



OPCW

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**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
TO THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES
AT ITS TWENTY-SECOND SESSION**

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. I welcome all delegations to the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties.
2. At the outset, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of Morocco on his election as the Chairperson of the Conference. His diplomatic skills and knowledge of the OPCW will serve him well in leading this session to a successful outcome. I should take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to our outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Christoph Israng of Germany, who has carried out his responsibilities with distinction.
3. I would also like to acknowledge Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal of Bangladesh for his able guidance of the Executive Council as its Chairperson. Likewise, I express my appreciation to his predecessor, Ambassador Odette Melono of Cameroon.
4. I am pleased to welcome Mr Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations; Mr Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO); and Mr Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary General of the World Customs Organization (WCO). We look forward to their messages to the Conference on behalf of their respective organisations.
5. The year 2017 has been a landmark one for the OPCW and has given us the opportunity to celebrate and reflect on our achievements of the past two decades.
6. On 26 April, a commemorative ceremony to observe the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the founding of the OPCW was held in The Hague, with attendance by His Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands, other dignitaries, and Permanent Representatives, as well as other delegates of the OPCW Member States.



7. Along with this ceremony, the twentieth anniversary has been marked in all regions of the world through nearly 40 events organised by States Parties and the Secretariat. I thank all those who organised and participated in these events, which have successfully raised awareness about the work of the OPCW and the goals of the Convention.
8. Another milestone in the implementation of the Convention was the completion of the chemical demilitarisation process by the Russian Federation. On 27 September 2017, the Russian Federation announced the complete destruction of its entire stockpile of Category 1 chemical weapons, which amounted to 39,967 metric tonnes (MT).
9. As at 31 October 2017, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the United States of America of 91% of its Category 1 chemical weapons. Construction of the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP) is nearly finished and the facility will commence work in 2020.
10. With regard to overall progress on destruction, to date the Secretariat has verified the elimination of 67,851 MT of Category 1 chemical weapons, which equates to over 96% of the total 70,494 MT declared by the possessor States Parties.
11. Moving our attention to the Syrian Arab Republic, in 2017 the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) continued to study all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons on the territory of that State Party. The FFM issued three reports determining the use of chemicals as weapons in Um-Housh, Khan Shaykhun, and Ltamenah. A summarised update of the allegations that the FFM is currently working on was submitted to States Parties on 14 November 2017 (S/1556/2017).
12. It is very disturbing that yet again we are confronted with the use of chemical weapons. I believe that it is vital, and in the interests of all States Parties to the Convention, that the long standing international norm against chemical weapons remains strong and the perpetrators are held accountable.
13. In 2017, the Secretariat continued working with the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure that all declaration-related requirements have been met in accordance with the Convention and the decisions adopted by the Executive Council. In September, I had high-level consultations with the Syrian authorities at the OPCW Headquarters to resolve the outstanding issues related to Syria's declaration and related submissions. The results of these consultations are reflected in my report and the report of the Declaration Assessment Team, both of which were submitted to the Executive Council in October.
14. In addition to these activities, this year the Secretariat undertook two rounds of inspections at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in the Syrian Arab Republic in pursuance of Executive Council decision EC-83/DEC.5 (dated 11 November 2016). The first took place from February to March, while the second concluded on 22 November. A report on the second round of inspections will be submitted in due course.
15. The Secretariat provided technical logistical support to the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) as required. In October, the JIM issued its

seventh report providing assessments and findings in relation to the use of sulfur mustard in Um-Housh on 15 and 16 September 2016 and the use of sarin in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017. The report was circulated to the States Parties.

16. Turning now to Libya, I am pleased to report that the elimination of its declared stockpiles of Category 2 chemical weapons has been completed at GEKA mbH in Munster, Germany. The Secretariat is presently considering options for a visit to Libya to undertake some verification activities.
17. Regarding Iraq, we have been informed that the encapsulation of the two chemical weapons bunkers has now been completed. The Secretariat will analyse the verification documentation submitted by the Iraqi authorities and report later to the States Parties.
18. China and Japan continue to work together on recovery and destruction operations of abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) at sites across China, particularly Haerbaling. Since the last session of the Conference, the Secretariat has conducted 12 inspections of ACW operations on the territory of China.
19. Six inspections of old chemical weapons (OCWs) were conducted in six States Parties, namely Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Panama, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. While the destruction operations have made considerable progress, recoveries of significant quantities of OCWs continue.
20. In 2017, 241 Article VI inspections in 41 States Parties are being carried out by the Secretariat as scheduled.
21. Progress continues to be made in the utilisation of the Secure Information Exchange (SIX) system for the prompt transmission of information, especially if classified. As at today's date, 44 States Parties had registered and are actively using it. I wish to encourage more States Parties to join the system.
22. Over the course of 2017, the Secretariat has continued to work with States Parties to strengthen their capacity to implement the Convention. Within the framework of international cooperation and assistance, the Secretariat used regular budget funding and voluntary contributions to deliver over 125 training courses, workshops, seminars, and capacity-building programmes to more than 1,800 participants from all regional groups. I would like to express my gratitude to the States Parties and to the European Union, which have provided ongoing support to these efforts through voluntary contributions.
23. The OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Africa Programme) was renewed for the period covering 2017 to 2019.
24. As an initiative of the Secretariat under Article X, the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM) has been put in place to assist States Parties, upon their request, in case of a chemical attack by terrorists. In July 2017, the Secretariat conducted the first RRAM field deployment exercise, which took place in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A further one will be held in mid-December in Romania.

25. The Fourth Review Conference will provide the States Parties with the opportunity to consider future priorities in order to maintain the relevance of the OPCW. The activities of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW (OEWG-FP) and the new working group to be established by this Conference will contribute to a successful outcome of the Review Conference.
26. The OPCW continues to provide a platform to address measures related to the prevention of chemical terrorism through the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) and its Sub-Working Group (SWG) on Non-State Actors. The OEWG-T and its SWG offer an opportunity for States Parties to interact with international experts and exchange views on challenges posed by terrorism to the implementation of the Convention. I look forward to the continued engagement and support of States Parties on this topic, and I encourage them to share their best practices with others.
27. In this regard, the adoption of the decision entitled “Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors” by the Executive Council at its Eighty-Sixth Session in October underscores the willingness of the States Parties to implement the Convention while taking into account the new security environment.
28. This year, the OPCW co-chaired, together with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), yet another edition of the Working Group on Preventing and Responding to WMD¹ terrorist attacks in the framework of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (UNCTITF). A table-top exercise for enhancing inter-agency interoperability and communications in the event of a chemical or biological attack was held in early 2017 at the OPCW Headquarters.
29. Strengthening global chemical security to ensure that toxic chemicals do not fall into the wrong hands is one important way the Organisation and its Member States can counter chemical terrorism. In September, the OPCW convened an experts’ workshop on chemical security to better coordinate international efforts in this critical area. The recommendations from the workshop have been published.
30. In another development, I welcome the issuance on 14 November of a joint statement by the East Asia Summit (EAS) recognising the OPCW’s efforts in the implementation of the Convention and acknowledging the importance, among other things, of meeting the ongoing challenges posed by chemical weapons.
31. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) held its Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth Sessions in March and October, as well as two European Union-funded international workshops in July and October. The five reports produced by the SAB between March and October are available on the OPCW website.
32. The SAB is now drafting its report on developments in science and technology for the Fourth Review Conference, and intends to finalise it at its Twenty-Seventh Session in March 2018. I look forward to an innovative, future-oriented, and engaging report.

¹ WMD = weapon(s) of mass destruction.

33. The network of designated laboratories has been an important component of the Convention regime and it is in the interest of States Parties to maintain and strengthen it. I encourage States Parties to further develop their laboratory capabilities by taking advantage of the training possibilities offered by the OPCW and its partner laboratories. I also encourage States Parties, particularly in Latin America and Africa, to apply in order to become part of this network of laboratories.
34. Furthermore, upgrading the OPCW Laboratory is important for keeping pace with the advances in science and technology. The Secretariat issued a concept paper in July, informing the States Parties of the details of the proposed project to upgrade the Laboratory. A needs statement for this project that contains more detailed information is being finalised by a consultancy company and will be circulated very soon. Its outline will be presented to States Parties during a side event today. Support of States Parties for this project will be crucial. The Secretariat is in the process of creating a trust fund for this purpose, which will be announced through a Note.
35. The chemical industry remains an essential partner for the OPCW. In October, I attended a meeting of the Board of Directors of the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) in Vienna, where I presented my views on industry cooperation. I welcome the fact that a representative of the ICCA is attending this session of the Conference and will speak later on.
36. On 24 September, the OPCW once again participated in the annual International Open Day programme organised by the City of The Hague. We welcomed 900 visitors, a 50% increase compared to last year. Our associated social media campaign also reached a greater number of people globally.
37. The Third Review Conference recommended improving interactions with civil society organisations supporting the Convention. Sixty-six NGOs and over 170 individuals were invited to participate in this Twenty-Second Session, which will include a special plenary sitting for NGOs to address delegates, as well as a number of NGO side events and exhibits.
38. The Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO) is preparing a report on education and outreach theory and practice of relevance to the OPCW and how this could inform all our future education and outreach activities. We anticipate that the report will be submitted before the end of the year.
39. On 16 November the Secretariat hosted a legal conference entitled “The Chemical Weapons Convention in 2017: What are the Boundaries to Its Future Evolution?”. Over 100 academics, legal practitioners, and representatives of States Parties attended this event, which focused on the evolution of the Convention over the last twenty years.
40. Moving on to matters of administration and finance, the 2018 Draft Programme and Budget (C-22/DEC/CRP.7, dated 31 October 2017) has been formulated on a zero nominal growth basis and amounts to EUR 67,248,655. This represents a 0.8% (or EUR 549,545) reduction against the 2017 Programme and Budget. In addition, the number of fixed-term staff positions will decrease from 459 to 456.

