



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Thirtieth Session
24 – 28 November 2025

C-30/DG.17
24 November 2025
Original: ENGLISH

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE THIRTIETH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES

1. I welcome all delegations to the Thirtieth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. I thank, Ambassador Almir Šahović of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as outgoing Chairperson, for his able leadership of the Conference and the General Committee throughout the year. Dear Almir, I am a first-hand witness to your exceptional achievement, and at this special moment as we open the Conference I am honoured to highlight the success of the work you have carried out, always with particular dedication, generosity, and good judgement. Ambassador Agustín Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador, I congratulate you on your appointment as the new Chairperson. This is not the first time that we have been on the podium together. I recall, with appreciation, your previous service to the OPCW as Chairperson of the Executive Council during the difficult pandemic times in 2020, and previously as Chairperson of the Fourth Review Conference in 2018. I believe that your experience and sense of duty will ensure the success of your new mission. I am confident that this session of the Conference will benefit immensely from your rich experience.
2. We convene, once again, in a degraded international security environment. Although we have achieved the verification of the destruction of all declared stockpiles, since July 2023, documented cases of use in recent years in Iraq, Malaysia, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and in other instances, as well as numerous allegations of use of toxic chemicals since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, show that the OPCW's mission is far from complete. Where the Secretariat has been seized, we have responded and will continue to do so, and in accordance with the requests from the States Parties. I would like to begin by addressing the most challenging dossier over the past 12 years.
3. Since the Syrian Arab Republic joined the Chemical Weapons Convention in September 2013, the Secretariat has been working intensely on the Syrian chemical weapons dossier, with the highest level of professionalism and expertise. Following the verified destruction of the declared Syrian chemical weapons, the Secretariat has consistently reported that the initial declaration was neither accurate nor complete. At the same time, we documented numerous instances of use of chemical weapons and, in several cases, identified the then Syrian Armed Forces as the perpetrator. Today, we have confirmation through our recent deployments that the former Syrian authorities continuously but unsuccessfully tried to mislead the Secretariat and the international community as to the extent of their secretive chemical weapons programme. The Secretariat has brought such evidence of deception to the Executive Council throughout the year, and this information is now before the Conference at this session.



4. Just a few days after the end of the Conference last year, the Assad regime fell. This was 8 December 2024, and immediately the Secretariat took steps to establish working relations with the new authorities. At the same time, the Secretariat provided guidance to the new authorities on the Syrian Arab Republic's obligations under the Convention. These steps are detailed in the Notes shared with all States Parties on 26 February (S/2376/2025) and on 7 August 2025 (S/2433/2025). A day after the ousting of the regime, on 9 December 2024, the Secretariat reminded the Syrian Arab Republic by note verbale of its continued obligations under the Convention, and requested relevant information and updates on the chemical weapons programme. This was the first in a series of official communications from the Secretariat to the new Syrian authorities. Three days later, on 12 December, the Executive Council was convened at my initiative. During that meeting I briefed the Council, and the States Parties had an opportunity to express their views. In early January this year, with our assistance, the Syrian authorities delegated to the Permanent Representation of Qatar the representation of their interests to the OPCW. On 22 January, the Secretariat issued two notes verbales to the Permanent Representation of Qatar to the OPCW, acting on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic (Nos. NV/ODG-651/24 and NV/ODG-652/25). The first note verbale, among other matters, recalled my proposal to deploy a Secretariat team to the Syrian Arab Republic, and contained the Secretariat's new 9-Point Action Plan for Syria under these new circumstances. The second note emphasised the importance of identifying and securing chemical weapons-related locations and materials. In that note verbale, the Secretariat also outlined the assistance it could provide in managing the risks posed by chemical weapons.
5. These initial activities preceded my visit to Damascus on 8 February 2025, the first time for any Director-General of the OPCW to visit the Syrian Arab Republic. During my visit, I held separate meetings with President Ahmed al-Sharaa and with Minister of Foreign Affairs Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani. Both expressed recognition and support of the OPCW's mandates, and their country's commitment to addressing all the outstanding issues. This commitment was demonstrated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs when, on 5 March 2025, he visited the OPCW upon my invitation and addressed the Executive Council during its 108th Session. I underline that all obligations related to the Syrian chemical weapons dossier, conferred by the Convention, decisions of the policy-making organs, and the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, remain binding on the Syrian Arab Republic, irrespective of any change in government.
6. The Syrian Arab Republic's obligations under the Convention are clear. The Syrian authorities must declare and destroy any chemical weapons that they may possess. Explicitly, in line with the definition in the Convention set forth in Article II, these include any toxic chemicals, munitions, devices, and equipment intended to be used in violation of any of the provisions of the Convention.
7. The role of the Secretariat in this process is to verify the accuracy of Syrian authorities' declarations, and the irreversible destruction by the Syrian authorities of discovered chemical weapons. The Secretariat also provides all possible assistance to the Syrian authorities by visiting the sites with them, supporting them in preparing the inventory and the new declarations, and advising them on destruction methods and technologies, as mandated by the Convention.

