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OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE 109TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

1. I warmly welcome all delegations to the 109th Session of the Executive Council.
2. I congratulate the new Chairperson of the Council, Ambassador Thomas Schieb, Permanent Representative of Germany to the OPCW, on his election. Ambassador, I am confident that the Council will benefit from your extensive diplomatic experience over many decades and I assure you of my full support, and that of the Secretariat.
3. I extend my appreciation to the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Andrés Terán Parral, Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the OPCW, for his able stewardship of the Council.
4. I thank all the outgoing members of the Council and welcome the new ones joining us today.
5. We continue to operate in an unstable world, marked by escalating conflicts and geopolitical divisions, such as the wars in Ukraine and in the Middle East. Today's international environment poses unprecedented challenges and constant pressure on global security, including the arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation international legal architecture. Despite these difficult circumstances, affecting all international organisations, the OPCW continues to function and to deliver on its mandates. During the intersessional period, we have made significant progress on many different fronts.
6. I wish to begin with the Syrian Arab Republic. The fall of the Assad government in December 2024 provides us with an opportunity to uncover the full extent and scope of its chemical weapons programme and to draw to a close this longstanding issue. At the same time, this event also serves as a wake-up call for the international community to reaffirm its responsibility, through the OPCW, to play its part in eliminating Syria's chemical weapons. I recall that all legal obligations of the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the mandates received by the Secretariat, and conferred by the Convention, the decisions of the policy-making organs, and the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, remain binding, providing the legal framework to continue to address these issues.
7. Since the Council last met, we deployed a team of experts to Syria three times, in March, April, and June 2025. On 23 May, the Secretariat provided a briefing to States Parties on the deployments that took place in March and in April, and on the activities that have taken place during and since these deployments. Presentations were made available to all States Parties. Despite all the constraints in the country, the Syrian



authorities provided the necessary support for the activities of the Secretariat's team and undertook to cooperate in the implementation of the different mandates.

8. During the deployment that took place in June, we dispatched for the first time a team composed of members from the DAT, the FFM and the IIT, under the new Office of Special Missions. The team worked in two main areas, as has been the case since the first deployment, last March, under these new conditions. The first area consists of meetings with the Syrian authorities aimed at presenting and discussing all the Secretariat's mandates in Syria and organising the upcoming activities, including establishing an office for the OPCW in Damascus. The Syrian authorities committed themselves to work with the Secretariat, which underscored the importance of signing a privileges and immunities agreement. I wish to share the very good news that during the deployment that took place last month, June 2025, the Syrian authorities signed the privileges and immunities agreement with the OPCW, which is a mandatory legal instrument for the Secretariat's activities in this country.
9. In addition, during that deployment, we visited two potential locations for an OPCW office in Damascus. Both locations require significant investments for essential renovations, which will take time, relevant financial resources and administrative work. We will continue to explore these options and additional ones with the Syrian authorities. This includes the possibility to re-open temporary offices in one of the hotels in Damascus recommended by the United Nations. The possibility to deploy staff permanently in Syria will be crucial for ensuring the best regular contact with the Syrian authorities and for carrying out our activities efficiently. As for the second main area of work, during the three deployments that have already taken place, the team conducted declaration-related meetings and field visits to a total of nine locations. Four of these locations are previously declared facilities and five are locations suspected to be related to the chemical weapons programme. The team collected samples from one of the suspected locations. The process of analysis of these samples by designated laboratories is under way. The team also obtained new information related to the Syrian chemical weapons programme, which is being analysed.
10. So far, we have already reached the conclusion, on the basis of the most recent deployments, that we have no doubt as to the fact that the previous Syrian authorities continuously, but unsuccessfully, tried to mislead the Secretariat as to the extent of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Further details and outcomes of these deployments were provided in my report (EC-109/HP/DG. 1, dated 2 July 2025).
11. The facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) located in Barzah and Jamrayah were among the locations visited by the Secretariat's team in March 2025. The SSRC Barzah facility was visited again by the Secretariat's team in April 2025. The Secretariat will continue to implement the relevant Council decision during its ongoing activities in the Syrian Arab Republic.
12. Since the Council's last session, we have continued our investigations regarding allegations of use of chemical weapons in Syria. The Office of Special Missions, deployed its Fact-Finding Mission three times, including once in Damascus, during the intersessional period. We are currently analysing the data already collected and gathering additional information related to five groups of allegations, encompassing more than 16 reported incidents, and will issue reports on the findings in due course.

