



OPCW

**Advisory Board on Education and
Outreach**

Eighteenth Session
11 – 13 February 2025

ABEO-18/1
13 February 2025
Original: ENGLISH

**REPORT OF THE EIGHTEENTH SESSION
OF THE ADVISORY BOARD ON EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

- 1. AGENDA ITEM ONE – Opening of the session and welcome address by the Director of Strategy and Policy**
 - 1.1 The Chairperson of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO), Prof. Magda Bauta Solés, opened the Eighteenth Session of the Board on 11 February 2025 at 10:00 and thanked the Director of Strategy and Policy, Mr Marcin Wroblewski, for delivering the opening remarks on behalf of the Director-General of the OPCW.
 - 1.2 On behalf of the Director-General, the Director of Strategy and Policy welcomed the ABEO members and observers to the Eighteenth Session in The Hague. He acknowledged the meaningful contributions of Board members who completed their mandate in December 2024, welcomed new members, and noted the value of the Board's diverse expertise, broad geographical distribution, and gender balance. Mr Wroblewski also expressed appreciation for the participation of Ms Rebecca Jovin, Chief of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in Vienna, and her continued cooperation with the OPCW. He also thanked Ms Andrea García Rodríguez, an expert in quantum computing and artificial intelligence (AI), for her valuable contribution to enriching the Board's work.
 - 1.3 The Director of Strategy and Policy updated the Board on recent developments of importance to the OPCW's work, and underscored that determining the full extent of the chemical weapons programme in the Syrian Arab Republic, in order to ensure its complete elimination, would be a top priority in 2025 and the next biennium, as part of the enduring mission of the OPCW and in parallel with an increased focus on preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. He referred to the continuous monitoring of rapid advances in science and technology, especially in AI and other emerging technologies, and informed the Board of the recent establishment of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) Temporary Working Group (TWG) on Artificial Intelligence by the Director-General, following a recommendation by the SAB.
 - 1.4 Within the context of the implementation of continuous efforts towards achieving universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention), Mr Wroblewski emphasised the importance of the Board's role in upholding the Convention, advancing education and outreach, and noted the value of the core syllabus for educators prepared by the Board as a supporting tool for educators in all regions. He also encouraged the Board to continue working to identify strategies, experts, and institutions to promote the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre).



- 1.5 The Director of Strategy and Policy noted that the tenth anniversary of the adoption of The Hague Ethical Guidelines in 2025 would be marked with an international meeting of experts at the ChemTech Centre in autumn to establish a global academic network that will function in an integrated and sustainable manner. He encouraged the Board members to contribute their expertise and advice for the preparation of this meeting and wished the Board members a productive session.
- 1.6 On behalf of the Board, the ABEO Chairperson expressed appreciation for Mr Wroblewski's opening remarks and emphasised the need to keep the Board's priorities aligned with the Director-General's priorities, based on the ABEO Strategic Plan and taking into consideration the evolving context in several States Parties.
2. **AGENDA ITEM TWO – Adoption of the agenda and appointment of a drafting committee**
 - 2.1 The ABEO adopted the following agenda for its Eighteenth Session:
 1. Opening of the session and welcome address by the Director of Strategy and Policy on behalf of the Director-General
 2. Adoption of the agenda and appointment of a drafting committee
 3. General update on recent developments at the OPCW, Mr Marcin Wroblewski, Director of Strategy and Policy
 4. Tour de table among ABEO members and observers to identify the main areas of expertise in the Board
 5. Disarmament education tools and collaboration between the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, Ms Rebecca Jovin, Chief of United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Vienna
 6. Reflection on the priorities for the Board's work and strategies to implement them
 7. Artificial intelligence and its ethical impact on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention: The Hague Ethical Guidelines and reflection on the need to update their principles
 8. Update by the Secretary of the Board on main educational activities
 9. Overview of the implementation of declaration obligations by States Parties, opportunities and challenges, Ms Barbara Muik, Head of the Declaration, Validation and Evaluation Section, Declarations Branch, Verification Division
 10. Capacity-building activities and contribution of the Board in all regions, Mr Suljuk Mustansar Tarar, Director of the International Cooperation and Assistance Division
 11. Public Affairs Functions, overview of youth engagement initiatives and contribution of the Board, Ms Elisabeth Waechter, Head of Public Affairs Branch and OPCW Spokesperson
 12. International meeting of experts to establish a global academic network at the ChemTech Centre, Mr Zaven Hakopov, Knowledge Management Advisor