8. The Syrian authorities and the Secretariat agree that there may be situations in which the hazardous state of chemical weapons and sites discovered would mean that the weapons found cannot be reliably secured for storage or safely and securely transported to a centralised location for destruction. In those exceptional situations—set out in the Secretariat’s Note (S/2428/2025, dated 24 July 2025) and the Concept Plan presented by Qatar on behalf of Syria on 29 July 2025—an alternative solution in addition to regular destruction must be found. Rapid on-site destruction will be the only viable solution. The decision of the Executive Council on expedited on-site destruction (EC-110/DEC.1, dated 8 October 2025) authorises such a measure. During this process, the Secretariat is required to ensure that the methods to be used meet the following criteria, namely that (a) the irreversible destruction must be verified by the Secretariat; (b) the safety of the people must be a high priority; (c) the protection of the environment must be ensured; and (d) any evidence related to chemical weapons use must be preserved.
9. In its Note of 24 July 2025, the Secretariat offered advice on chemical weapons destruction technologies and provided an outline plan for their selection, including for expedited on-site destruction. In August 2025, the Secretariat also provided a model facility agreement for destruction and a template for agreed detailed plans for verification. Also in August, the Secretariat prepared a Draft Field Deployment Protocol and shared it with the Syrian authorities for comments. The Secretariat is still awaiting a response from the Syrian authorities. Accordingly, we have provided all the necessary information and support for the destruction, and we are ready to proceed.
10. Nonetheless, the task ahead is considerable. The process of identification, destruction, and verification will take time. It also requires adequate and relevant resources on the part of Syria, as well as the Secretariat. The Secretariat provided estimates of these costs in its Note dated 29 April 2025 (S/2397/2025) and in its call for voluntary contributions dated 5 June 2025 (S/2413/2025). As the Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic confirmed to the Executive Council on 5 March, Syria does not possess the necessary means and resources to implement its obligations (L/ODG-769/25). In the same vein, I reminded all Executive Council members of this in my letter of 6 November 2025. I strongly invite States Parties that wish to support these activities to do so. I wish to emphasise that these tasks are at the core of the Convention, as they concern the destruction of chemical weapons and the risk of proliferation.
11. In the meantime, throughout 2025, the Secretariat continued to implement its existing mandates relating to the Syrian chemical weapons dossier. We conducted two deployments to the Syrian Arab Republic in March and April 2025 under the mandate of the Declaration Assessment Team. On 1 June 2025, I established the Office of Special Missions (OSM), which now integrates, inter alia, the mandates of verifying the accuracy and completeness of Syria’s declaration; establishing the facts surrounding allegations of use; investigating and identifying perpetrators when use has been established; as well as any other activities in the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, the OSM is responsible for coordinating responses to requests for assistance from States Parties in case of allegations of chemical weapons use and risk of use.
12. The OSM conducted further deployments in June, August, and September 2025. It engaged with the Syrian authorities and continued with operational planning and technical support. We had also scheduled a deployment in July 2025, but it was postponed as a result of the air strikes carried out by a neighbouring country on 16 July 2025. This