13. The Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) is continuing its investigations and further reports will follow. The new situation in Syria should allow for improved access to evidence and witnesses relating to the perpetrators of incidents of use of chemical weapons falling within the IIT's purview. Alongside these activities, the IIT will continue to preserve information and evidence and provide it to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM).
14. With respect to destruction of any chemical weapons or facilities remaining in Syria, this task may be smaller in scale, but certainly greater in complexity, than the one that was carried out 11 years ago. This is due, among other things, to: the unprecedented number of sites that need to be visited, and assessed; the need to draw up a complete inventory; the need for a declaration by Syria, to be subsequently verified by the Secretariat; and, the diversity of items that may be identified for destruction, with the appropriate methods, in or outside of the country, with the necessary verification of the destruction by the Secretariat.
15. Many of the sites in Syria that the Secretariat's missions are visiting, and will visit, are hazardous, difficult to access, and require a range of safety and security measures. The Syrian authorities will need to declare chemical weapons-related items, sites, and equipment every time they are discovered, and the Secretariat will need to verify this declaration. All such items will then need to be secured by the Syrian authorities prior to their destruction. All relevant procedures for destruction and verification will be implemented in line with the rules laid down in the Convention and its Verification Annex (namely Part IV(a) of the Verification Annex). The Secretariat will stand ready to play its part should the activities of declaration and destruction begin before the end of the visits to all sites and the completion of the inventory.
16. We are aware that certain circumstances may entail special risks of proliferation or risks to the people or the environment, or which may imply a potential destruction of evidence related to use of chemical weapons in Syria. This will require the adoption of special measures, including expedited destruction of the chemical weapons found in certain sites. The Council will be informed in detail and in due time about the need to adopt certain measures to ensure operational efficiency regarding the destruction. In any case we will need to ensure that the experts of the Secretariat can collect evidence, such as samples, videos, photos, and the like, for subsequent investigations of chemical weapons use. The Secretariat, the Syrian authorities and the Ambassador of Qatar to the Netherlands, in his role as representative of Syria to the OPCW, have been working together in developing necessary plans that will allow for such activities to take place, always in line with the Convention. I wish to thank the Ambassador of Qatar and the States Parties that are technically supporting Syria in this process. The outcome of this work will be presented to the Council for its approval in due course.
17. As I mentioned on other occasions, I can confirm that the OPCW activities in the Syrian Arab Republic require substantial additional human and financial resources. On 29 April 2025, the Secretariat issued a detailed Note on its estimates of the costs of the Organisation's mandated activities to resolve the remaining issues surrounding the Syrian chemical weapons programme (S/2397/2025). In addition, on 5 June 2025, the Secretariat issued a Note calling for voluntary contributions for the financing of the OPCW activities in Syria (S/2413/2025).

18. In Ukraine, the allegations arising from the war, contained in the compendium of correspondence received by the Secretariat from the Russian Federation and Ukraine, are a disturbing reminder that threats of use of chemical warfare remain a reality. During the intersessional period, the Secretariat was requested, under subparagraph 38(e) of Article VIII of the Convention, to conduct a technical assistance visit (TAV) to Ukraine. The request was made in relation to an incident involving toxic chemicals, which reportedly took place on 28 February 2025. The location is at an observation post of the Border Guard Service of Ukraine, near the village of Mariivka in Nikopol district, in the Dnipropetrovsk region, along the confrontation lines with opposing forces. This was the third TAV request from Ukraine in this respect.
19. Upon receipt of the request, I dispatched a technical assistance visit team (TAV team) to provide the requested assistance to Ukraine. The activities were carried out according to my instructions as set out in the TAV team's mandate. The TAV team conducted two deployments, collected related documentation and digital files, as well as testimonies from first-hand witnesses, and received seven environmental samples collected by Ukraine, from a location adjacent to a dugout at the observation post I mentioned earlier, namely: two grenade shells (one of which was collected with parts of a fuse system); two soil samples; two vegetation samples; and remnants of an electronically sophisticated drone (known as a first-person view—or FPV—drone).
20. On 20 June 2025, the report of the TAV was delivered to the Government of Ukraine and, upon its request when receiving the report, declassified and circulated by the Secretariat to all States Parties (Note S/2415/2025, dated 20 June 2025). The use of the best technological tools allows the TAV team to unequivocally affirm that the chain of custody of the samples collected by Ukrainian investigators had been maintained. Two OPCW designated laboratories selected by me, separately and independently from one another, confirmed that the grenades collected from the location close to the observation post of the Border Guard Service of Ukraine, contained the riot control agent CS, its precursors and degradation products. The chemical found, CS, is prohibited for use in warfare under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The soil and vegetation collected from the locations where the grenades were found, also contained CS, its precursors or its degradation products. A soil sample collected approximately 15 meters away from the incident location, as well as the solvent wipe sample from the frame of remnants of the collected drone, also contained CS at very low levels. This is the result of the third TAV.
21. I have previously briefed all of you on the outcomes of the first two technical assistance visits, the reports of which have been shared with all States Parties and made available on OPCW's public website, upon the request of Ukraine. The reports of these two first visits also arrived at the conclusion that CS, a chemical banned from use in war, was found to have been used on the front line. At the end of last week, information was released to the public of the use as weapons in Ukraine of a wide range of chemicals with an alarming frequency, including very dangerous agents. Considering the gravity of the information that is circulating, the Secretariat will increase its vigilance and continue to monitor with utmost attention what is happening on the front and beyond. Given the documented pattern of use, Ukraine and the Secretariat have engaged in discussions on how to further support Ukraine within the framework of the Convention and the relevant decisions of the policy-making organs.