41. In view of the Organisation's present cash situation, States Parties are encouraged to pay their assessed contributions on time and in full, in line with the requirements of the Convention and the Financial Regulations and Rules of the Organisation.
42. On the subject of knowledge management, a cross-divisional team undertook a new project in 2017. This project is now complete and has formulated a comprehensive road map to implement knowledge management within the Secretariat through a coherent and effective set of actions that meets our objectives within the knowledge management strategic framework.
43. The Secretariat has made progress in the development of the enterprise resource planning (ERP) project. We expect that the ERP system will be implemented before the end of next year.
44. At the end of today, we look forward to presenting this year's OPCW-The Hague Award. Please join us in honouring this year's recipients.
45. On Thursday, 30 November, we will be holding the annual Day of Remembrance for victims of chemical warfare, which will be commemorated in the Ieper Room followed by a wreath-laying ceremony at the memorial site.
46. As part of its agenda for this session, the Conference will appoint my successor as the Director-General of the OPCW, to begin his term next July. In a spirit of consensus that has remained the hallmark of our Organisation, the Executive Council has endorsed the candidature of Ambassador Fernando Arias of Spain to lead the Organisation as of 25 July 2018.
47. I would like to give my praise to all the candidates who participated in the selection procedure and express my sincerest gratitude to Ambassador Belal for shepherding the process.
48. We all anticipate a unanimous decision by the Conference. The appointment of Ambassador Arias will constitute recognition of his outstanding qualities, experience, and his capacity to lead. I warmly congratulate him and I look forward to working with him closely and to ensuring a smooth transition.
49. The full text of my statement, detailing our work over the last year, will be circulated to delegations as an official document of this session.

Chemical demilitarisation and verification

50. As at 31 October 2017, a total of 70,494 MT of Category 1 chemical weapons had been declared by the possessor States Parties. Of this amount, 67,851 MT, or more than 96% of the declared Category 1 chemical weapons, had been destroyed under verification by the Secretariat. The aggregate amount destroyed includes 2.914 MT that have been withdrawn from Category 1 chemical weapons stockpiles pursuant to Article VI of the Convention and subparagraph 2(d) of Part VI of the Verification Annex for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. The destruction of all Category 1 chemical weapons stockpiles declared by A State Party, Albania, India, Libya, the Russian Federation, and the Syrian Arab Republic has been completed.

51. In total, 1,811 MT of Category 2 chemical weapons have been declared by Albania, India, Libya, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the United States of America. The completion of the destruction of Libya's remaining Category 2 chemical weapons on 23 November 2017 has brought the total amount of Category 2 chemical weapons destroyed to 100%.
52. As for Category 3 chemical weapons, A State Party, India, Libya, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the United States of America have previously completed the destruction of these weapons.

Russian Federation

53. The Russian Federation completed the destruction of its chemical weapons this year. From the seven chemical weapons destruction facilities (CWDFs) declared by the Russian Federation, the Kizner CWDF was the only remaining facility in operation. It completed the destruction of all 5.744 MT of its declared chemical agent, or 100%, on 27 September 2017. As at today's date, the Russian Federation has completed the destruction of its entire stockpile of Category 1 chemical weapons, namely 39,967 MT, or 100% of the total amount declared.

United States of America

54. As at 31 October 2017, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the United States of America of 25,154 MT, or 91%, of its declared Category 1 chemical weapons. In accordance with its detailed plan for the destruction of remaining chemical weapons after the extended deadline of 29 April 2012 (EC-68/NAT.2, dated 13 April 2012), the planned completion date is September 2023. The United States of America has destroyed all of its Category 2 and Category 3 chemical weapons.
55. Eleven CWDFs have already completed the destruction of their respective stockpiles. There are two remaining CWDFs: at Pueblo, Colorado and at Blue Grass, Kentucky. These two destruction facilities are augmented by supplemental explosive destruction technologies. The Explosive Destruction System (EDS) at the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP) completed the destruction of its first campaign of problematic and hazardous munitions in February 2016. The EDS will be reactivated in 2019. Construction of the Static Detonation Chamber (SDC) at the BGCAPP is 87% complete, and systemisation now stands at 90%. The SDC will be used to destroy the mustard-filled munitions stocked at the Blue Grass site in Kentucky. The overall schedule for the BGCAPP is under review; it is expected that the planned completion date will not be affected.
56. In May 2017, the United States of America submitted an addendum to the detailed facility information for the PCAPP, providing information on the inclusion of the non-contiguous site, Veolia Treatment, Storage, and Disposal Facility (TSDF) at Port Arthur, Texas, to be employed to supplement the on-site Bio-Treatment System. As at 31 October 2017, a total of 230 MT of chemical agent had been verified as destroyed. In parallel with the destruction operations, which started in September 2016, the PCAPP has reconfigured chemical weapons boxed into palletised configuration. As a result, 72 problematic chemical weapons (rejects) have been identified and over-packed. They will be destroyed, along with three items from Pueblo Chemical Depot, during the second campaign of operations at the PCAPP EDS.

57. Pursuant to the decision of the Conference on the final extended deadline for destruction (C-16/DEC.11, dated 1 December 2011), at the invitation of the United States of America, a delegation of the Executive Council visited the BGCAPP and the SDC in Kentucky from 2 to 6 April 2017.

Libya

58. Libya has destroyed all of its Category 1 and 3 chemical weapons. The Secretariat will travel to GEKA mbH in Munster, Germany, in the first week of December to verify the elimination of Libya's declared stockpiles of Category 2 chemical weapons.
59. The Secretariat continues to work closely with the Libyan National Authority to develop a plan that would allow the Secretariat to send an inspection team to Libya to collect soil samples as requested by the Council at its Eighty-Third Session (paragraph 6.12 of EC-83/5, dated 11 November 2016).
60. On 30 October, a Secretariat team travelled to Tripoli to meet with representatives of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and representatives of the Libyan Government to assess the viability of a mission to Ruwagha. Discussions revealed lack of a support structure to provide adequate security for an OPCW team.
61. The European Union noted the request for funding required for the clean-up of the former chemical storage site in Ruwagha, Libya. This project will address the reaction mass from the recently destroyed container that exhibited an exothermic reaction, the residue inside the decanted tanks, as well as 350 MT of hazardous waste from the neutralisation of the Schedule 1 chemicals. Work is anticipated to begin in early 2018. The funding from the European Union will supplement the remaining funding from Cyprus, Finland, New Zealand, and Spain for completion of this project.

Iraq

62. The Secretariat consults regularly with the United Nations Department of Security and Safety (UNDSS) regarding travel to Iraq. UNDSS advice is that travel to Falluja and Al Muthana, where the remaining four former chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) are located, is now possible. The Secretariat, in liaison with the Iraqi authorities, will organise the physical inspection of these sites.

Old and abandoned chemical weapons

63. China and Japan continue to work together on ACW recovery and destruction operations at Haerbaling. They jointly hosted a visit by a delegation from the Executive Council in June. Tripartite talks continue to be held with the participation of the Secretariat.
64. The destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China continued this year at the Haerbaling Abandoned Chemical Weapons Test Destruction Facility. Between the start of the destruction operations at Haerbaling in December 2014 and 31 August 2017, a total of 9,751 items of ACWs had been destroyed using two destruction technologies: a controlled detonation chamber and an SDC.

65. Since the last session of the Conference, 11 inspections of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China have been conducted in China. This figure includes two inspections of destruction operations at Haerbaling and seven at storage locations in Guangzhou, Taiyuan, Haerbaling, Bei'an, Qiqihaer, Jixi, and Hunchun. In addition, the Technical Secretariat attended two excavation and recovery operations at the recovery sites in Shangzhi and Haerbaling.
66. Six inspections of OCWs were conducted in six States Parties, namely, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Panama, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. While the destruction operations have made considerable progress, recoveries of significant quantities of OCWs continue to be made.

