforcing effective customs control of the trade in toxic chemicals in Africa. The conference helped African customs administrations and National Authorities to share best practices on how to enforce effective control of the trade in chemicals, and to identify opportunities to improve prevailing practices and enhance regional and subregional cooperation. The role of the Convention in supporting global, regional, and national security was also underscored.
31. From 10 to 12 October 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya, the Secretariat organised a peer-to-peer training of customs training institutions. Through specific content and adult training methodologies, customs administration personnel in English-speaking States Parties in Africa enhanced their skills to enforce the Convention's transfers regime for scheduled chemicals and to monitor the cross-border movement of toxic chemicals. Participants acquired knowledge and skills that could be replicated to effectively train national customs officers at scale on the transfers regime for scheduled chemicals. The course fostered networking and collaboration among customs training institutions, customs administrations, and National Authorities, helping to build stronger regional networks to improve enforcement of the Convention.
32. From 3 to 5 October 2023 in Bridgetown, Barbados, the Secretariat organised a subregional forum on national implementation of the Convention for Caribbean States Parties. The Forum encouraged broader subregional cooperation and engagement on the implementation of the Convention, by discussing its region-specific relevance in regard to terrorist acts involving toxic chemicals and the prevention of the illicit trade in such chemicals. The Forum facilitated the sharing of experiences, challenges, and good practices, and the building of networks and new working relationships among Caribbean States Parties. Participants recognised that even in countries without a significant chemical industry, robust legislation and controls on the transshipment of chemicals are needed to prevent the illegal transfer of scheduled chemicals through the territories of such countries. This legislation is necessary to close existing loopholes and to eliminate potential "safe havens" for the proliferation of chemical weapons. The

Forum welcomed substantive contributions from various United Nations entities, including UNOCT, the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament, and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICRI, and UNODC. A total of 48 representatives from 11 States Parties attended.

33. Further information specific to the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Africa Programme) is detailed in paragraphs 56 to 67 below.

Ensuring an effective response to the hostile use of toxic chemicals

34. Enhancing global capacity to respond to the hostile use of a toxic chemical has continued to be a priority area for the OPCW. The Secretariat's efforts were aimed at supporting national and regional response capacities, enhancing the OPCW's own capacity to respond and provide assistance, and improving the collective response of the United Nations and other international organisations.
35. In acknowledging decision EC-86/DEC.9, which noted in its final preambular paragraph "the need to continue to enhance the Secretariat's capacity and readiness, in response to alleged incidents of chemical weapons use, to provide technical assistance, to deploy emergency measures of assistance under Article X of the Convention at the request of a State Party, and to enhance the Secretariat's readiness to conduct investigations of alleged use under Article IX and Article X of the Convention and Part XI of the Verification Annex to the Convention", the activities below are highlighted.
36. In line with the report of the Council at its Eighty-Sixth Session (EC-86/11, dated 13 October 2017) and its decision EC-86/DEC.9 (dated 13 October 2017), as well as the decision of the Conference of the States Parties at its Twenty-Eighth Session (C-28/DEC.12, dated 30 November 2023), the Secretariat worked to further enhance States Parties' capacities in 2023. Towards this end, the Secretariat developed a new specialised training programme focused on law enforcement, deterrence, and prevention of the use of chemical weapons and the malicious use of toxic industrial chemicals, including investigations and the countering of chemical terrorism. This training has been launched and implemented successfully in Asia and in Africa. In addition, a specialised course on investigation of incidents involving toxic industrial chemicals was developed by the Secretariat in cooperation with the Italian National Authority, and will be held at the ChemTech Centre in 2024.
37. The Secretariat continued to provide support to States Parties in the development of their national programmes for protective purposes, pursuant to paragraph 4 of Article X. The Online Self-Assessment Tool (OSAT) continued to support the development of robust national protection plans at the subregional and national level, through risk-based needs assessment and a better targeting of areas for capacity-development assistance. To promote the use of the OSAT, during the reporting period the Assistance and Protection Branch engaged with the OPCW Member States of the Caribbean subregion, the Member States of RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe, and Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