was the subject of discussion during the special meeting of the Executive Council, held on 22 July 2025. On 23 October 2025, the Secretariat established its new office in Syria and initiated a continuous, rotational presence there. We are now studying the possibilities for improving in the future the location of these offices. During the above-mentioned deployments, the Secretariat experts advanced on key objectives, including: (a) visits to 19 sites—4 previously declared sites and 15 locations suspected to have been involved in chemical weapons activities; (b) the collection of six samples from three of these locations; (c) the conduct of meetings with Syrian authorities; and (d) interviews with Syrian experts previously involved in the chemical weapons programme. The information received through these activities and the analysis of documents gathered during the site visits confirm the Secretariat's earlier assessments. Namely, that the Syrian initial declaration was inaccurate and incomplete and that many important elements of the former chemical weapons programme were deliberately not declared. So far, the Secretariat has gathered sufficient information to consider that at least two additional locations, as well as activities conducted at these locations, have not been declared as required by the Convention.

13. During meetings held in Damascus in October and November 2025, the Syrian authorities and the Secretariat considered visits to five suspected chemical weapons locations of high priority, located in the northwest area of the country (Latakia, Tartus, etc.). In these places, we expect to find relevant elements related to the undeclared parts of the secret chemical weapons programme. The Syrian authorities conducted reconnaissance visits to two of these locations, and on 11 November shared their report of these two visits. These reports are being analysed by our team on the ground. The Secretariat will coordinate possible visits to these locations with the Syrian authorities. In any case, the Syrian authorities currently do not have the technical, financial, or practical means to support deployments to the Latakia region or to ensure security for the Secretariat's teams. I recall that this is their responsibility under the Convention. Such security includes demining areas if necessary, securing the roads and locations to be visited, as well as having medical evacuation plans in place. The Syrian authorities have begun working on these requirements, together with supporting States Parties. They have informed us that they will likely need several months to be ready. This is understandable, in view of the unstable situation in the country. As you know, the region of Latakia is home to frequent incidents, including with fatalities, and the Syrian authorities do not have full control of the area, a former stronghold of Assad's Alawite supporters. In the interim, we have decided to conduct further visits to 17 locations of interest in the Damascus area, which are less complex to secure. The Secretariat prepared a needs assessment that I shared by letter to the members of the Executive Council on 6 November 2025. The purpose of this assessment is to guide the States Parties in supporting the task in the Syrian Arab Republic. The needs assessment is a non-exhaustive list of gaps between what the Syrian Arab Republic must provide and the capacity it has at its disposal. It focuses on: (a) means required for safe access to locations, the protection of teams, or to support verifiable inventory, storage, and transport, and to carry out the destruction of chemical materials; (b) relevant expertise required to ensure the safety, legality, and credibility of activities to be carried out; (c) training of personnel with expertise to minimise the risk of incidents and chain-of-custody breaks, and to reduce the risk of jeopardising verification activities; and (d) operational requirements for deployments to suspected chemical weapons sites, and for regular as well as expedited on-site destruction.