Syrian Arab Republic

67. The Secretariat has verified the destruction of 25 of the 27 CWPFs declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. At the beginning of November 2017, an initial inspection was conducted at the two remaining CWPFs that were previously inaccessible. Destruction activities at the aforementioned facilities are scheduled to be initiated this month. The planned annual routine maintenance of the remote monitoring system, installed at four destroyed underground structures, was carried out by the contracted company in May 2017. As part of the yearly agreed verification activities, Secretariat representatives visited the five destroyed underground structures at the end of September 2017 to verify the integrity of the installed interior plugs. In order to secure the continued support of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) for our work in the Syrian Arab Republic, work is ongoing to extend the contract with UNOPS.

Declaration Assessment Team

68. In 2017, the Secretariat continued working with the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure that all declaration-related requirements established under the Convention and the decision adopted by the Executive Council at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013) have been met.
69. From 16 to 18 September, I convened high-level consultations between the Secretariat and the Syrian authorities at the OPCW Headquarters. My report reflecting the results of this meeting was submitted to the Eighty-Sixth Session of the Council (EC-86/DG.30, dated 4 October 2017), while the technical analysis of all outstanding issues was included in the "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team" (EC-86/HP/DG.2, dated 3 October 2017) and its corrigendum (EC-86/HP/DG.2/Corr.1, dated 5 October 2017).
70. So far, the Syrian Arab Republic has provided additional information on some of the outstanding issues and declared additional laboratories of the SSRC under Article III of the Convention, thus acknowledging and further clarifying the role of the SSRC in the Syrian chemical weapons programme.
71. However, the additional documents that have been supplied so far, including those related to the SSRC, do not fully resolve all identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies, rendering the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration and related submissions inaccurate and incomplete.

72. In my letter to the Syrian Arab Republic dated 26 October 2017, I called on the Syrian authorities to submit a complete and accurate declaration of all relevant parts and activities of the SSRC and to provide information and documents that would clarify all outstanding gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies.

Chemical weapons production facilities

73. The total number of CWPFs has remained at 97 in 14 States Parties. Of those, 68 have been destroyed and 23 have been converted for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. Twelve States Parties have completed the destruction or conversion of all their declared CWPFs. All converted production facilities remain under systematic verification by the OPCW to ensure that they are fully consistent with the approved conversion requests.
74. In 2017, the Technical Secretariat conducted systematic inspections at five converted CWPFs in the Russian Federation following the decision by the Executive Council at its Sixty-Seventh Session (EC-67/DEC.7, dated 16 February 2012) on the nature of continued verification measures at converted CWPFs ten years after certification of their conversion.

Declarations

75. The timeliness of submission of annual declarations on past activities (ADPA) has continued to improve gradually and has remained at a high level over the last four years. For ADPA 2016, 76 States Parties (or 84%) made timely declarations. I encourage all States Parties to meet the deadlines set by the Convention.
76. In relation to annual declaration on anticipated activities (ADAA), submission rates have remained unchanged over the years, with a rate of over 90% annually. For ADAA 2018 for Schedule 1 facilities, the timeliness of submissions showed no change in comparison to last year. Of the 23 States Parties that have declarable facilities, 21 States Parties (or 91%) submitted their ADAA by the deadline of 2 October 2017. Regarding ADAA for Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 declarations, the timely submission remains high. Forty-three States Parties (or 98%) submitted their ADAA for 2018 by the deadline of 1 November 2017, as compared to 42 States Parties (or 96%) for the ADAA for 2017.

Transfer discrepancies related to the import and export of Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 chemicals

77. The Secretariat appreciates States Parties' overall efforts to resolve transfer discrepancies for previous years. The resolution rate for ADPA 2015 improved as a result of States Parties' thorough analysis of declared data. This allowed for identifying causes of certain discrepancies for consideration by the Secretariat. The most common causes are differences in data collection for the declarations of import and export of Schedule 2 and 3 chemicals and different national measures in the implementation of decisions adopted by the Conference of the States Parties. It is encouraging that the resolution rate for 2015 went up to 10% (compared to 5% for 2014 and 2013).

78. I encourage the States Parties to continue working with the Secretariat and among themselves to analyse the current transfer discrepancies, namely, those encountered in ADPA 2016, and to provide the results of the resolution process as soon as practicable.

Survey on the implementation of Schedule 2A/2A* low-concentration guidelines

79. To further analyse the ways to reconcile transfer discrepancies, in July 2017 the Secretariat issued the “Survey on the Implementation of National Measures Regarding the Collection and Declaration of Import and Export Data for Schedule 2 and 3 Chemicals” (S/1511/2017, dated 5 July 2017). As at 6 November 2017, the Secretariat had received 72 responses. Preliminary results were presented at the recent Industry Cluster consultations (held on 9 October 2017) and more detailed findings were shared with States Parties last week, at the Nineteenth Annual Meeting of National Authorities. The Secretariat still welcomes responses from those States Parties that have not yet responded to this survey. I encourage States Parties that are experiencing certain difficulties with regard to both national implementation of Conference decisions and data collection for Article VI declarations to contact the Secretariat for assistance.

Secure Information Exchange

80. The Secretariat continues its efforts to increase and expand the utilisation of the SIX system, taking into consideration the feedback from States Parties. As indicated in the Note by the Secretariat S/1525/2017/Rev.1 (dated 19 September 2017), starting from the 2017 transfer discrepancies round, the SIX system can be used by States Parties for the resolution of such discrepancies using the Secretariat as a communication hub between National Authorities.
81. This year, a presentation on the SIX system was provided to personnel of National Authorities during the training course on fulfilling Article VI obligations for representatives of National Authorities of States Parties, which took place at the OPCW Headquarters in The Hague from 18 to 22 September. Additional presentations were provided during the Annual Meeting of National Authorities last week. I encourage States Parties that have not done so to explore the utilisation of this optional communication mechanism and to approach the Secretariat with any questions they may have.

Electronic processing

82. In 2017, the Secretariat performed two key EDNA-related² activities. Firstly, the Secretariat continued to perform regular EDNA maintenance. The new version, v3.3.1, will address a number of issues raised by the States Parties and will introduce improvements and usability enhancements. Secondly, the Secretariat sent out a survey to uncover and elicit end-user feedback. The input collected is being used to conduct a feasibility study with the aim of designing a more usable, robust, and flexible new EDNA version.

²

EDNA = electronic declarations tool for National Authorities.

83. The Secretariat has continued to provide training on electronic declarations, delivering five courses on this topic in 2017: a basic course for personnel of National Authorities, held at the OPCW Headquarters in The Hague on 5 April; a training course for representatives of National Authorities on fulfilling Article VI obligations, held on 20 September; and two individualised training courses on electronic declarations, delivered to two States Parties in February and March, respectively. Furthermore, the Secretariat delivered EDNA training as part of the training course on chemical databases organised for National Authorities by VERIFIN³, which took place in Helsinki, Finland, on 10 and 11 August.
84. As a result of the above efforts, the electronic processing of declarations has continued to improve. The Secretariat received declarations from 54 States Parties for ADPA 2016 in electronic format, amounting to a total of 96% of declared plant sites.
85. The Technical Secretariat is also organising training sessions and presentations for EDNA and the SIX in the margins of this session of the Conference; details are available in the OPCW Journal. I encourage you to contact the Secretariat should you require guidance or assistance on the electronic submission of declarations, or in order to request support and training regarding the use of the software.

Enterprise content management

86. The Secretariat has continued with the implementation of the enterprise content management (ECM) system for verification. The contract has been signed for the software solution, licences, initial implementation, and maintenance. Implementation of the first phase has started with configuration and customisation of the system and its preparation to support the management and preservation of information related to non-routine missions. In parallel, activities continued with the preparation of data from legacy systems, as well as organising, cataloguing, and protecting information related to non-routine missions for their subsequent importation into the ECM system.

Technical support from the OPCW Laboratory

87. Starting this December, the OPCW Laboratory will be conducting the second in a series of exercises on the analysis of biologically derived toxins. These exercises will further enhance our partner laboratories' capabilities in this area and will help to arrive at commonly accepted reporting criteria.
88. To date, 10 of our partner laboratories have analysed 306 samples in support of ongoing missions. I wish to thank the staff of the laboratories and their representatives for their assistance. Additionally, the OPCW Laboratory and the designated laboratories have provided assistance to the work of the JIM.
89. Work continues at our designated laboratories with regard to sampling, analysis, and proficiency testing. Our network of partner laboratories available for off-site analysis of samples remains strong, with 20 laboratories from 16 Member States having met the requisite criteria to become or retain their status as OPCW designated laboratories for environmental analysis.

