



REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION C-SS-4/DEC.3 ON ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE

1. The Conference of the States Parties (the Conference), at its Fourth Special Session, adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018). In paragraph 24 of the decision, the Conference decided that “the Director-General shall provide a copy of this decision and a report on its initial implementation to all States Parties and to the United Nations Secretary-General within 30 days of this decision and thereafter provide a report on progress to each regular session of the Council”, in reference to the Executive Council (the Council).
2. In furtherance of paragraph 7 of the decision, the Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat) has continued its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify all gaps, discrepancies, and inconsistencies noted in its initial declaration and subsequent submissions.
3. The twenty-seventh round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority took place in Damascus in May 2024.
4. During this round of consultations, the DAT conducted technical meetings with experts from the Syrian National Authority, interviewed three persons who were involved in the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and visited three declared former chemical weapons-related sites and collected samples. In the course of the technical meeting with the Syrian National Authority, the DAT discussed the results of the analysis of samples collected by the DAT between 2019 and 2023 at two declared chemical weapons production sites, with a focus on the unexpected presence of indicators of potentially undeclared activities involving research and development, production, storage, and/or weaponisation of unknown quantities of chemical weapons.
5. The details and outcomes of the twenty-seventh round of consultations will be reported through the Director-General’s report on the work of the DAT to the 106th Session of the Council.
6. Regarding the Secretariat’s serious concerns about the presence of unexpected chemicals in the samples collected by the DAT between 2020 and 2023 at two declared sites, the DAT has engaged with the Syrian National Authority on these matters since the results of the analysis were shared with the Syrian Arab Republic in February 2021 and in October 2023, respectively. The Secretariat requested verifiable and scientifically plausible explanations of the results of sample analysis.



7. As at the date of this report, three rounds of consultations have taken place and several notes verbales have been exchanged on these matters. Most recently, through a note verbale dated 11 June 2024, the Secretariat reiterated its earlier requests to the Syrian Arab Republic to provide additional scientifically plausible and verifiable explanations to clarify these results by 21 June 2024, in order for the DAT to properly study and reassess the Syrian technical experts' explanations and report the current status of these matters to the Council.
8. Through the same note verbale, the Secretariat reminded the Syrian National Authority that failing to provide additional verifiable and substantiated explanations, or providing insufficient or scientifically implausible explanations, may result in opening further outstanding issues.
9. On 21 June 2024, the Syrian National Authority provided its response to the Secretariat's request, which will be translated and analysed by the DAT. Further details will be reported accordingly.
10. At this stage, considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the Secretariat assesses that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention) and, inter alia, Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 (dated 27 September 2013), EC-81/DEC.4 (dated 23 March 2016), and EC-94/DEC.2 (dated 9 July 2020), Conference decisions C-SS-4/DEC.3 and C-25/DEC.9 (dated 21 April 2021), and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).
11. Consistent with paragraph 8 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, and following current practice, the Secretariat continues to update States Parties on the operations of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) through, inter alia, the monthly progress report entitled "Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme", and through reports detailing the FFM's activities and findings regarding specific incidents of alleged use of chemicals as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic.
12. On 11 June 2024, the Secretariat issued a report (S/2295/2024) by the FFM entitled "Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria regarding Incidents of Alleged Use of Toxic Chemicals as a Weapon in Qalib al-Thawr, al-Salamiyah, on 9 August 2017, and al-Balil, Souran, on 8 November 2017, in Hama Governorate, the Syrian Arab Republic".
13. The FFM obtained information regarding the two reported incidents from diverse sources, including interviews with witnesses, visits to locations of interest relevant to the incidents, medical records, and documents from and correspondence exchanged with the Syrian Arab Republic.
14. The FFM actively pursued further information from all available sources but faced challenges in corroborating the information gathered regarding the reported incidents. Furthermore, because of several identified gaps, the FFM cannot provide a toxicological assessment of the reported exposure.
15. The information obtained and analysed is not sufficient to provide reasonable grounds for the FFM to determine that toxic chemicals were used as a weapon in the reported incidents that occurred on 9 August 2017 in Qalib al-Thawr and on 8 November 2017 in al-Balil, Hama Governorate, the Syrian Arab Republic.