14. Under its mandate to establish the facts surrounding allegations of use of chemical weapons, the Office of Special Missions continues to gather information and analyse data related to five groups of allegations, encompassing more than 16 reported incidents. Since the Conference met last year, the Secretariat has conducted seven deployments. These visits enabled the Secretariat to maintain engagement with the new Syrian authorities, relevant stakeholders in the Syrian Arab Republic and with other States Parties. During these missions, the teams interviewed witnesses and received samples, facilitated through coordination with the Syrian authorities. The Secretariat is analysing the information and materials obtained and will issue a report on the allegations currently under investigation in due course.
15. The Secretariat has also continued its investigations to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. A member of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) joined my visit to Damascus on 8 February 2025, as part of the delegation of the Secretariat. This was the first time that the IIT had been granted access to the Syrian Arab Republic since that team was established in 2018. In June 2025, the Chief Coordinator of the IIT travelled to the Syrian Arab Republic as part of a deployment coordinated by the OSM, and held meetings with relevant Syrian authorities. Discussions centred on the support of Syrian authorities for ongoing and future investigations and identification-related activities in the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, the IIT is completing its transfer of knowledge and skills to relevant units of the Secretariat.
16. I wish to highlight that engagement with the new Syrian authorities has enabled progress on several key issues that will facilitate our work. In particular, I noted the conclusion in June 2025 of a new agreement with Syria on the privileges and immunities of the OPCW and its personnel when deployed in the Syrian Arab Republic and conducting activities related to the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Moreover, in response to my letter of 23 October, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Syria informed me on 26 October of the re-establishment of the Syrian National Authority. I welcome this important development as, under the Convention, the National Authority is the sole official institution entitled to share information with the Secretariat. This is particularly important in relation to the declaration of chemical weapons-related items, and for the verifiable destruction of such items. Last week, I received Ambassador Mohamad Katoub, who presented his credentials accrediting him as the new Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW. The Secretariat looks forward to working with you, Ambassador, as we advance this file. I wish to express appreciation to Qatar for its role in representing the interests of Syria before the OPCW since January, in particular for the important work done towards the adoption of the decision on expedited on-site destruction that I mentioned earlier (EC-110/DEC.1).
17. I also wish to recall the decision adopted by the Conference in April 2021 entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC.9, dated 21 April 2021) suspending certain rights and privileges of Syria. The Conference decided that these rights will be reinstated once I have reported that the Syrian Arab Republic has completed the requested measures adopted in the Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2 (dated 9 July 2020). The decision was based exclusively on the repeated failure of the Assad regime to implement specific obligations under the Convention. These obligations remain binding for the new government. And to date, the measures required for the reinstatement of Syria’s rights and privileges are yet to be completed. Nonetheless, this matter is under the purview of this Conference, which can decide on the appropriate way to continue addressing this situation.

18. Regarding Ukraine, I briefed the Conference last year on the report of the first technical assistance visit (TAV) conducted by the Secretariat to Ukraine, issued in November 2024. Since then, the Secretariat has issued two more TAV reports, in February and in June this year. The three reports reached similar conclusions: in all three instances, two OPCW designated laboratories that I selected confirmed, separately and independently from one another, the presence of a riot control agent, 2-chlorobenzalmalononitrile—known as CS—in grenade and soil samples provided by Ukraine. The samples were collected by Ukrainian investigators from locations along the confrontation lines with opposing troops. The TAV teams affirmed, using the latest technological tools, that the chain of custody of the samples collected by Ukraine had been maintained.
19. The use of riot control agents (RCAs) as a method of warfare is prohibited under paragraph 5 of Article I of the Convention. Article II of the Convention defines RCAs. Article III requires States Parties to declare possession of any chemical it holds for law enforcement purposes. In 2014, the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) reviewed an initial list of RCAs that had been declared by States Parties (S/1177/2014, dated 1 May 2014). Of the 59 chemicals considered, the SAB determined that 17 of them—including CS—met the definition of an RCA under paragraph 7 of Article II of the Convention.
20. Many of the notes verbales received from Russia and Ukraine concern allegations of use of riot control agents on the battlefield. A State Party possessing riot control agents has no obligation to accept regular inspections from the Secretariat to verify declaration of RCA holdings. Therefore, it is not possible for the Secretariat to verify that these chemicals are used exclusively as riot control agents, as authorised under the Convention. Additionally, progress in science and technology now allows for the development and production of toxic chemicals that are used without any verification by the Secretariat for different reasons. This entails a new factor of risk, and I strongly invite States Parties to further address this matter as a priority.
21. I note that Ukraine requested the TAVs (under subparagraph 38(e) of Article VIII of the Convention), to help identify the chemicals found on the battlefield, not to establish the facts surrounding the allegations of use, nor to support any domestic investigation to identify the perpetrators of such use. The latter activities are investigations of a different nature and are to be conducted under a different legal framework.
22. Ukraine and the Secretariat have been discussing how to further support Ukrainian authorities within the framework of the Convention and the relevant decisions of the policy-making organs. I underline that the mandate of the Secretariat, if seized under paragraph 20 of Conference decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018) on “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use”, is to provide, upon request, expertise to any national investigation for identification of perpetrators of use of chemical weapons on the territory of the requesting State Party.
23. Alongside the TAVs, the Secretariat has continued to deliver support to Ukraine, upon its request, in the field of assistance and protection, under Article X of the Convention. Since 2023, 157 Ukrainian experts have benefited from the OPCW online specialised courses on emergency response to incidents involving toxic chemicals. Another 120 Ukrainian experts attended the in-person specialised courses on sampling for investigations of chemical weapons use, delivered at the OPCW Centre for Chemistry