22. An exchange of notes verbales between the Permanent Representation of Ukraine to the OPCW and the Secretariat, dated 7 July 2025, was circulated to all States Parties. In its note, Ukraine requested the Director-General to take steps towards establishing an independent and impartial mechanism to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons, including the identification of perpetrators. The Secretariat has responded, inviting Ukraine to engage with the States Parties to explore such a possibility. This exchange has been made available to all States Parties through Catalyst and is being issued as an official document of this Council's session, as requested by the Permanent Representation of Ukraine to the OPCW.
23. Yesterday afternoon, I received a Note Verbale from the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation transmitting a letter addressed to me by the Vice-Minister of Industry and Trade. In his letter the Russian Vice-Minister is requesting a technical assistance visit under subparagraph 38(e) of Article VIII to receive samples and evidence reported to be collected by the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine. The letter, with its unofficial translation in English, also contains an attachment in Russian that I have requested to be officially translated. The Secretariat teams will analyse the request and the content of the document and will respond in due course. In the meantime, this exchange has been made available to all States Parties through Catalyst, and is being issued as an official document of this Council's session, as requested by the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW.
24. Alongside the technical assistance visits, the Secretariat continued to deliver equipment and training support to Ukraine, upon its request, under Article X of the Convention in the field of assistance and protection.
25. We delivered another iteration of the online specialised course on emergency response to incidents involving toxic chemicals to 37 first responders of the State Emergency Service of Ukraine from 24 February to 16 May, and from 14 April to 4 July 2025. In all, this course has benefitted 216 experts from Ukraine since 2023. It aims at preparing participants for the practical use of personal protective equipment (PPE), chemical detectors, as well as practising basic decontamination and sampling methods in the hot zone.
26. Additionally, the Secretariat continued to deliver the in-person specialised courses on sampling for investigations of chemical weapons use. The fifth group, consisting of 20 experts, was trained at the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre), from 26 to 30 May 2025. The course provided participants with knowledge and practical skills for conducting investigations of chemical weapons use. So far, a total of 100 Ukrainian experts have been trained on investigative skills since July 2024. The impact of this training is evident in the context of the three technical assistance visits, where samples identified, collected, packed, and transported by Ukrainian experts, trained by the Secretariat, consistently meet the highest international standards. In addition to these training activities, seven new chemical identification systems, known as "First Defender Detectors", were recently delivered by the Secretariat to Ukraine, bringing the total of delivered items to 20. During the same period the Secretariat also delivered 70 Lightweight Chemical Agent Detectors to Ukraine. In each instance, in-person training on how to use such advanced equipment has been provided by Secretariat experts.