13. Update on the activities of the Scientific Advisory Board, Mr Peter Hotchkiss, Science Policy Adviser and Scientific Advisory Board Secretary
 14. OPCW workforce, acquisition, and outreach: Contribution of the Board to raise awareness of OPCW vacancies in all regions, Ms Katherine Hummel, Head of the Human Resources Branch
 15. Educational aspects of capacity-building activities for first responders and the contribution of the Board, Dr Ladislava Navrátilová
 16. The Medical Action Plan and development by the OPCW of a syllabus for medical education, Mr Eduardo Herrera, Assistance and Protection Branch
 17. Technological convergence: AI and quantum computing, and their impact on critical industries, Dr Andrea García Rodríguez, Chair of the Governing Board of ImpaQT UA and Associate Researcher at the Centre for European Policy Studies
 18. Inspectorate functions and activities, Mr Milan Strahinjc, Chemical Weapons and Munition Specialist, Inspectorate Division
 19. Identification of champions to coordinate work on each priority identified by the Board
 20. Criteria and other aspects to select experts to promote the ChemTech Centre, update by the ABEO Secretary, discussion by Board members and observers
 21. Intersessional activities of Board members
 22. Topics identified for further consideration at the Nineteenth Session of the ABEO and dates for the next session
 23. Any other business
 24. Closure of the meeting
- 2.2 The Board appointed Prof. Magda Bauta Solés, Prof. Supawan Tantayanon, Dr Nezha Barakate, Dr Shahriar Khateri, and Dr Richard Guthrie as drafting committee members.
- 3. AGENDA ITEM THREE – General update on recent developments at the OPCW, Mr Marcin Wroblewski, Director of Strategy and Policy**
- 3.1 Mr Wroblewski provided an update on the new political situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, and the opportunities and challenges it presents for the Organisation's mandated activities.
- 3.2 The Director of Strategy and Policy highlighted the risks of the re-emergence of chemical weapons and the involvement of non-State actors, emphasising the need to secure facilities, evidence, and information to fully determine the scope of the chemical weapons programme with the aim of achieving its complete elimination. He noted that the implementation of these mandated activities would require human and financial resources not only throughout 2025, but also during the next biennium (2026–2027).
- 3.3 Regarding the situation in Ukraine, a briefing was provided on recent developments and the efforts of the Organisation within this context, including training for first responders, both in Ukraine and at the ChemTech Centre, and the provision of identification, protection, and detection equipment at the request of Ukraine, under

Article X of the Convention. The Director of Strategy and Policy referred to the Technical Assistance Visit by the OPCW under Article VIII of the Convention at the request of Ukraine, and the subsequent report issued in November 2024, which confirmed the presence of a riot control agent in samples.

- 3.4 Mr Wroblewski encouraged Board members to continue raising awareness of the OPCW's mission and work as part of their participation in conferences, seminars, and other activities, while taking into consideration the increasing visibility of the OPCW.
- 3.5 The Board thanked Mr Wroblewski for his update and praised the work of the Organisation, highlighting the importance of securing access to relevant sites in the Syrian Arab Republic and the need for the OPCW to have the necessary resources to successfully implement its mandated activities. The Board also expressed its willingness to contribute its expertise on the aspects that the Director-General finds necessary, and confirmed that it would continue to provide accurate information on the OPCW's work.

4. AGENDA ITEM FOUR – Tour de table among ABEO members and observers to identify the main areas of expertise in the Board

A tour de table was conducted among ABEO members and observers to identify their main areas of expertise and how they could best contribute to the Board's work. The Board identified a diverse range of areas of expertise among its members, such as chemistry, chemical security, international public law, international organisations, toxicology, science communications, and life sciences. This variety of disciplines covered by Board members' fields of expertise will contribute to the Board's mandate in an integrated manner.

5. AGENDA ITEM FIVE – Disarmament education tools and collaboration between the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, Ms Rebecca Jovin, Chief of United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Vienna

- 5.1 Ms Rebecca Jovin, Chief of UNODA in Vienna, provided an update on UNODA's functions and educational activities. She highlighted UNODA's focus on providing the knowledge, facts, and tools that various audiences can use to foster their engagement with disarmament. She noted that UNODA's three regional offices—in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Asia-Pacific, and Africa—play a vital role in amplifying these educational efforts worldwide. Ms Jovin referred to the long-standing cooperation between the OPCW, the United Nations, and UNODA in the areas of capacity building and education. A recent example of this collaboration was the joint side event held on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly First Committee in October 2024. The event, organised by UNODA, the OPCW, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), explored the impacts of rapid advances in science and technology on weapons of mass destruction (WMD) disarmament and non-proliferation instruments. She also underscored the importance of the United Nations Secretary-General's biennial reports on disarmament and non-proliferation education, to which the OPCW contributes.

- 5.2 Ms Jovin highlighted the UNODA Disarmament Education Strategy, launched in 2022. The strategy is built on the principles of sustainability, coherence, and coordination of initiatives and partnerships to expand the reach of disarmament education. A key component is youth engagement, which is pursued through empowerment and tailored communication strategies. This includes working with educators and connecting disarmament topics to human rights, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other relevant subjects.
- 5.3 Ms Jovin presented an overview of the educational tools offered by UNODA, including the UNODA e-learning platform, the recently revamped disarmament education website, and specific courses and initiatives. The e-learning platform, which is globally accessible and free of charge, has approximately 30,000 users, and offers self-paced courses, training, and modules. She highlighted the 2019 module on chemical weapons, the Convention, and the OPCW, noting that UNODA intends to update this module and make it more interactive in collaboration with the OPCW, with the aim of launching a revised version in the coming months.
- 5.4 With regard to youth initiatives, Ms Jovin highlighted that since 2019, UNODA has been developing a global network of young people to connect them with career opportunities and disarmament content. Several programmes aim to demystify disarmament, such as the Youth for Biosecurity Programme, Youth4Disarmament, and the Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons, which includes a study trip to Hiroshima and Nagasaki focused on legacy preservation and engagement with survivors. To expose youth to multilateral diplomacy, UNODA facilitates youth participation in intergovernmental meetings such as Nuclear Proliferation Treaty Review Conferences and regular sessions of the United Nations General Assembly First Committee, thereby helping them strengthen their negotiation and advocacy skills.
- 5.5 In the discussion that followed, the Board explored the introduction of disarmament topics to university curricula, the need to increase the visibility of disarmament education, and the development of academic and professional networks. They also discussed best practices for youth engagement, including, among others, the appointment of youth ambassadors in their home countries, and emphasised the importance of expanding online access to UNODA's e-learning content. The potential use of AI to enhance multilingual content was also suggested. The Board noted that older audiences, such as those involved in the University of the Third Age, should not be overlooked. Emphasis was also placed on the need for greater coordination of youth initiatives across international organisations.
- 5.6 The inventory of universities offering courses on the Convention and the OPCW was highlighted by the Board as a valuable outcome, as it mapped academic institutions across all regions that can help expand outreach and educational impact.
- 5.7 The Board thanked Ms Jovin for her comprehensive presentation and valuable insight on disarmament and non-proliferation education and youth engagement, and expressed its interest in continuing cooperation with UNODA.

