



DENMARK, FINLAND, NORWAY, AND SWEDEN

THE ROLE OF THE OPCW CENTRAL ANALYTICAL DATABASE IN ENSURING EFFICIENT ON-SITE VERIFICATION

1. The OPCW Central Analytical Database (OCAD) is an essential component of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) verification regime. Any chemical not contained in the database cannot be detected during on-site analysis.
2. The more comprehensive the OCAD is, the more likely it is that chemicals of relevance to the Convention will be identified on-site, making inspections more efficient and the verification regime as a whole more robust.
3. In order to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the verification regime, the Review Conference should endorse the inclusion of data on all chemicals relevant to the Convention in the OCAD.

The OCAD is essential for on-site verification

4. The verification regime is a fundamental pillar of the Convention and one of its main achievements to date. Verification of the destruction of existing stockpiles of chemical weapons and on-site inspections of commercial chemical plants to verify declared activities are essential for achieving confidence in compliance with the Convention. On-site verification is essential for the conduct of challenge inspections and investigations of alleged use, and could be a key element in ensuring appropriate assistance to victims.
5. An effective verification regime requires effective verification tools. One of these is the OCAD.
6. The OCAD is a reference library of analytical data of chemicals of relevance to the Convention. Its primary purpose is to enable on-site analysis with approved OPCW inspection equipment as provided for in the Convention. Any chemicals that are not contained in the database cannot be detected by the OPCW inspection team. It is therefore essential that the OCAD be as comprehensive as possible.
7. In addition to on-site analysis, the OCAD is used as a validated reference library by OPCW designated laboratories and by laboratories seeking designation and taking part in OPCW proficiency testing. It also assists States Parties’ laboratories in the analysis of samples for their own national purposes. The OCAD is available to all States Parties, and its continued improvement therefore of interest to all.



8. Data intended for inclusion in the OCAD is produced by States Parties' laboratories and submitted to the OPCW Validation Group for evaluation and technical analysis. After careful consideration, this expert body recommends the inclusion of new data to the Director-General, who in turn forwards the recommendation to the Executive Council for its approval.

Optimising the use of the OCAD

9. The more comprehensive the OCAD is, the more likely it is that chemicals of relevance to the Convention will be identified on-site. A more effective process of on-site analysis assists in making inspections more efficient and the verification regime more robust. Thanks to the many contributions of data by States Parties' laboratories, the content of the OCAD has increased significantly over the last few years. There are still major gaps in its analytical data, however.
10. Most importantly, analytical data of important oxidation and degradation products of scheduled chemicals is not included in the database. From a technical perspective, this is a significant weakness, since data of these (non-scheduled) chemicals is needed for the effective on-site analysis of the scheduled chemicals in question.
11. Without the relevant reference data in the OCAD, the absence or presence of the scheduled chemicals cannot be comprehensively confirmed on-site. This can give rise to so-called false positives, complicating the inspection process and increasing the workload of National Authorities and the Technical Secretariat. On the other hand, a chemical relevant to the Convention may be overlooked altogether, and any inconclusive findings will need to be analysed separately off-site.
12. The addition of data on relevant oxidation and degradation products to the OCAD would assist in avoiding these unnecessary problems, and could help to save costs.
13. For investigations of alleged use and for challenge inspections, the inclusion of data on riot control agents and of old and abandoned chemical weapons in the OCAD would also be essential.
14. The lack of progress in including these chemicals in the OCAD, despite recommendations from the Validation Group, has led to the creation of a parallel, more comprehensive database, containing all data validated by the Validation Group, including on non-scheduled chemicals of relevance to the Convention. This working database is only available for designated laboratories, however, not for the conduct of inspections. In essence, the OPCW inspection teams thus are denied access to the best tool available for the performance of their duties. Over the long term, this could damage the effectiveness of the verification regime as a whole.

Preparing for future challenges

15. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) has repeatedly highlighted the critical role of the OCAD in on-site analysis, and the necessity of ensuring its comprehensiveness also in the future. In its report to the Third Review Conference, the SAB once again underlines the importance of adding relevant non-scheduled chemicals in the database.

16. It is important to note that the addition of new data in the OCAD does not in any way imply that the chemical in question is or should be included in the Schedules. Also, only chemicals of demonstrated relevance to the Convention, carefully selected by the Validation Group, would be targeted. No changes to the Schedules are suggested and no additional obligations will be imposed on States Parties.
17. In its report, the SAB underscores the importance of a comprehensive OCAD for the ability of the OPCW to meet future verification challenges, calling upon the Secretariat to ensure the adequate content of the database. We believe this is a responsibility shared equally by the States Parties.
18. The Review Conference should, therefore, in order to ensure the continued effectiveness of the verification regime, endorse the inclusion of data on all chemicals relevant to the Convention in the OCAD.

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