38. CHEMEX Africa was the first-ever OPCW large-scale chemical emergency response exercise for African countries. During this two-week capacity building programme, African instructors trained African first responders, in South-South collaboration, on how to identify, manage, and mitigate threats posed by toxic industrial chemicals and chemical warfare agents. A total of 102 participants received rigorous training in the identification of toxic industrial chemicals and chemical weapons agents, decontamination procedures, detection and sampling techniques, the proper use of personal protective equipment, and incident command.
39. Throughout 2023, the Secretariat continued to enhance its investigative capabilities through a series of training activities offered to relevant staff. Building up investigative skills is relevant in the context of non-State actors, notably in case of requests for technical assistance visits under subparagraph 38(e) of Article VIII of the Convention, requests for assistance pursuant to paragraphs 11 and 13 of decision EC-86/DEC.9, and requests made under paragraphs 19 and 20 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018).
40. Within the scope of assistance under Article X of the Convention, the Secretariat continued to train relevant staff to assist requesting States Parties in the identification of munitions, explosive devices, remnants of war, or improvised devices suspected of holding chemical warfare agents or toxic chemicals and which are used by non-State actors. In 2023, the Secretariat worked to further enhance this capacity by pursuing advanced certification for more inspectors and support staff in non-destructive evaluation equipment, by implementing a specialised training programme for innovative techniques to evaluate improvised explosive devices that can be used by non-State actors as chemical weapons agent dissemination tools.
41. The Secretariat offered online and hybrid activities to States Parties throughout the course of the year, focusing on improving and strengthening relevant capacity-building programmes. Overall in 2023, in partnership with States Parties and partner training centres, 36 capacity-building activities were conducted, benefitting 805 participants in the various training courses aimed at supporting Article X implementation
42. Further information specific to the Africa Programme is detailed in paragraphs 56 to 67 below.

Enhancing laboratory capacity at the OPCW and in States Parties

43. The capability to safely analyse a wide range of chemicals and types of samples, both within the Secretariat itself and within each State Party, is of fundamental importance to the full and effective implementation of the Convention. Such capability can take a number of practical forms, ranging from the detection of chemicals in the field with hand-held equipment, such as by customs agencies, to the analysis of samples in a laboratory to identify chemicals used in an attack or to determine the likely provenance of a chemical weapons agent. Forward-looking research and development is also key to making practical advancements, such as in medical countermeasures. Addressing the need to develop, nurture, and enhance this capability in a sustainable way remains a priority for the Organisation, including in the context of the non-State actor threat.

44. The OPCW Laboratory Twinning Initiative is aimed at assisting laboratories in States Parties with economies that are either developing or in transition to improve their performance in the OPCW proficiency tests, which must be successfully completed in order to become an OPCW designated laboratory. Assisting laboratories offer their resources with support from the Secretariat to implement a series of training and mentorship visits, aiming to enhance the capacity of assisted laboratories in the analysis of environmental and biomedical samples. In 2023, the twinning project between VERIFIN – Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the University of Belgrade’s Faculty of Chemistry (Centre for Instrumental Analysis), Serbia, was successfully completed. As a result, the Centre for Instrumental Analysis made significant progress resulting in improved results in OPCW proficiency tests. Progress was also made in the development of a twinning project between the Bundeswehr Research Institute for Protective Technologies and CBRN¹ Protection in Germany and the National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology of the National Gendarmerie in Algeria, in which context a series of training courses took place. As a result, the Algerian laboratory made progress in OPCW proficiency tests. Twinning arrangements for another project, between the Forensic Science Centre of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory of the United States of America and the National Laboratory of Scientific and Technical Police of Morocco, were ongoing.
45. In 2023, the Secretariat continued to implement the project “Assessing and Enhancing Capacity of Analytical Laboratories from African and GRULAC Member States” with a voluntary contribution from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, aimed at laboratories from the Africa and GRULAC regions that are seeking OPCW designation. The fourth phase of the project was completed on 31 March 2023 and resulted in further enhancement of the capacity of six laboratories from Brazil (one), Chile (three), Kenya (one), and Nigeria (one). In August 2023, funding was renewed up to March 2024 to continue capacity building for the two laboratories from Africa and two laboratories from GRULAC (one from Chile and one from Brazil), with the support from two OPCW designated laboratories in Finland and Spain.
46. Additionally, within the area of analysis of Convention-related chemicals in 2023, the Secretariat supported two visits under the Fellowship Programme, 10 research projects under the Programme for Support of Research Projects, and the participation of three experts under the Conference Support Programme.
47. Further information specific to the Africa Programme is detailed in paragraphs 56 to 67 below.