6. AGENDA ITEM SIX – Reflection on the priorities for the Board’s work and strategies to implement them

- 6.1 Guided by the update provided by the Director of Strategy and Policy and based on the ABEO Strategic Plan, the Board identified several priorities for its work for the upcoming term. The Board agreed that AI is a top priority to reflect on from an educational perspective, with due consideration of AI-related ethics and the work other international organisations have carried out at an international level. This includes the United Nations General Assembly resolutions on the matter, as well as the work done by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence), the Council of Europe (the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence) and the European Union (the AI Act). The Board agreed to remain seized of the matter, analyse the conclusions of the SAB TWG on Artificial Intelligence, and analyse the regime of ethics related to AI.
- 6.2 The Board considered that contributing to the enhancement of the OPCW website through the addition of resources with accurate facts and explanatory materials on various topics would ensure that it remains a valuable source of information for educators, researchers, journalists, the chemical industry, and the general public, thus helping to counter misinformation and disinformation. Board members commented that some of these resources, called “Fact Sheets”, were already uploaded in the past on the OPCW website to provide information for the general public and educators. The Board commented that its contribution to the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons should be made complete with its academic advice on assistance and protection courses and related resources.
- 6.3 Other important priorities identified were the provision of academic advice to motivate audiences and get them involved in topics concerning disarmament, as well as the Board’s recommendations on presentations prepared by the personnel of the Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat), to make them more interactive and engaging.
- 6.4 The Board commented that it would like to recommend to International Cooperation and Assistance Division (ICA) to consider opening the trainings to professors to facilitate knowledge transfer since academia has an active role in transferring knowledge not only in universities but also when cooperating with National Authorities. The Board stressed the importance of the train-the-trainers approach and commented that a Trainers Manual on all existing resources could be compiled.

7. AGENDA ITEM SEVEN – Artificial intelligence and its ethical impact on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention: The Hague Ethical Guidelines and reflection on the need to update their principles

- 7.1 The ABEO Chairperson gave an overview of The Hague Ethical Guidelines and opened a discussion among those present to reflect on the opportunity to update or revise the Guidelines in line with recent developments in science and technology. She mentioned the AI Action Summit held in Paris earlier in February and recalled the spirit of cooperation during the negotiations on the Convention that always served as a principle of and guidance for the use of chemistry for peaceful purposes to benefit humankind.

- 7.2 During this discussion, the Board agreed to advance its work on this matter through analysis and an internal working group, if necessary. The Board also decided to prepare an assessment of the need to review The Hague Ethical Guidelines. This work would complement the efforts undertaken by the SAB TWG on AI, bearing in mind the different mandates of the two Boards and providing space for the ABEO's own approach in analysing this subject matter. The ABEO members agreed to work on strategies to reach out more effectively to chemists so that they are aware of the principles and mandate of the OPCW, and how these factors affect their work.
- 7.3 The Hague Ethical Guidelines could be updated to address any existing gaps in areas such as compliance, the misuse of technology, or other topics. The ABEO agreed, as a first step, to prepare a paper on the ethical implications of AI for the OPCW's work, taking into account the work done by other international organisations in this realm. The Board members agreed to include this topic on the agenda of the next ABEO meeting.

8. AGENDA ITEM EIGHT – Update by the Secretary to the Board on main educational activities

The Secretary to the Board provided an update on the Board's main educational activities and work in recent months. The Board thanked the Secretary for her update.

9. AGENDA ITEM NINE – Overview of the implementation of declaration obligations by States Parties, opportunities and challenges, Ms Barbara Muik, Head of the Declaration Validation and Evaluation Section, Declarations Branch, Verification Division

- 9.1 Ms Barbara Muik, Head of the Declaration Validation and Evaluation Section, provided an overview of the Declarations Branch functions and the implementation of declaration-related obligations by States Parties, referring to the different types of declarations and the electronic tools available to support States Parties. She explained that the Declarations Branch supports nearly all aspects of the verification cycle and highlighted the support provided to States Parties to help them to prepare their declarations. Ms Muik gave insights regarding the Secure Information Exchange system (SIX) and the Electronic Declaration Information System (EDIS) and their importance, as well as an increase in their use by States Parties. She also touched upon the Declarations Handbook, the brochure on the most-traded scheduled chemicals, and the Handbook on Chemicals, which comprises all scheduled chemicals declared since the Convention entered into force. These resources are available online. The contribution of the Verification Division to education and outreach activities was underscored, in particular the annual and regional meetings of National Authorities, the Associate Programme, and the provision of updated content for training provided by the Secretariat and coordinated by the International Cooperation and Assistance Division, and delivered to National Authorities and custom officials, including e-learning modules freely available on the OPCW Learning Management System.