and Technology (the ChemTech Centre). The Secretariat has also continued to provide advice to Ukraine, upon its request, on detection and identification equipment, and training on how to use such equipment. In addition, we have provided 90 units of the most advanced chemical detection and identification equipment. This support was made possible through voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund on Assistance and Protection for Ukraine under Article X. Of the EUR 6.5 million received in the Trust Fund, an amount of EUR 3.1 million has been spent, with a remaining balance of EUR 3.4 million.

24. On 7 July 2025, the Russian Federation seized the Secretariat with a request for technical assistance related to reported intent of chemical weapons use in Ukraine, to which the Secretariat responded on the same day. The Secretariat convened a meeting on 18 July, during which the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation provided further information related to this request. During that meeting, according to standard procedure, the Secretariat presented a series of questions to better understand and define possible parameters for responding to such a request. These questions were sent in writing to the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW, by note verbale, on 21 July. The Russian Federation responded to the Secretariat's questions on 17 September. On 20 October, the Secretariat sent follow-up questions and proposed amendments to the agreement prepared and shared by the Russian Federation on dedicated privileges and immunities. Such an agreement needs to be signed between the two parties for any such technical assistance to take place in the requesting State Party. It provides the Technical Secretariat with necessary guarantees for the independence of the Secretariat's work and protects team members while deploying in-country and afterwards. On 5 November, the Secretariat held another meeting with the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to continue to discuss technical and legal issues, and the possible way forward. The Secretariat will continue to engage with the Russian delegation to seek further clarifications on all pending issues. We will keep the States Parties apprised of developments, if any.
25. In relation to Gaza, we have engaged with the Permanent Representation of the State of Palestine in The Hague, upon the request for assistance that they presented, consisting of providing training to strengthen its capacity in responding to incidents involving toxic chemicals. The State of Palestine has since participated in two of our training activities—the first time for both events, namely: (a) the 26th edition of the Associate Programme, which equips participants with knowledge of key elements regarding the implementation of the Convention and OPCW activities, which took place from 28 July to 25 September; and (b) the course on enhancement of laboratory skills in liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry, held at the Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (VERIFIN), from 15 to 26 September 2025.
26. We are also closely following the situation in Sudan, where the civil war is very concerning. Serious crimes are being reported, with different factions committing acts of violence against populations. Ahead of the 109th Session of the Executive Council in July, Benin, Chad, and Mauritania, supported by Guinea-Bissau, seized the Council under Article IX of the Convention, requesting clarifications from Sudan on allegations of chemical weapons use. Following Sudan's responses, the parties have engaged in a dialogue under the direct purview of the Executive Council, in accordance with Article IX of the Convention. All correspondence on this matter has been shared with

States Parties via Catalyst. Based on our experience, when heinous acts are perpetrated and human rights are violated, they frequently include use and allegations of use of chemical weapons. The Secretariat therefore continues to monitor the allegations of use of chemical weapons in Sudan, mainly through its Situation Centre. To date, the Secretariat has not received any sufficiently substantiated request for any additional activity. As you know, the Secretariat has no authority to seize itself of any matter. Accordingly, the matter remains in the hands of the States Parties, under the purview of the Council.