³ VERIFIN = Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

90. This year, the Secretariat has successfully concluded the second biomedical sample analysis proficiency test. The Secretariat now has a network of 17 laboratories from 13 Member States available for the off-site analysis of biomedical samples.
91. The multipurpose training facility in Rijswijk continues to provide training to both internal and external trainees. The OPCW Laboratory will conduct two more training courses this year, with a projection of 77 person-days of training to Secretariat staff and 124 person-days of training to participants from Member States.
92. Before samples can be sent to a designated laboratory for off-site analysis, a formal agreement should be concluded with the laboratories. I encourage all Member States that host designated laboratories and that do not have active technical agreements in place to assist their laboratories in arranging agreements with the Secretariat.
93. In October, the Executive Council adopted a decision to include data for non-scheduled chemicals relevant to the Convention into the OPCW Central Analytical Database for optional use during inspections. This addition will help the Secretariat and States Parties to avoid false-positive identifications during industry inspections and will add valuable data for on-site use during investigations of alleged use.

Inspectorate training

94. With the forthcoming tenure of a group of inspectors in early 2018, a group of seven new inspectors (Group Q) joined the Secretariat in October 2017, and will complete their mandatory initial training by mid-December 2017. The new inspectors have been trained through an enhanced programme to ensure that they meet the effectiveness and efficiency standards in accordance with the OPCW's strategic objectives. This group will be prepared for deployment on their first inspection in January 2018.
95. During the reporting period, the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell of the Inspectorate Division provided or coordinated 46 individual training courses. The courses comprised 1,463 inspector days and 572 instructor days, and included a total of 439 participants. Some of the instructors were directly involved in the Secretariat's capacity-building programmes for States Parties, such as the Associate Programme, the assistance and protection instructors' course, and the regional and national assistance and protection courses for States Parties in Croatia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan, and Uganda.
96. The Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell also continued to provide mandatory inspector refresher courses to keep inspectors abreast of technological and verification-policy developments, as well as refresher courses on the use of protective equipment and the OPCW confidentiality regime. Several training courses were conducted for newly promoted inspectors, including team leader induction courses with enhanced content to address the needs of leading OPCW inspection teams.
97. Other relevant specialised training was offered in 2017. A course on the production of Schedule 1 chemicals, which presents a newly developed, more robust, and scientific approach to verifying the absence of Schedule 1 chemicals on Article VI inspections, was delivered to inspectors from various specialist areas. Such cross training will

enable a wider range of inspectors to potentially conduct Schedule 1 inspections, thus maximising the efficiency of Inspectorate resources.

98. With regard to preparation for challenge inspections, the Secretariat conducted an in-house refresher training course and a table-top exercise in 2017.
99. During the reporting period, the United States of America continued to provide the initial and refresher course sessions of Hazardous Waste Operations Emergency Response (HAZWOPER), which are mandatory under United States regulations for individuals operating within the United States CWDFs.
100. I would like to thank Belgium, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America for the technical and in-kind support provided throughout this year to the inspector training programme.

Industry verification

101. The Secretariat welcomes inputs by States Parties on improvements in the verification process through consultations within the Industry Cluster and meetings of National Authorities, as has been demonstrated in several papers and decisions this year. A Note by the Secretariat on this subject (S/1419/2016, dated 13 September 2016) contained the Secretariat's revised templates for preliminary findings and final inspection reports for Schedule 1, Schedule 2, and Schedule 3 inspections. The revised reporting templates for Article VI inspections were implemented in mid-September. Consultations on the SAB's recommendations on verification (SAB/REP/1/15, dated 11 June 2015) and on the SAB report on the convergence of chemistry and biology (SAB/REP/1/14, dated 27 June 2014) are still ongoing. A Note by the Secretariat on this subject (S/1436/2016, dated 14 November 2016) contained the survey on biomediated processes.
102. The Secretariat continues to provide assistance to States Parties to fulfil their obligations under the Convention. Utilising databases on chemical producers, the Verification Division organises technical consultations, as well as training and research, to draw attention to possible declarable activities when requested by any State Party. These activities have resulted in more accurate declarations.
103. Of the 10 S&A missions mentioned previously, eight were conducted at Schedule 2 facilities, while the remaining two were held at other chemical production facilities (OCPFs). A Secretariat Note on this subject (S/1383/2016, dated 10 May 2016) addressed the progress regarding S&A in Article VI inspections. The revised methodology for the selection of OCPFs, as reported in S/1348/2016 (dated 4 February 2016), has continued to show good results in terms of relevance of sites selected for inspection. The methodology takes into account both the number and the relevance of plant sites declared and results in a correlation between the number of declared OCPF sites and the number of inspections in each State Party. This approach continues to result in more inspections at highly relevant sites, as well as in a continued increase in the number of States Parties receiving inspections. The revised selection process allows the Secretariat to better target more relevant OCPF inspections with a broader geographical distribution.

Industry engagement

104. As reflected in my Note on engagement with chemical industry associations (C-22/DG.18, dated 10 October 2017), the chemical industry remains an essential partner for the OPCW. I welcome Mr Marco Mensink, Secretary of the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) and Director-General of the European Chemical Industry Council (Cefic), who is attending this session of the Conference.
105. In 2017, chemical industry representatives participated in a number of national and regional events that commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. They also attended a dedicated segment on industry engagement, which took place during the annual meeting of National Authorities here in The Hague last week. Representatives of the ICCA were invited to meetings of the OEWG-FP of the OPCW in January and April 2017.
106. Mr Mensink and I also met on 27 October in Vienna, when I was invited to address the ICCA Board of Directors. On that day, we also held an OPCW-ICCA Joint Steering Committee meeting, in which cooperation between the OPCW and the ICCA was discussed. Following the meeting in Vienna, the Chemical Industry Coordination Group met for the second time this year to discuss forthcoming activities.

Science and technology

107. In 2017, the SAB released an intersessional report on advice on riot control agents (SAB-25/WP.1, dated 27 March 2017), held two international workshops on emerging technologies (SAB-26/WP.1, dated 21 July 2017) and trends in chemical production (SAB-26/WP.2, dated 19 October 2017), and established a temporary working group on investigative science and technology, chaired by Dr Veronica Borrett of Australia. The temporary working group has scheduled its first meeting for February 2018; I look forward to reading its report.
108. The scientific review process that is informing the SAB's forthcoming report to the Fourth Review Conference has collected input from the work of three temporary working groups, seven regular sessions of the SAB, five intersessional reports, and four international workshops. The SAB members have received over 400 briefings from more than 190 individuals coming from 56 States Parties, and produced 30 reports.
109. A key finding of the SAB in its scientific review in the lead-up to the Fourth Review Conference has been the recognition that the emergence and practical applications of new and innovative technologies (in both the research and industrial sectors), as well as the repurposing of existing technologies for unanticipated new applications, have benefited from increasingly transdisciplinary (convergent) scientific communities. As the Secretariat and stakeholders of the OPCW consider technological change, it is imperative to maintain high levels of scientific literacy, to engage with scientific communities, and to consider technological opportunities that support robust implementation of the Convention. In order to have the capacity to face the challenges posed by technological advancements, we should take advantage of technological opportunities to ensure that our capabilities remain fit for purpose.

110. The SAB Chairperson, Dr Christopher Timperley of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Vice-Chairperson, Mr Cheng Tang of China, have provided valuable guidance to the Board across the scientific review process that has just been concluded. I wish to thank them for their commitment to engaging with States Parties to nurture a productive dialogue between scientists and policymakers. I also acknowledge the members of the SAB who have completed their terms in 2017, and look forward to welcoming new SAB members in 2018. As the SAB begins its work and looks beyond the Fourth Review Conference, it will continue to require appropriate support. In this regard, I encourage States Parties to respond favourably to my request for voluntary contributions to the SAB trust fund (S/1450/2017, dated 16 January 2017).

International cooperation and assistance

Article VII: implementation support

111. Development and adoption of national implementing legislation covering all initial measures remains an important priority in the provision of technical support and assistance. Currently, 153 States Parties have adopted national implementing legislation, of which 122 States Parties have legislation covering all initial measures, compared to 118 States Parties at the same time last year.
112. Belize, Cameroon, Jordan, and Mali have been the latest States Parties to adopt national implementing legislation covering all initial measures. As at 24 November 2017, 31 States Parties had legislation covering only some of the initial measures, while 39 States Parties had yet to adopt any legislation. The status is explained in detail in the annual reports on the status of implementation of Article VII in 2017 (EC-86/DG.8 C-22/DG.8, EC-86/DG.9 C-22/DG.9, and EC-86/DG.10 C-22/DG.10, all dated 24 August 2017).
113. Provision of assistance to States Parties in developing the initial draft of their implementing legislation, both through legal drafters and National Authority representatives, has continued. Two internship programmes organised in The Hague in August and November provided direct assistance to representatives from Benin, Djibouti, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Surinam, and helped draft action plans for adoption. The Secretariat has followed up on the progress of each participating State Party, providing one-to-one guidance and advice. Two legal workshops were held in Barbados and Georgia in March and May 2017 respectively, and provided direct legal support.
114. To further the legislation adoption process, three regional stakeholders' fora were organised for States Parties in the Africa, Asia, and GRULAC⁴ regions in September and November 2017. A main outcome of the fora was that each State Party developed a road map towards the adoption of implementing legislation. Two influential visitors' programmes for delegations from Namibia and Nigeria were held in The Hague in April and October 2017.