9.2 During the exchange of views with the Board, the importance of supporting States Parties to resolve transfer discrepancies was stressed, noting the need for National Authorities to connect with different stakeholders internally to ensure the accuracy of information and data on transfers. The Board praised the work of the Declarations Branch and emphasised the key role that educational tools hold for National Authorities looking to more effectively implement their obligations under the Convention.

9.3 The Board thanked Ms Muik for her presentation.

10. AGENDA ITEM TEN – Capacity-building activities and contribution of the Board in all regions, Mr Suljuk Mustansar Tarar, Director of the International Cooperation and Assistance Division

10.1 Mr Suljuk Mustansar Tarar, Director of the ICA, provided an overview of the Division's structure, functions, and various activities, with a particular focus on education and outreach initiatives. He highlighted that the ICA serves as a platform for capacity-building support and technical assistance to States Parties in implementing the Convention. He described the ICA's work, which is carried out by its three branches: the Implementation Support Branch, the Assistance and Protection Branch, and the International Cooperation Branch. Mr Tarar also emphasised the cross-cutting nature of the ICA's work, which addresses chemical safety and security, countering chemical terrorism, and the OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention.

10.2 The added value of the ChemTech Centre to the ICA's activities was underscored through its role as a global forum for policy dialogue and exchange, as well as its use in implementing ICA activities to strengthen capacity-building support for States Parties. Mr Tarar expressed appreciation for the ongoing collaboration between the ICA and the ABEO. These include the Secretariat's e-learning offerings and educational programmes, as well as the promotion of these programmes across all regions.

10.3 He noted ABEO's participation, through its Chairperson, in the youth training event held in Rio de Janeiro in 2024, as well as its contributions to regional meetings of National Authorities. Mr Tarar expressed appreciation for the expert advice on enhancing the Secretariat's e-learning resources and academic programmes offered in all regions, particularly in Africa, to strengthen knowledge and understanding of the Convention.

10.4 The subsequent discussion focused on the importance of making ICA resources for first responders accessible through the OPCW website, and the need to promote a culture of peaceful uses of chemistry among young professionals in all regions.

10.5 The Board thanked Mr Tarar for his comprehensive overview of the ICA's work and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the Division in the areas highlighted by the Director.

11. AGENDA ITEM ELEVEN – Public Affairs functions, overview of youth engagement initiatives and contribution of the Board, Ms Elisabeth Waechter, Head of Public Affairs Branch and OPCW Spokesperson

- 11.1 Ms Elisabeth Waechter, Head of the Public Affairs Branch and OPCW Spokesperson, provided an overview of the Branch's functions, activities, and educational resources, with a particular emphasis on multilingualism. She highlighted the OPCW Basics videos as a fully multilingual resource, alongside the OPCW website, which provides accurate information and materials.
- 11.2 Ms Waechter discussed the Branch's efforts to reach diverse target audiences through a variety of communication channels, underscoring the importance of engaging youth in the implementation of the Convention. She provided an update on youth-focused activities, such as public visits and participation in side events on topics, such as science diplomacy. She also mentioned outreach to targeted civil society organisations in the field of education as a key strategy for engaging young people.
- 11.3 Furthermore, Ms Waechter briefed the Board on the upcoming 101st session of the European Youth Parliament, a youth-led conference held in The Hague in April 2025. She noted the OPCW's planned contribution to the event, both in terms of substantive content and sponsorship of young participants from underrepresented countries in the Eastern European region. This event could serve as a case study for similar OPCW-supported conferences in other regions of the world.
- 11.4 Ms Waechter also informed the Board of discussions between the OPCW and Mr William Yotive, Model United Nations Coordinator for the World Federation of United Nations Associations. These discussions led to the inclusion of a topic related to the Convention at the Model United Nations Conference to be held in New York in February 2026.
- 11.5 She went on to compare youth outreach strategies used by different United Nations entities: the United Nations, which defines youth as individuals aged 15 to 24; UNODA, which adopts a broader approach targeting those aged 15 to 35; and UNESCO, which considers youth to be those under 30. At the OPCW, various divisions implement youth-related programmes independently. Ms Waechter suggested that the Secretariat could benefit from a more cohesive approach, potentially through the development of an OPCW Youth Strategy, to which the Board could contribute.
- 11.6 In the discussion that followed, the Board emphasised the importance of providing accurate and regularly updated resources on the OPCW website for a broad range of audiences in order to counter misinformation and disinformation. The Board also discussed the potential benefits of young delegates participating in meetings of the policy-making organs, in line with practices at other international organisations. Additionally, the Board suggested exploring incentives—such as certificates or academic credits—to encourage youth participation in OPCW e-learning modules.
- 11.7 The Board members thanked Ms Waechter for her valuable insights and expressed interest in reaching out to the Public Affairs Branch, through the ABEO Secretary, to coordinate press releases about their ABEO membership with their respective universities.