27. This support has been financed through voluntary contributions made to the Trust Fund on Assistance and Protection for Ukraine under Article X. Of the EUR 6.1 million in the Trust Fund, an amount of EUR 2.9 million has already been spent.
28. Alarming, the war in Gaza is still ongoing. Further to a request from the State of Palestine, the Secretariat has engaged with its Permanent Representation in The Hague on the provision of training to strengthen Palestine's capacity in responding to incidents involving toxic chemicals. Participants from the State of Palestine have already registered to attend our international cooperation assistance and protection courses in the coming months. The Secretariat remains ready to provide specialised training tailored to the specific needs identified by the State of Palestine.
29. In addition to Syria and Ukraine over the past 10 years, the Secretariat has been called upon to conduct contingency and non-routine operations, including in Germany, Iraq, Malaysia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, in relation to the use and the threat of use of toxic chemicals as weapons. Cognisant of this reality, the Secretariat has continued to deepen its knowledge and expertise to conduct all types of contingency operations, and to respond to requests by States Parties for assistance, protection, and any other type of investigation. Accordingly, I decided to establish the Office of Special Missions (OSM) to ensure the Secretariat's readiness to respond in the event of any new request by a State Party in relation to the use or threat of use of toxic chemicals as weapons. This new Office responds to the global security situation very well known to all of you. The OSM will bolster the Secretariat's capacity to organise, coordinate and undertake all types of special deployments in the States Parties. In the immediate future, it will increase the efficiency of our activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, including the investigations of the IIT to identify the perpetrators of use of chemical weapons, taking advantage of the new political situation in Syria. The OSM will integrate into a single unit the functioning of the FFM, IIT and DAT in Syria.
30. With respect to the Sudan, the Secretariat has been closely monitoring the situation, including the claims of allegations of use of chemical weapons, mainly through its Situation Centre. Yet, it has not received any sufficiently substantiated elements regarding such allegations. In June, the Republic of Benin, the Republic of Chad, and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, supported by the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, wrote to the Chairperson of the Council, requesting clarification from the Republic of the Sudan under paragraph 4 of Article IX of the Convention. Accordingly, at the behest of the Chairperson of the Executive Council, I forwarded the requests to the Republic of the Sudan. By separate letters, all dated 23 June 2025, the Chairperson of the Council conveyed to all the States Parties the separate responses from the Republic of the Sudan to the requests for clarification from the Republic of Benin, the Republic of Chad and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, respectively. All correspondence on this matter has been shared with States Parties via Catalyst.
31. Last week, on 1 July, the Sixty-Seventh Meeting of the Executive Council was convened at the request of the Islamic Republic of Iran. As I stated during the meeting, following the reported attacks on the Shahid Meysami Group in Karaj, Alborz Province, on 15 and 16 June, the Secretariat has been monitoring the situation related to the declared site and the designated laboratory located in the immediate vicinity of the reported attack. On 26 June, through a note verbale, we requested the Permanent

Representation of Iran to the OPCW, to provide any relevant information in its possession regarding the impact of the reported attack on the Shahid Meysami Group facility, directly located in the vicinity of a declared facility and of the Iranian OPCW Designated Laboratory. The requested information relates, inter alia, to any damage to a declared site in the vicinity of the reported attack; the possible release of any toxic chemicals; and, whether the OPCW designated laboratory, also located in the immediate proximity of the reported attack, was affected. The Permanent Representation of Iran was requested to provide its responses to the Secretariat as early as is feasible. As of today, we are still waiting for this information. The Iranian facility directly hit by the reported attack is not a declared facility, and as a result the Secretariat does not have the mandate to conduct on-site verification or data monitoring of this place. I wish to emphasise that just like the use of chemical weapons, the targeting with any kind of weapon of any chemical facility, whether declared or not, may constitute a violation of the legal norms and standards of the international community. This constitutes a principle of international customary law that is universally recognised.