27. The use of chemical weapons, and the rising number of allegations globally, demonstrates that the Organisation's mission is far from accomplished. Moreover, the fact that we still have four countries outside the Convention remains another risk factor. In this respect, I note that I sent a personal official invitation to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of South Sudan to attend the Conference, but unfortunately, he has not been able to travel to The Hague. I call on all States not Party to join the Convention without delay, and I hope that soon we will have a positive reaction.
28. The Secretariat has also been paying special attention to the misuse of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI). Emerging technologies are now a standing item on the agenda of the regular sessions of both the Conference and the Executive Council. I have regularly briefed the States Parties on the Secretariat's activities in this field. We need to ensure that the continued rapid developments in science and technology, including AI, are harnessed for the benefit, rather than to the detriment, of the implementation of the Convention. Building on the initiatives we implemented in 2024, last December I established a temporary working group (TWG) on AI under the SAB. The TWG has already produced two reports. It has heard from numerous experts on the applications of AI in the chemical sciences, large language models, robotics, data management, and extended reality platforms. The Group has been considering the risks and opportunities associated with AI-assisted tools across the activities of the Organisation. The first two reports of the working group on AI have been made available to all States Parties. The TWG on Chemical Forensics has issued two reports as a result of its work in 2025. Both TWGs will complete their mandates by the end of 2025, with their final reports to be issued in early 2026. 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. The workshop raised awareness of the transformative impact of AI on the chemical industry processes, as well as on chemical safety and security. The Secretariat is also turning its attention to uncrewed aerial vehicles, such as drones. Drones equipped with chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive payloads are of growing international concern. On the other hand, drone technology has the potential to augment the Organisation's verification capabilities, by enabling sensor integration, data fusion, real-time detection, sampling, and more effective remote monitoring.
29. On 1 October, the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism discussed the threat posed by the intersection of drones, toxic chemicals, and non-State actors. We will continue to assess the implications of this technology for the implementation of the Convention.

30. Reflecting further on the progress we have made, the ChemTech Centre is now in its third year of operation. The Centre has placed the Organisation in a strong position to keep pace with technological developments and to benefit from them.
31. Looking ahead, I recall the Conference decision on aerosolised use of central nervous system-acting chemicals (CNS-acting chemicals) (C-26/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2021). A well-known and highly potent CNS-acting chemical is the synthetic opioid fentanyl. The SAB worked to review and identify RCAs and determined that CNS-acting chemicals do not meet the definition of riot control agents. This is due to their distinct mode of action and to the fact that their effects are not usually limited to sensory irritation of a temporary nature, but on the contrary, they can cause serious lasting harm. Reflecting this, the Conference decision in 2021 considered that the aerosolised use of CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes cannot be understood as consistent with the Convention. Furthermore, I note that, thanks to the new technologies, fentanyl and other dangerous synthetic opioids can be produced in a faster, easier, and cheaper way. This growing ease of production poses a threat to the verification regime. Since this year, the Executive Council has an item dedicated to emerging technologies on the agenda of each of its sessions. I can only encourage all of you to make full use of this opportunity to address these matters further, to prepare any decisions deemed appropriate when needed.
32. Over the past few years, the Secretariat has been delivering on the non-routine activities I have mentioned and on new initiatives, simultaneously with its existing tasks in chemical demilitarisation, prevention, and non-proliferation.
33. The OPCW's verification regime is at the core of these efforts. This year, the Secretariat conducted four review visits to the Blue Grass chemical weapons destruction facility, and its non-contiguous facilities, in the United States of America, to verify the disposal of chemical weapons component wastes. The fourth and final visit took place last October. The facility has now completed the disposal of chemical weapons component wastes, marking the successful conclusion of an additional process related to the destruction of stockpiled chemical weapons.
34. In relation to abandoned chemical weapons (ACW), 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 17 October 2025, a total of 170,762 items had been recovered, of which 133,659 items had been verified by the Secretariat as destroyed. Since the last session of the Conference, 14 inspections have been conducted at ACW sites in China. I commend the continued commitment demonstrated by China and Japan in fulfilling their ongoing obligations under the Convention. It is important to note that the complete destruction of chemical weapons worldwide can solely be achieved once the task of destroying all the chemical weapons abandoned in China is completed.
35. States Parties may recall the adoption by the Executive Council, at its 107th Session in October 2024, of an agreed detailed plan for verification and facility arrangement between the OPCW and Germany for the destruction of items declared as ACW. These items were destroyed at the GEKA facility in Munster, Germany, in February this year, under the verification of the Secretariat. In this regard, two inspections were conducted in Germany since the last session of the Conference. On 13 and 14 March 2025, at the invitation of the Ambassador Permanent Representative of Germany, together with the