12. AGENDA ITEM TWELVE – International meeting of experts to establish a global academic network at the ChemTech Centre, Mr Zaven Hakopov, Knowledge Management Advisor

- 12.1 Mr Hakopov described the ChemTech Centre as a repository and hub for knowledge sharing and excellence. He noted that the Board's efforts had helped generate interest among States Parties in funding an international expert meeting to develop a global academic network, as recommended by the Board. He stressed the meeting's relevance under the knowledge management portfolio, supported by the Office of Strategy and Policy, and announced that France had generously contributed funding. The meeting is planned for late 2025 at the ChemTech Centre, pending necessary logistical arrangements.
- 12.2 He also addressed questions about the meeting's purpose, expected deliverables, such as a set of terms of reference and ensuring the network's sustainable operation with support from the Secretariat. Mr. Hakopov emphasised the importance of regional and gender-balanced participation by top experts.
- 12.3 The Board's discussion focused on the meeting's objectives, participant selection criteria, and ensuring broad, balanced representation. Board members highlighted the need to motivate experts to promote education across regions and to avoid duplicating the roles of ABEO or SAB. The idea of involving university consortia was suggested.
- 12.4 The Board also noted the relevance of the ChemTech Centre's Blue Book and the university course inventory prepared by the Board. Board members thanked Mr Hakopov for his update and agreed to draft a concept note based on the discussion, expressing strong support for the initiative.

13. AGENDA ITEM THIRTEEN – Update on the activities of the Scientific Advisory Board, Mr Peter Hotchkiss, Science Policy Adviser and Scientific Advisory Board Secretary

- 13.1 The Secretary to the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), Peter Hotchkiss, provided an update on the current SAB composition, its functions and activities, including work by the TWG on Chemical Forensics, and highlighted the recent establishment by the Director-General of the SAB TWG on AI. He also briefed the Board on the activities undertaken by the Secretariat in AI, highlighting the importance of the Global Conference on the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Advancing the Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention held in Rabat (Morocco) in October 2024.
- 13.2 During the exchange of views with the Board, ABEO members commented on the increasing risk of the use of AI to promote disinformation, thus the importance of the OPCW website having resources available for the general public, journalists, and educators with accurate and factual information on different subject matters related to the Convention. The Board inquired whether the SAB TWG on AI's work also focused on ethical considerations, as the ABEO was envisaging preparing a paper to analyse the ethical aspects of AI and their impact on the implementation of the Convention. The SAB Secretary confirmed that the SAB TWG on AI was focused on the scientific and technical aspects of AI, and for this reason, the work envisaged by the ABEO would not be duplicating any function of the SAB TWG on AI, but would complement it.

- 13.3 The Board thanked the SAB Secretary for his briefing and agreed to continue collaboration through ABEO and SAB observers and Secretaries.
- 14. AGENDA ITEM FOURTEEN – OPCW Workforce, acquisition, and outreach: Contribution of the Board to raise awareness of OPCW vacancies in all regions, Ms Katherine Hummel, Head of the Human Resources Branch**
- 14.1 Ms Katherine Hummel, Head of the Human Resources Branch, provided an update to the Board on OPCW workforce composition and trends, including gender parity and geographical diversity as a reflection of the international organisation. She mentioned research that has proven that diverse workforces bring more innovation and creative solutions. Ms Hummel also highlighted the role of the OPCW Director-General as an International Gender Champion, which has translated into a composition of workforce close to gender parity.
- 14.2 The measures currently being implemented by the Secretariat to increase the attractiveness of vacancies and internships were explained, and an update was provided to the Board on the outreach strategy, including participation in specific career fairs, webinars, social media platforms, and partnerships with States Parties. Furthermore, Ms Hummel commented that the Board's assistance in raising awareness of professional opportunities at the OPCW in all regions through professional networks is key.
- 14.3 During an exchange of views, the importance of working together with other international organisations, including, among others, joint career fairs with the CTBTO and the IAEA, was emphasised by the Board. The ABEO underlined that internships are a first step to develop an international career in intergovernmental organisations and are assessed as very positive mentorships and targeted initiatives undertaken by the Human Resources Team to increase geographical distribution within the Secretariat. Ms Rebecca Jovin, Chief of Office of UNODA at Vienna, offered the support of UNODA's social media channels and regional offices in Peru, Togo, and Nepal to raise awareness of OPCW vacancies. She also proposed the inclusion of information on OPCW vacancies in the Youth4Disarmament initiative and other UNODA programmes targeting youth.
- 14.4 The Board members thanked Ms Hummel for her presentation and expressed their willingness to assist and disseminate information related to professional opportunities through their professional networks in their regions.
- 15. AGENDA ITEM FIFTEEN – Educational aspects of capacity-building activities for first responders and the contribution of the Board, Dr Ladislava Navrátilová**
- 15.1 Dr Ladislava Navrátilová delivered a presentation on educational aspects of capacity-building activities for first responders. She stressed the relevance of having educational resources for trainers that could consist of executive summaries or explanatory materials on the OPCW public website that could be consulted on as needed by first responders, together with the resources already available through the Learning Management System.
- 15.2 The Board thanked Dr Navrátilová for her presentation.