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GRULAC = Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

115. A training course on fulfilling Article VI obligations was held in September in The Hague. To strengthen coordination among National Authorities and industry, the annual meeting of representatives of chemical industry and National Authorities was held in October 2017 in Doha, through a voluntary contribution from Qatar.
116. A train-the-trainers course on technical aspects of the transfers regime was organised in The Hague in June for representatives of customs training institutions and National Authorities. This initiative is expected to enhance the capacity of States Parties at the national level.
117. A basic training course for National Authorities personnel was held in The Hague in April.
118. Four mentorship and partnership programmes have been initiated in 2017 for Argentina and Guatemala, Bolivia and Cuba, Brazil and Panama, and Nigeria and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
119. Four regional meetings of National Authorities in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and GRULAC were held in the Gambia, the United Arab Emirates, Georgia, and Jamaica respectively. The meetings were followed by an additional event commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the OPCW and the Chemical Weapons Convention.
120. The Nineteenth Annual Meeting of National Authorities was held last week in The Hague. The meeting served as a global platform for an exchange of practices in the implementation of the Convention.
121. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the OPCW, an international conference on chemical disarmament and security was held in Doha, Qatar, in April through a voluntary contribution from that State Party. The conference highlighted the contributions of the OPCW to chemical disarmament and international security and its achievements in those areas.
122. Following the signing of the memorandum of understanding between the OPCW and the WCO in January 2017, efforts and collaboration to enhance control of trade in toxic chemicals has continued.

Article X: assistance and protection

123. Implementation of Article X provisions on assistance and protection continued throughout 2017. This year, pursuant to paragraph 7 of Article X, increases were registered in the Voluntary Fund for Assistance, following a contribution by Mexico, and two unilateral offers of assistance, following a new offer by Brazil. Currently, the aforementioned fund stands at approximately EUR 1,555,000, while a total of 46 States Parties have made unilateral offers. Bilateral agreements remain unchanged, with two offers of this type in place.
124. Submissions of information by States Parties regarding their national protective programmes against the use of chemical weapons have increased this year. As at 24 November, 73 States Parties had submitted information about their national protective programmes against the use of chemical weapons.

125. The databank established under paragraph 5 of Article X containing information regarding means of protection against chemical weapons is currently undergoing modernisation and an upgrade. It is anticipated that this renewal process will be completed by the middle of 2018.
126. In accordance with paragraph 5 of Article X, the Secretariat has continued to provide expert advice and to assist States Parties in identifying suitable ways for the development and improvement of protective capability against chemical weapons.
127. In accordance with recommendations of the Second and Third Review Conferences, and aiming at enhancing efficiency in the utilisation of available resources and expertise in the regions and subregions, the Assistance and Protection Branch has successfully continued to implement its tailored approach to training.
128. In 2017, the Technical Secretariat held international and regional assistance and protection training courses and capacity-building activities under Article X in cooperation with the governments of Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Poland, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Uganda, Uruguay, and Zambia. In addition to the regular budget, voluntary contributions to further support Article X programmes were provided by the Czech Republic, Qatar, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union.
129. The Secretariat continued to provide tailored training for police first responders with a training cycle in Asia and an advanced training course in the GRULAC region. These courses focused on the initial response to an incident involving the use of chemical weapons or other release of toxic chemicals. Other specialised training courses were held on the subjects of laboratory skills, pre-hospital medical care, medical treatment of chemical casualties, and S&A.
130. Furthermore, the Secretariat successfully continued to expand its Instructor Development and Exchange Programme. This programme involves international exchange of expertise and fostering of best practices that will enhance response capacity by States Parties, both individually and regionally, and will continue to improve the state of readiness of the Organisation necessary to respond to a request for assistance.
131. In support of instructor development, the sixth international training course for instructors provided advanced training to a new international team of instructors. The conduct of this course is an integral part of efforts to enhance the effectiveness of expert advice provided to States Parties under paragraph 5 of Article X.
132. An inaugural coordination meeting of a new regional capacity-building project for States Parties from the Southern African Development Community was held in May under the Africa Programme. Projects with Member States belonging to the East African Community and the Economic Community of West African States continued in 2017 with the refinement of national protection programmes, regional table-top exercises, and practical training for first responders.

133. Operational and procedural issues of regional assistance coordination were addressed during two table-top exercises conducted this year. These table-top exercises, held in Indonesia in May and Mexico in November, allowed participants to test their organisational processes and consider the modalities of regional and international support in a scenario involving a major chemical incident.
134. The seventeenth annual workshop to coordinate assistance and protection under Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention was held in June at the OPCW Headquarters in The Hague.
135. In the context of the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons, and in accordance with decision C-16/DEC.13 (dated 2 December 2011), the Practical Guide for Medical Management of Chemical Weapons Casualties was translated into Arabic and has also been made available in Turkish. The Secretariat is currently engaged in the preparation of an OPCW symposium in support of victims of chemical weapons planned for the first half of 2018. I also wish to thank the Governments of Andorra, the Republic of Korea, and Spain for voluntary contributions made to the trust fund in 2017. I take this opportunity to once again encourage States Parties to make further contributions to this trust fund, which will facilitate the realisation of activities in support of victims of chemical weapons.

Article XI: international cooperation

136. Since the last session of the Conference, the Secretariat has further enhanced the delivery of its international cooperation programmes focusing on three thematic areas: integrated chemicals management, enhancing laboratory capabilities, and promoting chemical knowledge.
137. From 28 July to 29 September, under the framework of integrated chemicals management, the Secretariat organised the eighteenth edition of the Associate Programme, attended by 32 participants from 31 Member States. The continuous support provided by our partners to this programme has been invaluable and has yet again contributed to its success: to date, the programme has trained 456 experts from 121 States Parties.
138. The alumni of the Associate Programme continue to provide strong support for the national implementation of the Convention in their home countries. The OPCW is also benefiting directly from the expertise of the alumni, 21 of whom have joined the Technical Secretariat as professional staff members. Four alumni were appointed to serve on the ABEO and the SAB. The fifth webinar of the Associate Programme Alumni Network was held from 11 to 18 November. The discussions and the exchange of views generated several valuable recommendations on how to enhance further the impact of the programme and link it more to the objectives of Article XI of the Convention.
139. Under the Chemical Safety and Security Programme, 12 courses were hosted by 11 States Parties, attended by 368 participants from Algeria, Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, and Uganda.

140. From 3 to 7 April, with the support of the Government of Germany and in cooperation with the University of Wuppertal, the OPCW organised two parallel editions of the “Wuppertal Annual Course on Loss Prevention and Safety Promotion in the Chemical Process Industries” for Member States in the Africa region and in the Asia and GRULAC regions, respectively. A total of 23 specialists from 22 countries benefited from the two courses. Since the inception of the OPCW’s Chemical Safety and Security Programme in 2009, 12 courses have so far been jointly organised with the Government of Germany and the University of Wuppertal, providing capacity building for 140 experts from 55 countries in the Africa, Asia, and GRULAC regions.
141. From 13 to 17 November, the Secretariat organised, for the second time since the inception of this initiative in 2016, a training workshop in Russian on best practices for developing the ICCA’s Responsible Care® programme for the chemical industry. The initiative hosted 15 specialists from Member States in Central Asia and Eastern Europe. The workshop was supported by the ICCA and aimed at promoting the adoption of the Responsible Care® programme.
142. An executive programme on integrated chemicals management was held in Shanghai, China from 29 August to 1 September. The programme provided an opportunity for individuals with managerial responsibilities, including representatives of chemical industry, to share views and good practices with regard to integrated chemicals management.
143. In order to facilitate further dynamic discussions and deliberations on cutting-edge issues concerning the peaceful uses of chemistry, the Secretariat organised the second forum dedicated to this purpose, focusing on “Developing a Chemical Cradle-to-Grave Responsibility”. The forum, which took place in September 2017 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, provided a platform for States Parties to share information, experiences, and best practices related to chemical life-cycle management, including trade management.
144. In follow-up to the first report on needs assessment and best practices in chemical safety and security, published on 30 November 2016, a second edition of the report is being compiled, on the subject of integrated chemicals management. Both reports will serve as guidance for the Secretariat to further enhance its relevant capacity-building programmes tailored to the needs identified by States Parties.
145. In line with integrated chemicals management, the Secretariat organised the second workshop on green and sustainable chemistry on 16 and 17 November at the OPCW Headquarters, where participants exchanged views on different approaches to green and sustainable chemistry and their potential contribution to promoting the goals of the Convention, as well as the OPCW’s potential role in the evolving climate of safety, security, and sustainability.
146. As part of the continuous efforts to enhance laboratory capabilities in Member States, the Technical Secretariat has continued to receive expressions of interest in joining the Laboratory Twinning Initiative, which is aimed at assisting laboratories in Member States whose economies are either developing or in transition and intends to improve their performance in the OPCW proficiency tests, with a view to achieving OPCW designated laboratory status. To date, the Secretariat has been discussing two

twinning projects between laboratories in the Netherlands and South Africa on the one hand, and Finland and Serbia on the other. Another 10 expressions of interest have been received from nine institutions seeking assistance and one offering assistance. We encourage more designated laboratories to come on board as assisting laboratories.