32. The threats we face transcend national borders. That is why our focus on understanding the impact of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), on the implementation of the Convention, is so crucial. Some of you attended the side event co-hosted by the delegations of Japan and the United States of America, in the margins of the March session of the Council, commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Tokyo Subway Sarin Attack on 20 March 1995. As we heard at that side-event, the terrorist group that carried out this attack—the doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo—lacked the technological means, widely available today, to be efficient. We wonder what the scale of the fatalities could have been, had this terrorist group had access to today's technologies, such as modern drone delivery systems, or the advanced methods to produce already known toxic chemicals or to design new ones. I am referring, as you know, to the use of 3D printing technology, nanotechnology, automation in laboratories, cloud laboratories, Internet (including the deep web), powerful computers using special algorithms, and, of course, everything boosted with the use of AI. To mitigate the novel risks and anticipate new threats, we must build a robust capacity both in the Secretariat and in the States Parties. In this vein, it would be appropriate to increase in number and substance the programmes of International Cooperation and Assistance, using, when needed the Centre for Chemistry and Technology. At the same time, we must maintain and enhance the capacity to assist and protect citizens, should chemical terrorism or incidents involving toxic chemicals occur. Towards these objectives, the Secretariat and the States Parties built on the outcomes of the Global Conference on AI held in Morocco last October.
33. The Temporary Working Group on AI that I established at the end of last year, which is already working under the supervision of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), held its first meeting from 9 to 11 April 2025. In its first meeting the Working Group addressed both the transformative potential of AI and the importance of vigilance in its application. The Group held a second meeting from 24 to 26 June 2025. Additionally, the Temporary Working Group on Chemical Forensics continues to work, and its fifth meeting took place from 11 to 13 June 2025. Both Temporary Working Groups—on AI and on Chemical Forensics— will complete their mandates by the end of 2025 and submit their final reports in 2026.

34. I also remind States Parties that there are seven members of the Scientific Advisory Board who will complete their tenure at the end of this year. I refer States Parties to the call for nominations of qualified experts to sit on the Board, which expires on 31 August (Note S/2362/2025, dated 29 January 2025).
35. In addition, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Government of China, organised a workshop on AI and chemical safety and security management, in Shanghai, from 17 to 20 June 2025, which I was very pleased to attend. It was the first capacity-building programme that the OPCW has organised in relation to AI and chemical safety and security. I wish to thank the Government of China for co-organising this highly relevant workshop with the Secretariat. The workshop raised awareness of the transformative impact of AI on the chemical industry, within the context of the Convention and chemical safety and security. During my visit, I had the opportunity to meet with high-level officials including the Mayor of Shanghai, H.E. Mr Gong Zheng, and the Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, H.E. Mr Zhang Yunming. Workshops, such as this one, contribute to ensure that all States Parties have access to knowledge on new technologies and the capacity to use them to their benefit for better implementing their international commitments.
36. The Secretariat will continue identifying opportunities to utilise AI technologies within its workstreams, increasing efficiency and capability. The results of the AI Research Challenge, as well as the final report of the TWG on AI, both expected in early 2026, will be instrumental in laying the scientific foundation for our next steps.
37. The 2026–2027 Draft Biennium Programme and Budget has been developed against the backdrop of our new requirements, in particular, for OPCW activities in Syria. The proposed increases in the budget are driven by two factors. The budget for the Secretariat's regular activities seeks to maintain minimal inflation-related growth. It also includes a proposal to accommodate an increase in Article VI industry inspections, from 200 up to the level of 241, as established in 2015 by the Conference of the States Parties. The second component relates to the cost of completing our work in the Syrian Arab Republic. This new programme of work has already begun in 2025, relying on a combination of regular budget and extrabudgetary resources. I place great emphasis on making best use of the resources provided to the Secretariat by the States Parties.
38. The creation of the Office of Special Missions is a good example of how we are taking care to use the modest resources we require in the most effective and impactful way. This rationalisation means that we are implementing all mandates related to the Syrian chemical weapons programme with means similar to those we had previously for the functioning of the IIT, which will be subsumed into the Office of Special Missions (OSM), together with the other teams working in Syria. This restructuring will in no way mean that teams such as the IIT will lose efficiency. On the contrary, the IIT will directly benefit from the synergies of being integrated into a larger group composed of many experts. In addition, the OSM will stand ready to support requests from States Parties for contingency operations in case of need, as is already the case in Ukraine, and will also stand ready to study any other proposal to support any other requesting State Party. In addition, the Secretariat plans to repurpose existing resources to meet the cost of new expertise to address the impact of AI and emerging technologies in general, which will be cost-neutral. States Parties will have the opportunity to discuss the Draft Programme and Budget during the facilitation process, which will begin in

September following a review by the Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters (ABAF) at its Fifty-Ninth Session, later this month.