16. AGENDA ITEM SIXTEEN – Medical Action Plan and development by the OPCW of a syllabus for medical education, Mr Eduardo Herrera, Assistance and Protection Branch

- 16.1 Mr Eduardo Herrera briefed the Board on the Medical Action Plan developed in 2022, which includes key objective to strengthen and enhance medical preparedness and response in all geographical regions. One activity from the plan was to develop a syllabus for medical education on the management of patients affected by exposure to chemical weapons. Mr Herrera explained that the Assistance and Protection Branch has identified initiatives to enhance medical education and assist States Parties in improving their medical capacity in preparedness and response in this realm. Different medical protocols across the globe are being taken into consideration, and several training courses have been delivered to help harmonise the content of a medical syllabus. Some of the most recent training courses in this field were regional training courses on medical response to chemical weapons for States Parties of the Latin American and Caribbean Group, held in Brazil in May 2022 and in Madrid in April 2023, and international training courses on the medical aspects of assistance and protection against chemical weapons, held in the Islamic Republic of Iran in October 2023, and China in October 2024.
- 16.2 An exchange of views with the Board members ensued, focusing on the relevance of ensuring that updated resources are available for first responders, medical doctors, and nurses, as well as the key trainings that are being offered by the Assistance and Protection Branch, such as pre-hospital preparedness, hospital preparedness, and medical training for medical personnel and nurses. The Board highlighted the value of the efforts made by the Secretariat to coordinate efforts, wherever possible, with the World Health Organization, and the opportunity to raise awareness of the OPCW's work at different medical congresses and conferences worldwide.
- 16.3 The Board thanked Mr Eduardo Herrera for his update and offered its assistance to provide academic advice on training and educational resources, if needed.

17. AGENDA ITEM SEVENTEEN – Technological convergence: AI and quantum computing, and their impact on critical industries, Dr Andrea García Rodríguez, Chair of the Governing Board of ImpaQT UA and Associate Researcher at the Centre for European Policy Studies

- 17.1 Dr Andrea García Rodríguez delivered a presentation on AI and quantum computing and their impact on critical industries. She explained that AI is a dynamic and evolving field with profound implications for a variety of industries, including security, defence, and the chemical industries. The presentation outlined the historical development of AI, from early conceptual stages to modern implementations. It sought to debunk AI myths and provide a general technical understanding of the techniques that form the foundation of AI. The presentation also introduced the notion of AI agents, which are autonomous systems capable of executing tasks with minimal human oversight, and underscored how these technologies are improving decision-making processes, even in high-pressure environments, and driving innovation in critical sectors. Lastly, the presentation highlighted the key challenges of AI development, such as generalisation, the points where AI struggles to perform reliably outside of its training environment, and resource constraints. This session was also used to address misconceptions and potential opportunities.

- 17.2 The Board highlighted the importance of the benefits of AI and the need for ethical principles guiding research and the application of knowledge. The Board underscored the importance of OPCW personnel being sufficiently trained in AI if their functions are impacted by it.
- 17.3 The Board agreed to continue reflecting on AI developments and to prepare a document on AI and ethical considerations in light of developments in emerging technologies.
- 17.4 The Board members thanked Ms García Rodríguez for her insightful presentation and expressed their enthusiasm to continue learning about AI and emerging technologies in order to provide their advice on ethical principles and guardrails.
- 18. AGENDA ITEM EIGHTEEN – Inspectorate functions and activities, Mr Milan Strahinjc, Chemical Weapons and Munitions Specialist, Inspectorate Division**
- 18.1 Mr Milan Strahinjc gave an overview on the functions and activities of the Inspectorate Division and underscored the importance of keeping abreast of developments in science and technology. He focused on the knowledge management framework within the Inspectorate and gave insights on its main components, such as the Mentorship/Partnership Programme, knowledge transfer sessions, a database of lessons learned, and a knowledge repository.
- 18.2 In the exchange of views with the Board that followed, the key role of the ChemTech Centre as a knowledge repository was highlighted, as was the relevance of the contribution of the Inspectorate to capacity-building activities led by the ICA. The Board focused on the impact of AI on Inspectorate activities and spoke positively of the value of knowledge management efforts within Inspectorate to preserve knowledge.
- 18.3 The Board thanked Mr Strahinjc for his presentation and emphasised that it would be appropriate to include more insights on the work of inspectors in outreach products, such as videos, to increase knowledge of the OPCW's mission.
- 19. AGENDA ITEM NINETEEN – Identification of champions to coordinate work on each priority identified by the Board**
- 19.1 The Board agreed that the preparation of a first draft concept paper on the international meeting of experts at the ChemTech Centre to establish a Global Academic Network would be coordinated by Dr Richard Guthrie and Dr Sylvain Paile-Calvo. The Board would connect with the Knowledge Management Advisor through the ABEO Secretary to finalise the approach and other related aspects.
- 19.2 Prof. Supawan Tantayanon, Prof. Supawan Tantayanon, and Dr Ladislava Navratilova were appointed by the ABEO to serve as ABEO observers to the SAB.
- 19.3 Prof. Magda Bauta Solés and Prof. Vicente Garrido Rebolledo would prepare a report on the ethical aspects of AI that have an impact on the implementation of the Convention.
- 19.4 Dr Edith Valles informed the Board that she had already been looking at the question from the ICA Director regarding the identification of sources of expert advice in chemical security and risk assessment. She confirmed that she would send this information through the ABEO Secretary.