The role of the Scientific Advisory Board

48. Through its work in assessing and reporting on developments in scientific and technological fields that are relevant to the Convention, the SAB has an important role to play in ensuring that the Secretariat and States Parties are better placed to mitigate the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors. The SAB endeavours to stay abreast of emerging technologies and developments that may be attractive to non-State actors. In February 2023, the Board issued its report on

¹ CBRN = chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear.

developments in science and technology in support of the Fifth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (RC-5/DG.1, dated 22 February 2023). In August and September 2023, the Board held its Thirty-Seventh Session, in which briefings were given by OPCW staff and external experts on topics relating to non-State actors.

49. In 2021, the Director-General established the Temporary Working Group (TWG) on the Analysis of Biotoxins, the objective of which is to review the science and technology relevant to the analysis of biotoxins, as well as considerations that need to be taken into account in investigations of their alleged use. A major focus of the TWG, which is comprised of both SAB members and external experts in the field of toxins, is the potential use of biotoxins by non-State actors. The Group met for the final time in early 2023 and issued its final end-of-mandate report in April (issued as SAB/REP/1/23).
50. In his response to the report of the Thirty-Seventh Session of the SAB, the Director-General announced his intention to establish another TWG on chemical forensics, the objective of which would be to review the science and technology relevant to chemical forensics and to identify remaining gaps and challenges such that the OPCW can make best use of the information chemical forensics can yield moving forward. This TWG recently began its initial work in January 2024.

The OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology and the network of designated laboratories

51. The ChemTech Centre was inaugurated on 12 May 2023 and now provides expanded and enhanced analytical, operational, and capacity-building capabilities to assist States Parties to better prepare for and respond to threats of use and use of chemical weapons by non-State actors. While many of the activities at the ChemTech Centre continue or enhance existing activities, the facility also allows for additional programmes to strengthen the Secretariat's ability to fulfil its mandate more effectively. These relate to the enhancement of OPCW Laboratory's capabilities, inspectors' routine and non-routine readiness and training, international cooperation and assistance, knowledge management, and scientific collaboration. As outlined above, specific activities related to chemical terrorism that took place at the ChemTech Centre in 2023 included the interagency workshop on deployments held on 26 and 27 June 2023 and the OEWG-T table-top exercise held on 20 and 21 November 2023.
52. The OPCW network of partner laboratories that are available for off-site analysis of samples has remained stable since 2022; currently, 26 laboratories from 21 States Parties have met the requisite criteria to be OPCW designated laboratories for the analysis of environmental samples.
53. In 2023, the Secretariat conducted the Eighth Biomedical Proficiency Test. The OPCW network of partner laboratories currently consists of 19 laboratories from 14 States Parties having met the requisite criteria to be OPCW designated laboratories for the analysis of biomedical samples.
54. In 2023, the OPCW Laboratory finalised the seventh exercise on the analysis of biologically derived toxins. These exercises further enhance the OPCW partner laboratories' capabilities in this area and help arrive at commonly accepted analysis and reporting criteria.

55. The OPCW Laboratory continued to monitor scientific progress and developments in the field of chemical forensics and is actively pursuing the transfer of methods among the network of laboratories for in-depth evaluation. Such methods will enlarge the toolkit available to the designated laboratories for the analysis of samples and the determination of chemical signatures.

Efforts by the OPCW to enhance chemical security and counter-terrorism efforts as part of the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2023

56. Africa continues to face particular challenges from terrorist threats and attacks in several countries. The potential use of chemicals by non-State actors, including terrorist and violent extremist groups, to perpetrate terrorist attacks remains a serious threat. In 2023 the Secretariat continued to devote special attention to Africa through the sixth phase of the Africa Programme (2023-2025), with a view to responding to African States Parties' needs and priorities, including the promotion of peaceful uses of chemistry for a developed, safe, and secure Africa.
57. In terms of preventing and responding to chemical terrorism in Africa, the sixth phase continued to follow an integrated approach aimed at enhancing chemical security on the continent. This approach is multidimensional and focuses on developing the capacities of African States Parties in the areas listed below.