39. We are delivering on our new priorities in tandem with our existing tasks in the areas of chemical demilitarisation, prevention and non-proliferation.
40. We continue to verify the disposal of chemical weapons component wastes and rocket motors, at the non-contiguous sites of the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant in Kentucky, and the Anniston Static Detonation Chamber in Alabama, the United States of America. One visit was conducted in the intersessional period. Based on the results of this visit, the Secretariat confirmed completion of the destruction of the rocket motors at the Anniston Static Detonation Chamber and terminated verification activities at the Anniston site.
41. China and Japan have continued bilateral consultations on the excavation, recovery, and destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China. As of 31 May 2025, a total of 126,975 of the 153,671 declared items of abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) had been reported by Japan as destroyed, as verified by the Secretariat. The Secretariat conducted seven ACW inspections in China during the intersessional period. In June 2025, a trilateral meeting was conducted during which China, Japan, and the Secretariat discussed the progress of the destruction and recovery activities and the plan for 2025.
42. Concerning old chemical weapons, during the intersessional period, the Secretariat conducted inspections in Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
43. At the invitation of the German Government, on 13 and 14 March 2025, I visited the GEKA Destruction Facility and Dethlinger Pond site in Munster, Germany, together with the Chairperson and members of the Executive Council representing all regional groups. We were warmly received by Ms Susanne Riegraf, Deputy Federal Commissioner for Arms Control, with whom I discussed the importance of global collaboration in addressing pressing challenges in disarmament and non-proliferation. Beyond Germany's borders, GEKA has contributed to international chemical demilitarisation efforts, including the past destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles in Syria and in Libya. I thank the Ambassador of Germany for organising this special and useful visit. As we complete the outstanding tasks in Syria, and more broadly, if a possessor State joins the OPCW, we may, once again, look to Germany and other States Parties that have gained expertise over the years on this matter, for support and technical expertise.
44. As I mentioned earlier, concerning the industry verification regime, the budget this year foresees 200 chemical industry inspections in declared sites all over the world. The Secretariat continues to work with States Parties to complete the inspections planned for 2025. In the intersessional period, seven Schedule 1, 17 Schedule 2, and 57 other chemical production facility (OCPF) plant site inspections took place under the Inspection Plan for 2025. These deployments have involved 24 States Parties.
45. In line with its ongoing adaptation, the Inspectorate Division has reprioritised its training activities to further enhance its preparedness to deliver and to support any contingency operations. During the reporting period, the inspectors of the Organisation

provided, coordinated, or participated in 20 training courses for a combined 688 training days held at the OPCW Main Building and the ChemTech Centre, as well as at external facilities.

46. Now, more than ever, all States Parties must adopt and implement the necessary legislation to give full effect to the protection afforded to your citizens by the Convention. Such legislation is also necessary to advance the peaceful uses of chemistry for economic and technological development. In support of this objective, the Secretariat delivered a total of 51 capacity-building events, benefiting 1,144 participants from all geographical regions. Six of these were conducted online and in person from and at the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre). These activities included a landmark regional conference held in Namibia in April, which the Deputy Director-General attended in person. This event brought together senior government officials and legal experts from 23 African countries to accelerate the adoption of national implementing legislation.
47. Partnerships with like-minded organisations can only further the overarching goal of a more peaceful and secure world. I was therefore pleased to sign a memorandum of understanding between the OPCW and the Community of Portuguese Language-speaking Countries (CPLP) in Lisbon, Portugal, on 3 June. Through this document, as well as the existing agreements with the African Union Commission, the European Union and others, the OPCW is collaborating even more closely to enhance the implementation of the Convention across all regions.
48. The Organisation's activities continue to expand in scale and complexity to meet the needs of States Parties in an increasingly unstable world. States Parties need to ensure that the next Director-General be empowered through your decisions, as has been the case over the past seven years, to continue to address the ever-evolving global landscape and to deliver on the Secretariat's mandates. The process for appointing the next Director-General is well under way following the road map contained in the Note issued by the Chairperson of the Council at its last session (EC-108/2, dated 7 February 2025). You can count on the Secretariat to continue to support you throughout the process, as you require.
49. In closing, last month, we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, banning the use of biological and chemical weapons in war. As I said in my statement issued on that occasion, the threats facing the drafters of the Protocol are still very relevant today. In 1997, when the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force, we inherited a vital mission. One that we must continue to pursue to the best of our abilities. This mission is valid only if all States Parties implement, defend, and promote the Chemical Weapons Convention. Rest assured that the Secretariat will continue to work with dedication and commitment, and that I will also continue to do so until my last day as your Director-General. We owe it to the victims of chemical weapons use, to future generations, and to all of you in line with the commitment I made already seven years ago.