147. Other training and capacity-building initiatives in analytical chemistry included nine analytical chemistry courses held in six States Parties: Australia, Finland, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, and Sweden. These courses were attended by nearly 100 participants. To train laboratories seeking to pass the proficiency tests and to subsequently receive OPCW designated status, the OPCW conducted two laboratory training courses at its laboratory facility in Rijswijk. This programme was aimed at expanding the global network of partner laboratories that can perform analysis of samples under the OPCW's verification regime. The first training programme was conducted from 6 to 10 November, with the participation of six laboratory specialists from Algeria. The second course will be held from 4 to 8 December for participants from Italy and Morocco. The Secretariat will host the first course on development of analytical skills for analytical chemists from laboratories supporting customs services, to be held at the OPCW Laboratory in Rijswijk from 11 to 15 December. This course aims to assist qualified chemists supporting customs services in acquiring further experience and practical knowledge of the analysis of scheduled chemicals and to facilitate the adoption of good laboratory practices for the implementation of the Convention.
148. It is noteworthy that, as part of the analytical chemistry courses delivered in the intersessional period, two courses took place on the premises of VERIFIN in Finland this year, in continuation of our cooperation with VERIFIN. These covered the subjects of enhancement of laboratory skills in nuclear magnetic resonance and the enhancement of laboratory skills in quantitative mass spectrometry.
149. Under the Equipment Exchange Programme, two Bruker portable FT-IR⁵ spectrometers and two Captair Toxicap 1016 fume hoods were donated to requesting National Authorities (the Gambia and Senegal). The Secretariat maintains continuous contact with potential donors to encourage donations and is currently developing an online portal to facilitate the matching of requests and offers.
150. In promoting chemical knowledge, the Secretariat continues to organise the workshop on policy and diplomacy for scientists, with a view to increasing the awareness of young scientists on the issues of dual use of chemistry, ethics, education, sustainability, and chemical safety and security. A workshop dedicated to this purpose was organised in September, in Trieste, Italy, in collaboration with the World Academy of Sciences and the Inter-Academy Partnership, and with support from local institutions, including the University of Trieste and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology.
151. In its continued endeavour to empower women as a force to promote the peaceful uses of chemistry, the Technical Secretariat organised the OPCW's second symposium on

⁵ FT-IR = Fourier transform-infrared.

women in chemistry in May 2017 at OPCW Headquarters, followed by a basic analytical chemistry course for women chemists at the OPCW Laboratory. The symposium further highlighted the need for enhancing knowledge and capacity building for women chemists in working towards peaceful chemistry.

152. In the framework of the Fellowship Programme, the Secretariat provided funding to 12 fellowships in 2017 to support the mobility of scientists from Bangladesh, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nigeria, the Philippines, and Uganda. The Secretariat plans to host a fellowship for research projects in the area of green chemistry.
153. In order to facilitate the exchange of scientific and technical information in areas relating to the peaceful uses of chemistry under the Conference Support Programme, the Technical Secretariat supported 44 participants from 32 Member States to attend 11 conferences in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Kenya, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Russian Federation, and the United Republic of Tanzania.
154. The Secretariat also continued to fund 16 research projects in the field of peaceful applications of chemistry. In addition, five new projects have been started in 2017.
155. In the framework of cooperation with the International Foundation for Science (IFS) within the Programme for Support of Research Projects, a joint OPCW-IFS workshop will take place on 11 and 12 December 2017, dedicated to the topic of “Chemistry for Safety, Security and Environmental Protection”.
156. A workshop entitled “Review and Evaluation of the Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI” was held at the OPCW Headquarters on 21 November, to review the progress of the implementation of Article XI of the Convention. The workshop offered a platform for a fruitful exchange of views among various stakeholders on the comprehensive implementation of Article XI.

Africa Programme

157. In continuation of the implementation of the Africa Programme in its fourth phase (2017 to 2019), the Secretariat provided capacity-building support across three thematic areas of international cooperation and assistance.
158. In terms of implementation support, the Technical Secretariat held an internship programme for legal drafters and National Authorities’ representatives from African States Parties, the influential visitors programme for Namibia, a stakeholders forum on legislation for French-speaking African States Parties, and a train-the-trainers course for the customs training institutions of Malawi and Nigeria.
159. To assist African States Parties in the field of assistance and protection, the Technical Secretariat provided expert advice regarding the development of national protection programmes in Burkina Faso and Ghana, conducted an emergency response table-top exercise and emergency response training for first responders in Uganda for members of the East African Community, and initiated a similar project for members of the

Southern African Development Community, with a planning and coordination meeting in Zambia.

160. In support of international cooperation, the Technical Secretariat held workshops on chemical safety and security management for African Member States in Uganda and Algeria, organised an event on needs assessment and best practices on chemical safety and security management in Cameroon, and held a laboratory skills development programme in South Africa. The Technical Secretariat also supported a number of African States Parties under the auspices of the Fellowship Programme, the Programme for Support of Research Projects, and the Conference Support Programme.
161. The Technical Secretariat also held a meeting with the African Union at its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with the aim of ensuring further engagement for implementation of the Convention and to foster wide support for the Africa Programme and the various activities foreseen in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities.

Universality and external relations

162. The Conference has before it the annual report on the implementation of the action plan for the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention during the period from 16 August 2016 to 15 August 2017 (C-22/DG.12 EC-86/DG.12, dated 30 August 2017). The report details activities undertaken by the Secretariat to promote universal adherence to the Convention.
163. During the course of 2017, the Secretariat has continued to engage with representatives of States not Party to the Convention, including through OPCW-related activities. Contacts have continued with representatives of South Sudan, with a view to facilitating South Sudan's joining of the Convention. In March this year, together with the United Nations Secretary-General, H.E. Mr António Guterres, we sent out joint letters to Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the remaining four States not Party, urging them to join the Convention without delay or preconditions.
164. In the last twelve months, I welcomed a number of high-level guests at the OPCW Headquarters, notably, H.E. Mr Mauricio Macri, President of Argentina; H.E. Mr Evo Morales, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia; H.E. Mr Alfonso Dastis Quecedo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain; H.E. Mr Witold Waszczykowski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland; H.E. Mrs Retno Marsudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia; H.E. Mr Liu Lihua, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of China; H.E. Mr Pasi Patokallio, Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland; H.E. Mr Michael Starbæk Christensen, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Prime-Minister's Office of Denmark; H.E. Mr Fernando González Bermúdez, First Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba, and H.E. Mr Fernando Simas Magalhães, Undersecretary General for Multilateral Political Affairs, Europe and North America of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil. I also welcomed Mr Kunio Mikuriya, Secretary-General of the WCO, with whom we signed a memorandum of understanding.

165. In 2017, I paid bilateral visits to Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cameroon, Chile, China, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Singapore, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. During these visits, I had opportunities to meet with high-level government officials, including heads of state and ministers. I addressed a diverse range of audiences, including representatives of scientific communities, academic institutions, government agencies, and the chemical industry. I also had an opportunity to address various conferences, including the Conference on Disarmament and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and have met with representatives of the United Nations, the IAEA, the CTBTO, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.
166. Since the last session of the Executive Council this October, I have visited Austria, Belgium, and France. In Paris, I was received by the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian, and Diplomatic Counsellor, Office of the President of the French Republic, Mr Philippe Etienne. I also addressed a symposium organised to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Convention and the OPCW.
167. In Vienna, I participated in the meeting of the Board of the ICCA discussing perspectives for the OPCW's cooperation with the chemical industry. In November, I visited Belgium to attend the Ieper commemorative event and visited the destruction facility located in Poelkapelle.
168. In 2017, the Deputy Director-General visited Bangladesh, Belgium, Croatia, Mexico, Qatar, and the Russian Federation. The Deputy Director-General also visited New York and addressed an open debate of the United Nations Security Council on protecting critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks. At the invitation of the Russian Federation, the Deputy Director-General also visited the Kizner CWDF and attended the closure ceremony marking the completion of destruction operations.
169. Since the last session of the Executive Council this October, the Deputy Director-General has travelled to Bangladesh to open the International Seminar on Advanced Chemical Safety and Security Management, as well as to address the students and faculty members of the University of Dhaka. He held bilateral meetings with representatives from the Bangladesh National Authority and with professionals from the Bangladesh Chemical Society.
170. In November, the Deputy Director-General visited Mexico, where he opened the table-top exercise on chemical emergency response for States Parties from Latin America and the Caribbean. He delivered a lecture at the National Autonomous University of Mexico and met with officials from the Mexican National Authority and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. In Brussels, Ambassador Rao delivered the annual briefing to Permanent Representatives to the OPCW based outside The Hague.
171. Public interest in the Convention and the work of the OPCW has continued to increase in 2017. Secretariat staff delivered briefings and presentations to over 65 visiting groups, receiving more than 1,600 visitors at the OPCW Headquarters. The OPCW also hosted the annual United Nations Fellowship Programme on Disarmament visit and the Diplomatic Induction Workshop.