16. The report was shared with all States Parties to the Convention and transmitted to the United Nations Security Council through the United Nations Secretary-General.
17. The FFM is continuing its work and will issue further reports in due course.
18. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat established the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic by identifying and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those chemical weapons in those instances in which the FFM determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, and cases for which the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has not issued a report.
19. Further to the release of its fourth report (S/2255/2024) on 22 February 2024, the IIT is continuing its investigations and will issue further reports in due course. Pursuant to paragraph 12 of the Conference's decision, the IIT also continues to preserve and review information and evidence collected during its investigations for the purposes of transferring it to the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (IIIM).
20. The voluntary funding requirements for the IIT for 2024–2025, as specified in the Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2024–2025 (C-28/DEC.9, dated 29 November 2023), have been set at EUR 1,320,877 for 2024 and EUR 1,322,831 for 2025. Contributions and pledges have been received from Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union.
21. In continuation of its regular briefings to States Parties on chemical weapons-related activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 29 February 2024 the Secretariat provided States Parties with a presentation to inform them of the status of the Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The next such briefing is expected ahead of the 106th Session of the Council. The Secretariat will continue to keep States Parties informed of activities and progress with regard to the Syrian chemical weapons programme through existing reporting modalities and through briefings.
22. Pursuant to paragraph 12 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat has put in place appropriate measures to preserve and provide information to the IIIM, the body established by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 71/248 (2016). All transfers of information to the IIIM are being implemented in a manner consistent with the OPCW's rules and policies on confidentiality.
23. In accordance with paragraph 18 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat continues to develop options for further assistance to States Parties to help prevent the chemical weapons threat posed by non-State actors, and to aid States Parties' contingency planning in the event of a chemical weapons attack. Taking into consideration, inter alia, the decision of the Council entitled "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors" (EC-86/DEC.9, dated 13 October 2017), the Secretariat is building on existing activities related to preparedness, prevention, and response.

24. Pursuant to paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Director-General, if requested by a State Party investigating possible chemical weapons use on its territory, can provide technical expertise to identify those who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons. Accordingly, the Secretariat is working to ensure that it has the necessary capabilities to respond to such State Party requests, including through assessing relevant forensic tools and capabilities that may be useful in fulfilling them.
25. As reported previously, the Secretariat is implementing a series of capacity-building measures to expand the existing skills of relevant Secretariat staff. These measures include, inter alia:
 - (a) training to further build investigative capabilities in areas such as crime scene management, witness interviews, evidence collection, and forensics;
 - (b) the revision of job descriptions to recruit applicants with the skills and knowledge to match the evolving needs of the Secretariat;
 - (c) through internal and external consultations, the assessment of potential additional investigative tools and capabilities that could be useful for the Secretariat if called upon to assist a State Party in identifying perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise, of chemical weapons use on its territory; and
 - (d) support for the procurement of software and equipment through the creation of a test and evaluation programme.
26. The Secretariat will continue to expand these activities in order to scale up knowledge and expertise within the Secretariat. The capabilities provided by the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) continue to further underpin these efforts, including in the adaptation and transition of the Inspectorate Division to facilitate the readiness and flexibility of staff resources to support all types of missions and training. The Secretariat has developed specific projects, which are listed in the Note entitled “Anticipated New Programmes and Activities at the Centre for Chemistry and Technology” (S/2102/2022, dated 30 September 2022). States Parties are invited to consider providing voluntary contributions to support these priority projects.
27. In furtherance of paragraph 23 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat will continue to prioritise the realisation of the universality of the Convention, on the understanding that this goal is essential to achieving its object and purpose, to enhancing the security of States Parties, and to international peace and security. The Director-General continues to call upon all States Parties to support the Secretariat’s efforts in this regard.
28. At its Twenty-Eighth Session, the Conference adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use and the Threat of Future Use” (C-28/DEC.12, dated 30 November 2023). The Secretariat is incorporating reporting on the elements in the decision concerning the Syrian chemical weapons dossier into its existing reporting obligations.