- 19.5 The Board appointed Prof. Kellie Tuck and Dr Richard Guthrie as coordinators of the work on academic advice, methodologies, and pedagogical approaches to preserve and archive chemical demilitarisation knowledge, if requested by the Secretariat.
- 19.6 Regarding the suggestion by the Head of the Public Affairs Branch to the Board to reflect on a Youth Strategy, the Board agreed to work on it once previous tasks have been finalised.
- 19.7 On the recommendation by the Board to endorse research fellowships for women, the ABEO Chairperson commented that she had been looking into what other international organisations have implemented, and found that the CTBTO offers a fellowship online. This online version could be an easier way for the OPCW to have such an offering to enhance knowledge about the OPCW for women scientists, subject to OPCW approval. The Board could contribute academic advice if needed. The Board also commented that the provision of academic advice for the National Autonomous University of Mexico diploma course contents would continue.
- 20. AGENDA ITEM TWENTY – Criteria and other aspects to select experts to promote the ChemTech Centre, update by the ABEO Secretary, discussion by Board members and observers**
- 20.1 The ABEO Secretary provided an update of the work related to the blue book for the ChemTech Centre prepared by the Board and the tasks that are still outstanding for Board members.
- 20.2 The Board decided to appoint Dr Nezha Barakate and Prof. JaneFrances Ihedioha to contribute to the committee's work to select experts and institutions to promote the ChemTech Centre. Dr Shahriar Khateri would serve as an additional optional ABEO member, as needed. The ABEO Secretary would communicate this decision by the Board to the SAB Secretary. The Board reminded those present that in parallel to consultation with the Board, additional experts from the Secretariat would need to be identified.
- 21. AGENDA ITEM TWENTY-ONE – Intersessional activities of Board members**
- 21.1 ABEO members held an online meeting on 17 January 2025 to introduce themselves, receive updates on the ABEO's work, and start coordinating tasks ahead of the ABEO's Eighteenth Session. The Office of Strategy and Policy provided substantive and technical support for this meeting.
- 21.2 Prof. Ying Zhou teamed up with two young professors to offer a 32-hour course on chemical ethics to graduate students at Zhejiang University of Technology in China during the autumn semester (23 September 2024 to 10 January 2025). She delivered a poster presentation on chemical ethics and safety education, and on promotion of the Convention by young students at Zhejiang University of Technology in China at the 27th IUPAC International Conference on Chemistry Education in Pattaya, Thailand, from 15 to 19 July 2024. She was reappointed for another term as a member of the Chinese National Committee of Experts on the Implementation of the Convention at the ceremony marking China's civilian industry passing the 500th on-site inspection by the OPCW in Changshu, China, on 1 November 2024. She also briefed the Members of the Chinese National Committee of Experts on the functions and activities of the ABEO on the afternoon of the same day.

- 21.3 Prof. Magda Bauta Solés delivered a statement on ABEO activities on behalf of the Board at the Twenty-Ninth Session of the Conference of the States Parties (November 2024). She also participated in a joint side event on progress in chemical and biological security education with Prof. Lijun Shang, Director of the Biological Security Research Centre. The joint side event was held in The Hague in the margins of the Twenty-Ninth Session of the Conference of the States Parties on 27 November 2024.
- 21.4 Dr Ladislava Navrátilová was actively involved in the activities of the OPCW Assistance and Protection Branch. As the head trainer, she prepared and conducted the following training courses: an OPCW international sampling course (Czech Republic, from 14 to 19 September 2024); international CBRN emergency course with emphasis on industrial chemical incidents (Paraguay, from 21 to 30 October 2024), and the seventh operational training on chemical emergency response, planning, and management for the East Africa Community Partner States (Uganda, from 2 to 11 December 2024). Dr Navrátilová also lectured and trained participants of the OPCW basic training course (Germany, from 7 to 11 October 2024). Dr Navrátilová delivered a presentation on her educational activities at the following important conferences: the 27th IUPAC International Conference on Chemistry Education (Thailand, from 15 to 19 July 2024) and the 24th International Conference on Separation Chemistry and Toxic Substances Analysis (Czech Republic, from 12 to 13 November 2024).
- 21.5 Dr Nezha Barakate participated in a training course on biological crime scene management for experts nominated to the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism roster, organised by UNODA, INTERPOL, and the Public Health Agency of Canada, from 26 to 30 August 2024, held in Brindisi (Italy). She also participated in the 27th IUPAC International Conference on Chemistry Education, in Pattaya (Thailand) from 15 to 19 July 2024. Furthermore, she attended the training course on safe and secure approaches in field environments for experts nominated to the roster for the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism for the investigation of alleged use of chemical, biological, and toxin weapons in Cha-am, Thailand, from 5 to 11 May 2024.
- 21.6 Prof. Jane Frances Ihedioha participated in a workshop on advancing ethical AI with the theme "Responsible AI and ethical considerations", organised by the High-Performance & Intelligence Computing Lab, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria on 20 September 2024. She also participated in 47th Annual International Conference, Workshop and Exhibition held from 22 to 27 September 2024 in Kano State, Nigeria, with theme "Exploring security solutions and industrial revival through chemistry". She collaborated in a presentation on the sustainable environmental remediation of contaminated water. She also delivered a lecture entitled "Promoting chemical ethics among young chemists – The Hague Ethical Guidelines" to postgraduate students of the Department of Pure and Industrial Chemistry, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria on 3 February 2025.
- 21.7 Prof. Vicente Garrido Rebolledo was a guest speaker for several courses and seminars. The master's degree, higher intelligence, and national defence courses (two formats: one for high-level officials, diplomats, parliamentarians, and professors; and a second for those under the age of 29) addressed the nuclear, biological, and chemical threat and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These courses were delivered at several universities and colleges, including: the Superior Centre of National Defence

Studies of the Spanish Ministry of Defence; the Carlos III University of Madrid Conflict Prevention Course; the Complutense University summer course on current conflicts; the international relations Master's programme at the Diplomatic School of Spain; and the permanent seminar on security and defence organised by the Chairperson of Defence Studies of Rey Juan Carlos University.