Advancing national implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention in Africa

58. The Secretariat continued to provide relevant training and technical assistance to African States Parties in 2023, with a view to further developing their capacities to effectively implement the Convention.
59. In this context, in 2023 African participants took part in an online global training course on fulfilling declarations and inspections obligations under Article VI of the Convention, held from 27 March to 13 April. In addition, an online national legislative review forum was organised for Djibouti on 31 May 2023.
60. Furthermore, the Secretariat facilitated the active participation and contribution of African States Parties in regular annual OPCW meetings in 2023, notably, the Twenty-First Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Africa, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, from 25 to 27 July; the Tenth Annual Meeting of Representatives of the Chemical Industry and National Authorities of States Parties to the Convention, held in Qatar from 24 to 26 October; and the Twenty-Fifth Annual Meeting of National Authorities, held in The Hague from 22 to 24 November. Also, in the context of the regular consultations and exchanges between the OPCW and States Parties in the Africa region, the Secretariat convened productive information and coordination meetings with the Steering Committee of the Africa Programme on 26 June and 20 November, as well as a meeting with the African delegations based outside The Hague on 3 November at the ChemTech Centre.

61. Following consideration of their latest submissions and a review of the information available to the Secretariat on their respective national legal frameworks on the Convention, the status of the national implementing legislation of Djibouti and of Togo has been recorded as covering all initial measures. This brings to 25 the number of African States Parties that have comprehensive national Convention implementing legislation.

Control of cross-border transfers of toxic chemicals

62. In collaboration with the Polish Institute of Industrial Organic Chemistry, the Secretariat delivered from 22 to 26 May 2023 in Warsaw, Poland, a global course for analytical chemists from laboratories supporting customs services. The course assisted participants—including four qualified analytical chemists from Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania—in acquiring further experience in and practical knowledge of the analysis of chemicals related to the Convention. The course also facilitated the adoption of good laboratory practices for the implementation of the Convention.
63. In addition, from 23 to 25 May in Brazzaville, the Congo, the Secretariat, jointly with the Government of the Congo and in cooperation with the WCO, organised a regional conference on “Enforcing Effective Customs Control of the Trade in Toxic Chemicals in Africa”. The conference was funded through a voluntary contribution from the United States of America. From 10 to 12 October in Nairobi, Kenya, the Secretariat also organised, in cooperation with the WCO and with funding from the Government of Canada, a “Peer-to-Peer Training for African Customs Training Institutions”. More details on these two events are reflected earlier in this report.

Advancing chemical safety and security culture, standards, and practices in Africa

64. In 2023, the Secretariat organised a series of awareness-raising and capacity-building activities in the areas of chemical safety and security management which benefited, among others, 70 participants from 23 African States Parties. These activities focused on safety in industrial plant sites and in laboratories.

Enhancing protection and response capabilities against chemical incidents and attacks

65. In 2023, the Secretariat arranged the participation of African States Parties in a series of training courses aimed at developing capacities in areas of assistance and protection. The topics of these courses, organised in collaboration with international partners, included the handling of incidents involving toxic chemicals; decontamination of chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals; sampling and analysis in highly contaminated environments; and investigation of incidents involving toxic industrial chemicals. These events, including seven capacity-building activities organised specifically for the Africa region, benefited a total of 301 participants from 39 African States Parties. Several of these events were offered specifically to African subregions, in collaboration with the regional economic communities.
66. The highlight of these activities was CHEMEX Africa, the first pan-African multi-component chemical emergency response capacity-building exercise. The event, which combined training and simulation exercises, was organised from 23 September to 5 October 2023 in Algiers, Algeria, jointly with the Government of Algeria and with funding from Canada. As part of this exercise, first responder teams from the Economic

Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) received training from instructors from the East African Community (EAC), who were supported by technical teams from North Africa and the Sahel and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). External experts, notably from Canada, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, took part in the exercise in different capacities, notably as supervisors, observers, and evaluators.

Strengthening and developing chemical laboratory competencies and infrastructure

67. In the year under review, the Secretariat ensured the participation of 82 participants from 18 African States Parties in seven regional and global analytical skills development courses. Specialised OPCW proficiency test training was provided to 21 participants representing two African States Parties. Furthermore, under the Laboratory Twinning Initiative, in addition to the ongoing twinning project between two laboratories in the Netherlands and South Africa, a series of training courses took place under the twinning project between two laboratories in Algeria and Germany, and twinning arrangements were ongoing between two laboratories in Morocco and the United States of America.

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