Public affairs

172. The OPCW participated in another successful edition of the annual International Open Day, organised by the City of The Hague, and garnered record numbers in terms of 900 visitors and reaching 138,000 people through social media. The OPCW was further able to spread its message to thousands more people through similar open days organised by the European Union in Brussels on 6 May and by the United Nations in Geneva on 7 October.
173. The work to overhaul the official website is under way and is expected to be launched by the end of the first quarter of 2018. In parallel, dedicated websites have been created to promote the twentieth anniversary of the Convention and the OPCW, as well as the OPCW-The Hague Award and the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference.
174. Items on the OPCW agenda continue to attract attention. Media citations for the OPCW have increased by 19% since last year. Visitors to the official OPCW website have increased by 47%. The OPCW's social media campaigns have resulted in reaching hundreds of thousands of people through the "20 Moments" campaign and doubling the number of people reached for International Open Day.
175. The OPCW had received 20,027 citations as at mid-November 2017, which is an increase of 19% from the 16,769 citations at the same point in 2016. The Technical Secretariat's digital communications capacity continues to measurably increase according to metrics for both the official website (www.opcw.org) and social media platforms. Traffic to the website increased by 46.7% as compared to 2016, with approximately 574,900 visitors to the website in 2017.
176. The OPCW's investment in using social media platforms (for example, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn) has had demonstrable success. For instance, the "20 Moments" campaign, which provided educational information about the OPCW and the Convention reached 289,000 people.
177. To facilitate participation by NGOs from developing and transitioning economies in OPCW activities, 24% of the registered NGOs (up from 20% for the Twenty-First Session of the Conference) are able to attend the session thanks to support from the European Union funds provided to the OPCW for this purpose.
178. The OPCW continues its cooperation with the T.M.C. Asser Institute's Summer Programme on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in a Changing World. The eighth edition successfully concluded on 8 September, with 23 officials, including new OPCW delegates, scientists, researchers, and NGO representatives, benefiting from this week-long training course implemented with OPCW support. States Parties are encouraged to send new members of delegations, or other professionals who could benefit from this training, to the ninth edition, which will take place in September 2018.

Administrative and financial matters

179. The 2016 Financial Statements have been audited and certified by the External Auditor and received an unqualified opinion. The External Auditor confirmed that the

statements are in compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and reveal no material weaknesses. The 2016 Financial Statements also reported a cash surplus for 2015 of EUR 2 million, in addition to the previously reported cash deficit for 2014 of EUR 0.7 million.

180. Following the recommendation of the Executive Council at its Eighty-Sixth Session (EC-86/DEC.7, dated 11 October 2017), amendments to the OPCW Financial Regulations and Rules, including taking into account the implementation of the new enterprise resources system, have been submitted to the Conference for approval (C-22/DEC/CRP.14, dated 9 November 2017).
181. The Secretariat has continued to implement amendments related to the United Nations compensation package for professional and higher categories. Relevant amendments to the OPCW Staff Regulations (C-22/DEC/CRP.4, dated 18 October 2017) have been presented for the adoption by this session of the Conference.
182. At the request of States Parties, the Secretariat has developed and introduced the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme, with the anticipated selection of the first JPOs in the first quarter of 2018. The Programme offers States Parties the opportunity to sponsor the recruitment of young professionals to engage with the Secretariat in specific projects and to gain experience and exposure to work in the international public sector.
183. The National Audit Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has been recommended by the Council at its Eighty-Sixth Session for re-nomination as the External Auditor for a further three-year term (C-22/DEC/CRP.10, dated 2 November 2017).
184. As at 17 November 2017, the collection level for 2017 assessed contributions stood at 91.6% compared to 94% on the same date last year, whilst the collection level for 2016 assessed contributions stood at 95.8%. I continue to urge States Parties that have not paid their outstanding contributions to do so at the earliest and in full. For States Parties in arrears that have lost their voting rights, multi-year payment plans to settle outstanding assessed contributions may be arranged.
185. The Organisation has incurred substantial costs related to inspections under Articles IV and V. Although such costs have been invoiced to the States Parties, as at 17 November 2017, invoices in the sum of EUR 4.96 million remained unpaid. States Parties are encouraged to settle these invoices at the earliest and in full.
186. Delegations are also invited to consider for approval by the Conference at this session a draft decision (C-22/DEC/CRP.12, dated 2 November 2017) proposing the establishment of a special fund to cover the costs of the Fourth Review Conference, to be held in 2018.
187. A separate draft decision (C-22/DEC/CRP.9, dated 2 November 2017) recommends the transfer of a portion of the net cash surplus to the Working Capital Fund and a Special Fund for the Fourth Review Conference in 2018.
188. In October, I informed States Parties that the financial resources available to the Special Fund for Special Missions have been fully disbursed or obligated and the

balance of the fund is now nil (EC-86/DG.27, dated 2 October 2017). A draft decision to extend the fund is also before the Conference (C-22/DEC/CRP.11, dated 2 November 2017).

189. In 2017 the Secretariat has continued to report to the United Nations on its efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and has offset those emissions that are unavoidable, allowing the OPCW to be declared for another year as a United Nations climate-neutral organisation in the “Greening the Blue” report 2017.

Confidentiality reform task force

190. In January 2017 I convened a confidentiality reform task force to provide advice on any necessary modifications to the OPCW confidentiality regime. This assignment was completed on 1 June 2017, whereby the task force recommended amendments to the OPCW Policy on Confidentiality, the OPCW Media and Public Affairs Policy, and related internal regulations, in line with established practices and advances in information technology. These recommendations have been provided to the Conference for consideration and adoption at this session.

Office of Internal Oversight

191. The Secretariat has continued to improve the Quality Management System, including through cooperation between the OPCW Laboratory and the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO).
192. This year, the OIO has carried out six internal audits of activities related to International Organization for Standardization (ISO) accreditation of both the Laboratory and the OIO. The Dutch Accreditation Council (RvA) conducted its surveillance visit in April. As a result, both ISO accreditations for 17025 and 17043 standards have been extended until April 2021. The RvA has also decided to extend the accreditation of the OPCW Laboratory with 17043 for conducting biomedical proficiency activities.
193. From 28 to 31 August 2017, as part of the twentieth anniversary celebrations, the OPCW hosted for the first time the annual meeting of the United Nations Representatives of Internal Audit Services involving representative of United Nations organisations, multilateral financial institutions, and intergovernmental organisations. Representatives from over 50 international organisations participated in the meeting. This meeting contributes to strengthening internal auditing practices by providing a forum for the development of auditing methodologies through innovation and sharing best practices. The event was sponsored by a financial contribution from the Netherlands.
194. I have continued to closely monitor the status of the implementation of all recommendations contained in OIO reports to ensure that activities undertaken by the Technical Secretariat are in full compliance with OPCW rules and regulations.

Annex: Personal Reflections and Thoughts of the Director-General

Annex

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AND THOUGHTS OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Mr Chairperson,

1. Since this is the last session of the Conference of the States Parties that I am attending as Director-General, I wish to take the opportunity to share some personal thoughts and reflections on the eventful and productive years during which I have had the privilege of leading this unique and exemplary multilateral Organisation.
2. In 2010, when I assumed the position of Director-General, the question of the future relevance of the Organisation stood out against the background of progress in chemical demilitarisation. The imminence of the post-destruction phase gave rise to many crucial questions. As the bulk of our resources were devoted to verification of destruction, it was obvious that a significant part of our operational capacity would turn redundant. In the wake of the global financial crisis, downsizing the Organisation appeared to some as a justified course of action.
3. For an international organisation with a unique mission which is, essentially, to serve a normative goal in perpetuity, mechanical reductions can lead to a severe loss of expertise, institutional memory and knowledge, and therefore the capacity to fulfil other defined goals.
4. The specialised skills, knowledge, and experience that reside at the Organisation are hard to replicate. We have also needed to take into account the fact that, while the disarmament part of the mission of the OPCW was nearing completion, the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons was becoming increasingly important. Adequate capacity was also necessary to cater to the possibility of certain States not Party joining the Convention and declaring chemical weapons programmes; as indeed happened in 2013, when the Syrian Arab Republic joined the Convention.
5. The drafting of the Chemical Weapons Convention was considerably influenced by the dynamics of the Cold War; yet it was also designed as a treaty comprehensive enough to ensure that the threat of chemical weapons is addressed in all its manifestations at all times and for all times.
6. We have since been reminded time and again that, despite the near complete elimination of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons and a robust verification regime, old threats have not entirely disappeared, while new ones are posing unprecedented challenges.
7. In order to address issues of such far-reaching importance, I established an Advisory Panel on Future Priorities of the OPCW soon after taking over as Director-General in 2010. The recommendations of the Advisory Panel remain relevant. They have provided very useful food for thought in the subsequent discussions and debates, including preparation for the Third Review Conference and its aftermath.