- 21.8 Prof. Supawan Tantayanon participated in several activities related to chemical safety and security during the intersessional period. She organised the 27th IUPAC International Conference on Chemistry Education, comprising a symposium on advancing chemical safety and security education (held from 16 to 17 July 2024, Chonburi, Thailand), and a workshop on enhancing chemical safety and security for the Convention (July 2024, Chonburi, Thailand). She also conducted small-scale chemistry workshops in the Philippines and India for high school teachers in August 2024 and delivered a keynote lecture on advancing green chemistry and ensuring safety for humans and the environment at the 14th National Conference in Toxicology in September 2024 in Bangkok. She also participated in the media round table on advancing innovation and sustainable solutions in Thailand's agricultural sector with a lecture on green chemistry in agriculture in November 2024 in Bangkok. Prof. Tantayanon coordinated a workshop on Know Your Customer and suspicious indicators training for chemical suppliers and distributors organised by the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in November 2024 in Bangkok.

22. AGENDA ITEM TWENTY-TWO – Topics identified for further consideration at the Nineteenth Session of the ABEO and dates for the next session

- 22.1 The Board identified the following topics for further consideration at its Nineteenth Session: AI and its ethical aspects; enhancing engagement with and interest in disarmament, including academic advice on presentations by Secretariat personnel; the contribution of the Board to the international meeting of experts at the ChemTech Centre to develop a global academic network; and information on activities related to the ChemTech Centre. A suggestion was made to include a briefing on the work by the SAB TWG on AI.
- 22.2 The ABEO Secretary commented that, considering upcoming meetings in the next months and the need to submit to the Executive Council of October the DG report on ABEO annual activities, the month of June seemed to be the most appropriate occasion to hold the ABEO, most probably in an online modality. The ABEO decided to agree on the concrete dates to hold the Nineteenth Session in June through e-mail correspondence. To advance work on ongoing tasks, the Board agreed to meet online, as needed.

23. AGENDA ITEM TWENTY-THREE – Any other business

- 23.1 The Board offered its contribution to the regional meetings of National Authorities, as well as the Annual Meeting of National Authorities, if the ICA considers it appropriate. Furthermore, the Board suggested that the ICA could consider participating at international medical congresses of interest to the OPCW to raise awareness of the OPCW's work in medical assistance. The ABEO could provide support in this regard, if the ICA deems it appropriate.

- 23.2 The SAB observer to the ABEO provided an update on the IUPAC World Chemistry Congress in Kuala Lumpur, scheduled for July 2025, and asked whether some Board members were planning to attend this event. He also informed the Board of a project—under the umbrella of the Royal Society of Chemistry—to edit a book on the long-term effects of armed conflicts on the environment and human health, entitled “The environmental impact of weapons and military chemicals: Present issues and legacies from the past”. Dr Guidotti commented that ABEO expert contributions would be welcome.

24. AGENDA ITEM TWENTY-FOUR – Closure of the meeting

- 24.1 The Board thanked the Office of Strategy and Policy for the provision of substantive and administrative support, and agreed to remain in contact to advance work during the intersessional period, including through intersessional online meetings, if necessary.
- 24.2 The ABEO Chairperson closed the meeting on 13 February at 16:45.

Annex : List of Participants at the Eighteenth Session of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach

Annex

**List of participants at the Eighteenth Session
of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach**

Prof. Magda Bauta Solés, ABEO Chairperson

Dr Edith Valles, ABEO member

Prof. Kellie Tuck, ABEO member

Prof. Ying Zhou, ABEO member

Dr Ladislava Navrátilová, ABEO member

Dr Sylvain Paile-Calvo, ABEO member

Prof. Christopher Daase, ABEO member (*online attendance*)

Dr Shahriar Khateri, ABEO member

Dr Nezha Barakate, ABEO member

Prof. Janefrances Ihedioha, ABEO member

Mr Naveed Alam, ABEO member

Prof. Vicente Garrido Rebolledo, ABEO member

Prof. Supawan Tantayanon, ABEO member

Dr Richard Guthrie, ABEO member

Prof. Marietjie Potgieter, observer, IUPAC

Mr William Garcia, observer, the European Chemical Industry Council (Cefic)

Dr Matteo Guidotti, observer, Scientific Advisory Board (*online attendance*)

Ms Rebecca Jovin, Chief of Office, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Vienna

Ms Andrea García Rodríguez, Chair of the Governing Board of ImpaQT UA and Associate Researcher at the Centre for European Policy Studies

Mr Marcin Wroblewski, Director of Strategy and Policy, OPCW

Mr Suljuk Mustansar Tarar, Director of International Cooperation and Assistance, OPCW

Ms Katherine Hummel, Head, Human Resources, OPCW

Ms Barbara Muik, Head, Declaration, Validation and Evaluation, Verification Division, OPCW

Ms Elisabeth Waechter, Head of Public Affairs Branch and OPCW Spokesperson

Mr Zaven Hakopov, Knowledge Management Advisor, OPCW Administration Division

Mr Milan Strahinjic, Inspector and Chemical Weapons and Munitions Specialist, Demilitarisation Inspections Cell, Inspectorate Division, OPCW

Mr Eduardo Herrera, Senior Programme Officer, Assistance and Protection Branch, OPCW

Mr Peter Hotchkiss, Science Policy Adviser and Scientific Advisory Board Secretary, OPCW

Ms Luisa Sánchez-Bravo, ABEO Secretary, OPCW

Regrets:

Dr. Andrea Leisewitz