Chairperson and members of the Executive Council representing all regional groups, I visited the GEKA Destruction Facility and Dethlinger Pond site in Munster. We were received by Ms Susanne Riegraf, Deputy Federal Commissioner for Arms Control, with whom I had a bilateral meeting to discuss challenges in disarmament and non-proliferation. GEKA has contributed to international chemical demilitarisation efforts, including the past destruction of declared Syrian and Libyan chemical weapons stockpiles. As we progress on the outstanding tasks in the Syrian Arab Republic, we will, once again, look to Germany and other States Parties that have gained expertise over the years on this matter for support and technical expertise. Such expertise will also be needed more broadly, should another possessor State join the OPCW.

36. Turning now to old chemical weapons, since the last session of the Conference, inspections have been conducted at sites in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.
37. I wish to inform you of the results of the first trial OPCW Biotoxins Proficiency Test, conducted by the Secretariat from August 2024 to March 2025. I am pleased to note that 28 laboratories from 21 States Parties participated in this test, and that 23 of them achieved the maximum score. The second trial OPCW Biotoxins Proficiency Test is under way, with 31 participating laboratories from 23 States Parties. The Secretariat is also exploring the introduction of an official OPCW proficiency test for the analysis of scheduled biotoxins.
38. When it comes to industry inspections, to date, the Secretariat remains on track to complete the 200 inspections planned for 2025 by the end of the year. All six sampling and analysis missions planned for 2025 have been completed. Concerning training activities for inspectors, we have continued to focus on skills and competencies that enhance their preparedness to support contingency activities. The ChemTech Centre enables many of these activities. For instance, the preparatory phases of the “Precise Response” exercise, sponsored by Canada, and the “Toxic Valley” exercise, hosted by Slovakia, about reconnaissance and on-site sampling and analysis of toxic agents in simulated chemical incidents, took place at the ChemTech Centre. The Secretariat continues to explore the use of emerging technologies, such as virtual reality (VR), 3D printing, and AI in its processes and training programmes. A demonstration of various VR technologies was conducted at the ChemTech Centre in July 2025, and we are exploring opportunities for further collaboration with several States Parties. Since the last session of the Conference, the Secretariat delivered, coordinated, or participated in a total of 76 training courses, amounting to 2,881 training days. Of these, 840 training days were conducted at the ChemTech Centre.
39. As is the case with any international treaty, the full domestic implementation of the Convention by every State Party is an essential safeguard against the risks and threats we face. For this reason, the Secretariat has continued to expand its activities to strengthen the capacity of the States Parties to meet their obligations. Since we last met, the Secretariat has delivered a total of 106 capacity-building events benefiting 2,591 participants from all geographical regions. Twenty of these have used the capabilities of the ChemTech Centre. Since the previous session of the Conference, three Member States—namely the Marshall Islands, the Philippines, and Samoa—have adopted comprehensive national legislation, a requirement under Article VII of the

Convention. In effect, the number of States Parties with such legislation has now increased from 128 to 131 since the last Conference. Yet, 62 States Parties still have either no implementing legislation or only partial measures in place. The Secretariat will continue to support these States Parties to meet their obligations. When it comes to international cooperation, we have initiated the development of AI-related activities as part of future capacity-building offerings to States Parties. This builds on the success of the October 2024 AI Conference in Morocco, and the workshop on AI and chemical safety and security management in Shanghai in June of this year.