8. Today, we can say with a measure of satisfaction that the road map for the future has acquired much clarity and that we have been able to give shape and content to a vision that will serve the norms of the Convention well into the future.
9. The principle area of our focus was to ensure that, in reordering our priorities, preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons would be the defining feature of the security part of our mission. This, in turn, required maintenance of a robust and efficient Organisation, while guaranteeing that mechanisms to promote the norm and to enforce the prohibition remain available to the international community.
10. The objective of prevention is made more complex by the continuing advances in science and technology, as well as new security challenges. Instead of sequential thinking, we needed to work simultaneously on multiple fronts.
11. The global chemical industry makes a major contribution to economic growth. To its credit, it has developed several programmes for self-regulation, such as the Responsible Care® programme, and is also subjected to several national audits. From the perspective of the Convention, however, there remains a need for vigilance in the face of rapid advances that are constantly changing the face of the industry.
12. This is a function that is admirably performed by the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board. To the extent of my authority, I have endeavoured to elevate the discussions through tasking the Scientific Advisory Board with keeping up with advances in science, which is evident from the quality and substance of its recent reports and recommendations. These cover the entire gamut of issues of relevance for the Convention from a technical and scientific standpoint.
13. Progress in science also offers opportunities for improving verification and protection measures. The effective use of new scientific methods and procedures promises the ability to detect the presence of chemical warfare agents through improved sample collection and analysis. Sampling and analysis (S&A) have been fundamental in our recent missions to determine the validity of allegations of use of chemical weapons.
14. The temporary working group of the Scientific Advisory Board that I established recently is also related to the Organisation's ability to conduct an in-depth review of the methods and technologies used in our investigative work, which becomes crucial during contingency operations. These are some examples of how we have been able to institutionalise a result-oriented approach that takes into account the continuing impact of science and technology on the operation of the Convention in the contemporary security environment.
15. The initiative to upgrade the OPCW Laboratory to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology will not only serve our goals of capacity building in States Parties but will also augment the Organisation's technical and scientific capacity to fully address the threat of chemical weapons. Focus on training and research will be important undertakings for the Centre. This project will provide further substance to the goal of maintaining the OPCW as a global repository of knowledge and expertise in its field, as suggested by the Advisory Panel in 2011.

16. Despite its critical importance to the goals of international peace and security, I had also felt that the Convention and the work of the OPCW did not attract the kind of attention in several important quarters that they actually deserved. In addition to some public diplomacy initiatives, I encouraged Permanent Representatives to include in the programmes of their high level dignitaries a visit to the OPCW when in The Hague. It is gratifying that we have had and continue to have such important visits on a regular basis. Apart from the goodwill that is necessary for the Organisation as a multilateral body, this also helps policymakers to acquire first-hand appreciation of the Organisation's contribution to global objectives, as well as its challenges.
17. Equally, our outreach efforts have been targeted at other crucial audiences as well, since the objective of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons is best served by deepening our relationships with key partners in science, academia, and industry, as well as with civil society. Our engagement with non-governmental organisations has over the years significantly deepened. The decision to allow NGOs to speak at sessions of the Conference is of course to be warmly welcomed. Victims' associations also regularly attend relevant OPCW events to raise awareness about their sufferings.
18. These initiatives have not only provided information about the work of the Organisation, but have contributed to the objective of nurturing a culture of responsible science in research institutions, universities, and in our schools. It is my hope that the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach that was established last year will play its part in promoting the goals of the Convention around the world.
19. The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the OPCW in 2013 was indeed a high point for the Organisation in terms of deserved recognition of its work, which mostly was carried out without fanfare or international limelight. What followed, however, has been closely monitored and scrutinised around the world, given its impact and importance.
20. Our mission in Syria was assigned to the OPCW with some scepticism about the capacity of the Organisation due to its relative size and resource base. The manner in which the OPCW has carried out this mission in the most extraordinary and challenging circumstances has put to rest any such doubts about its ability to fulfil difficult mandates. These doubts were also proven unfounded as everyone connected to this mission put in extra effort, often going beyond the call of duty.
21. The Syrian demilitarisation mission was conducted under extremely compressed timelines, with the contributions of more than 30 States Parties, the United Nations, and the European Union. In the field of disarmament, nothing similar had happened before. This mission, the work of the Fact-Finding Mission and that of the Declaration Assessment Team, all combine to prove the resilience of the Convention in addressing real-life problems of gravity and import and the Organisation as dynamic and adaptable. The recent past illustrates not only the kinds of unexpected challenges that can emerge but also that the Organisation has what it takes to meet these challenges head on.
22. Contemporary challenges include a proper role for the Organisation in dealing with chemical terrorism. The decision adopted last month by the Executive Council

entitled “Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors” constitutes a major step in establishing the parameters for the Organisation to contribute substantively towards preventing and responding to the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors.

23. In this context, I wish to underscore the importance of greater collaboration between international organisations. This should be institutionalised, rather than be an imposition of circumstance. We have a long-standing Relationship Agreement with the United Nations. Initiation and conclusion of a related supplementary arrangement proved timely. It sets out the modalities and procedures for a possible investigation of alleged use under the Secretary-General’s mechanism in which OPCW experts and resources are to be placed at his disposal. We were, therefore, fully prepared when the Secretary-General initiated his investigations in Syria in 2013. This is just one example of how anticipation, cooperation, and collaboration can prepare us all to better deal with contingencies when they occur. I believe the policy-making organs of various international organisations should devote attention to identifying the many avenues of cooperation that present themselves as amenable to the pooling of expertise and resources and the utilisation of synergies. This is essential because global challenges can only be met through global action. This, I believe, is attainable without prejudice to the respective mandates of different organisations. Institutional interests must remain subordinate to the interests of the international community.
24. The pride of our enterprise is its multilateral character representing a unity of purpose within the diversity of our membership, including a broad range of countries whose economies are developing or in transition. Disarmament and non-proliferation are the two pillars of the Convention that serve the core security interests of our entire membership. The other two pillars are international cooperation, and assistance and protection against chemical weapons.
25. Our international cooperation programmes have engendered a sense of ownership across our membership. They have strengthened steadily and remain a source of maintaining goodwill and consensus. The feedback I have received from the alumni of OPCW activities during my visits to various States Parties always conveys a sense of abiding commitment to the goals of the Convention.
26. Thousands of individuals across the globe have benefitted from our capacity-building programmes, including through the Africa Programme, and are contributing both to the implementation of the Convention in their respective countries and to developmental goals.
27. This is also true for programmes in the area of assistance and protection where additionally, in case of a chemical weapons attack, States Parties can call upon the OPCW’s newly established Rapid Response Assistance Mission (RRAM) capabilities. The establishment of this mission should be seen as another example of the adaptability of the Organisation.
28. In approaching the conclusion of my tenure, I consider myself extremely fortunate. I will leave an Organisation that is strong, vibrant, and efficient. Its work is essential to

promoting disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as to the aspiration to strengthen humanitarian ideals.

29. We have successfully dealt with many challenges. This has been possible due to the spirit of cooperation and consensus consistently displayed by States Parties. I am confident that current difficulties will soon be surmounted through close consultations between member countries. This is in the interest of all States Parties and the Organisation as a whole. Together, we have performed to meet the high standards of excellence and efficiency expected of us. We have also disseminated the message of the Convention – which is essentially a message of peace – to the four corners of the world. This should continue.
30. I owe a debt of gratitude to States Parties and their Representatives for the confidence they have so consistently reposed in me and for the courtesies extended to me here in The Hague and during my visits abroad.
31. The OPCW is and will be what its States Parties want it to be. I am confident that your continued commitment to the goals of the Convention will further strengthen this essential pillar of international security.
32. Between now and the time I depart next year, there will be opportunities for me to thank many who supported me in so many ways, including my colleagues at the Secretariat, whom I have had the good fortune to lead. I will not miss this opportunity, however, to recognise their outstanding professionalism, their dedication, and their commitment – including those who were prepared to put themselves in harm's way for the sake of what this Organisation stands for.
33. This has been a truly extraordinary journey for me. And the privilege of your company and support makes it all the more special and memorable. I thank you all.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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