40. The demand from States Parties for the Secretariat's support is increasing. It is the responsibility of all of you to ensure that the Secretariat has adequate financial, human, and logistical resources to deliver to the highest professional standards. You have before you, for the consideration of the Conference, the Draft Programme and Budget of the Organisation for 2026–2027, as recommended by consensus by the Executive Council at its 110th Session. This budget reflects strong fiscal constraints in the context of the extraordinary resource requirements to complete the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme. I note that the Council has recommended that most of the estimated costs of the OPCW activities in Syria not be covered by the regular budget. Thus, substantial additional voluntary contributions from States Parties are required to ensure that we can conduct the activities in the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, the ability of the Organisation to benefit from and respond to the risks associated with the use of emerging technologies will depend on it being equipped with relevant resources. This budget, therefore, contains proposals for two new staff posts, one with responsibilities for AI and data science, alongside knowledge management, and the other devoted to biochemistry expertise. As far as chemical industry inspections are concerned, as you know we were required to reduce their number during the COVID-19 years. Since that time, the Secretariat has been incrementally returning to the annual target of 241 Article VI inspections per year. We will start with 210 missions in 2026 and increase to 241 missions in 2027, as decided by the Conference in 2014. I take this opportunity to remind you all that the annual assessed contributions of States Parties are due at the very beginning of the year. Most States Parties do not make their payments in a timely manner, and this has implications for the Secretariat's ability to function. This year, this delay in payment, including from major contributing States Parties, compelled the Secretariat to use entirely the reserved money in the Working Capital Fund in October. Under the best of circumstances, the Working Capital Fund is only sufficient to fund OPCW activities for approximately five weeks. Payments eventually made at the end of October allowed the Secretariat to function until the end of the year.
41. This year has also been intense in respect of engagement with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, in its capacity as the Organisation's Host Nation. The relations between the OPCW and the Host Country are enshrined in an international treaty, the Headquarters Agreement. This treaty defines the rights and obligations as well as the working relations between the OPCW and the Netherlands. Last year, the Secretariat and the Protocol Department of the Dutch Foreign Affairs Ministry set up a structured dialogue to resolve these issues. I am happy to announce that progress has been made on most of the issues that have been identified. At the same time, work needs to continue to ensure that the rights of the OPCW, your rights, are fully implemented and respected under the Headquarters Agreement. In addition, on 5 November, I received a visit from the Ambassador of the Netherlands for International Organisations. The Ambassador

handed over to me a letter providing information about projects currently being studied by the municipality of The Hague to reorganise what is called the “International Zone”, in which both the Headquarters of the OPCW and the World Forum are located. The letter mentioned that a report on the Programmatic Exploratory Study on Spatial Planning of the International Zone would be made public the next day by the Municipality. The very same day, I responded to the Ambassador by letter, thanking him for the information shared. In this letter, I underlined the need to inform in detail the 193 States Parties of the Organisation about any decision of the municipality that would affect the OPCW Headquarters, as the States Parties have to agree. The proposed plan of the municipality is a long-term initiative that may include relocation of the OPCW Headquarters main building, hence the importance of this matter. In any case, if one day there is a proposal to relocate, the States Parties have to agree on the location, the size, and the design of the building.

42. Another item before this Conference is the appointment of the next Director-General of the OPCW. Based on the recommendation of the Council at its 110th Session (EC-110/DEC.4, dated 10 October 2025), the Conference will be requested to appoint Ambassador Sabrina Dallafior Matter of Switzerland. I commend the exemplary way the process was undertaken by the members of the Executive Council, under the competent stewardship of the Chairperson, Ambassador Thomas Schieb of Germany. This process was very thorough, and Executive Council members could assess all candidates and select the best.
43. As of 1 January 2025, the OPCW became a member of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, the UNJSPF. This was possible after long and positive negotiations with the United Nations, the approval of the Conference last year at its Twenty-Ninth Session, and the approval of the United Nations General Assembly at its 79th Session. This transition to a more stable social security system has been successfully completed. Accordingly, the OPCW Staff Pension Committee has now been established, on which the members and alternate members will serve for a period of two years. I thank the Permanent Representations of Algeria and Chile for agreeing to provide delegates to serve as members of the Committee to ensure that it can fulfil its statutory role.
44. In closing, later this morning, we will announce this year’s winners of the OPCW–The Hague Award, presented by the Organisation and the Municipality of The Hague. I invite all delegates to attend this important ceremony, which will take place at 12:20 here, in the King Willem-Alexander Theater.
45. On Wednesday at 9:45 a.m., we will observe the traditional annual Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare. This special observance is an important reminder of the essence of the OPCW’s work in the service of humanity, particularly in the current difficult international circumstances in which we live. The victims and their families will never be forgotten. Their ordeal serves as a reminder of the work that still needs to be done to protect present and future generations. I wish you fruitful deliberations.