



OPCW

Executive Council

Seventy-First Session
19 – 22 February 2013

EC-71/DG.1
5 November 2012
Original: ENGLISH

NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

**RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE NINETEENTH SESSION
OF THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY BOARD**

1. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) met in The Hague, the Netherlands, for its Nineteenth Session from 10 to 12 September 2012. The report of the session has been issued as SAB-19/1, dated 12 September 2012.
2. Science and technology is a key element of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”). An understanding of science and technology is important to the full and effective implementation of Articles III to XI (inclusive) of the Convention. Therefore, robust technical advice from the SAB is crucial to the work of the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) and to the States Parties.
3. The Director-General would like to take this opportunity to remind States Parties that the terms of office of three members of the SAB ended on 3 October 2012, and that a call for nominations will be issued. In addition, a call for voluntary contributions to support the work of the SAB will also be made. The Director-General encourages States Parties to carefully consider both Notes when they are issued.
4. The Director-General congratulates Alejandra Graciela Suárez on her election as Vice-Chairperson of the SAB. He also thanks Robin Black for his contribution to the work of the SAB, and welcomes Mohammad Abdollahi as a new member of the Board.
5. After a careful study of the report of the Nineteenth Session of the SAB, the Director-General is pleased to submit to the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) the following comments and recommendations on the work of the SAB.

Developments in science and technology (paragraph 7 of SAB-19/1)

6. The Director-General appreciates the work of the SAB in drafting its “Report of the Scientific Advisory Board on Developments in Science and Technology for the Third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention” (RC-3/DG.1, dated 29 October 2012). The report provides a comprehensive overview of the developments in science and technology



since the Second Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and recommendations for action to be taken by the Secretariat and by States Parties. The Director-General will issue a response to the SAB's report in the near future. The Chairperson of the SAB briefed States Parties on this report during the meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on Preparations for the Third Review Conference¹ on 1 November 2012.

7. The Director-General expresses his thanks to the members of the temporary working group (TWG) on the convergence of chemistry and biology for the comprehensive report of its second meeting. The Director-General appreciates that the TWG has revised its terms of reference in response to his comments. The next TWG meeting will be held during the first week of April 2013. The Director-General encourages the TWG to continue participating in events and meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and to engage in exchanges with experts in the life sciences. It has been agreed with the Implementation Support Unit of the BWC that a side event be organised on the margins of the BWC Meeting of States Parties (from 10 to 14 December 2012 in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland).
8. In particular, the Director-General would like to draw the attention of States Parties to the SAB's view that "any process designed for the formation of a chemical substance should be covered by the term "produced by synthesis"." Consequently, policy options arising from this view might need to be considered, particularly in the context of ensuring consistent implementation of the Convention across different States Parties and the completeness of declarations, and that the verification regime remains focussed on activities relevant to the object and purpose of the Convention.
9. The Director-General notes the SAB's view that the technical discussion on the potential use of toxic chemicals for law enforcement has been extensive and notes the SAB's recommendation regarding verification activities in relation to incapacitating chemical agents (ICAs). The Secretariat is keeping abreast of the debate on ICAs.

Education and outreach in science and technology (paragraph 8 of SAB-19/1)

10. The Director-General expresses his thanks to the members of the TWG and to its Chairperson, Djafer Benachour. Education and outreach is a collective effort that requires the active support of States Parties and that also involves collaboration with other actors, including international organisations, professional associations, industry associations, and scientific unions.
11. The Secretariat is exploring the development of educational materials for students of chemistry. A project proposal has been drafted for a small group of local educators to develop such materials in collaboration with members of this TWG. The materials would be developed specifically with a view for them to be integrated into existing courses by educators around the world. The Director-General would like to encourage States Parties to support such a project, including through voluntary contributions.

¹ Third Review Conference = Third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention

12. As mentioned in the Director-General's response to the report of the SAB's Eighteenth Session (EC-69/DG.5, dated 11 June 2012), the Secretariat has included the subject of education and outreach in the agenda of the Fourteenth Annual Meeting of National Authorities, which will take place in The Hague, the Netherlands, from 22 to 25 November. The second meeting of this TWG will take place alongside this meeting.
13. The Director-General encourages the TWG to explore potential cooperation with other relevant international organisations and regimes, for example, with the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the BWC and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC). This cooperation could include participation in events, meetings, networks, and joint projects. As mentioned in paragraph 7 above, a side event will be organised on the margins of the BWC Meeting of States Parties in December.

Scientific and technological elements of verification methodologies, emerging technologies, and new equipment (paragraph 9 of SAB-19/1)

14. The Director-General thanks the TWG on sampling and analysis (S&A), and its Chairperson, Robin Black, for both the work it has conducted since 2007 and for the comprehensive report of its Seventh Meeting. In particular, the Director-General:
 - (a) notes the TWG's recommendations concerning the analysis of ricin, and appreciates the Group's efforts in this area. The Secretariat will start to implement the recommended methods and share this information with the Designated Laboratory Network;
 - (b) notes, as highlighted by this TWG, the improvements in the capabilities of partner laboratories, as evidenced from the second confidence-building exercise on biomedical sample analysis. The Secretariat intends to continue these confidence-building exercises, with the goal of implementing a system to designate laboratories for the off-site analysis of biomedical samples;
 - (c) acknowledges the recommendation of the TWG that the OPCW adopt trace-analysis identification criteria that are based upon a slightly modified version of the system used by the European Commission (EC). The Secretariat will prepare criteria to be used in the next confidence-building exercise on biomedical sample analysis²; and
 - (d) notes the TWG's endorsement of Secretariat's efforts to reduce on-site analysis time. The Secretariat will continue to refine procedures and processes, and will continue to explore the use of new technologies, including methods to quickly screen samples for further analysis.

²

The next exercise will commence in February 2013. See S/1051/2012 dated 5 November 2012.

Scheduled chemicals and advice on the Annex on Chemicals (paragraph 10 of SAB-19/1)

15. The Director-General greatly appreciates the work that the SAB has put into considering the questions he posed to it at its Eighteenth Session (see paragraph 14.2 and Annex 6 of SAB-18/1 dated 19 April 2012). The Director-General will now start to explore potential policy options and will submit them to the consideration of States Parties at an appropriate time.

Future work of the Scientific Advisory Board (paragraph 12 of SAB-19/1)

16. In accordance with paragraph 9 of the SAB's terms of reference (see the annex to C-II/DEC.10/Rev.1, dated 2 December 2004), the Director-General would like to request the SAB to establish a new TWG and to appoint a Chairperson for it. This TWG will address questions relating to verification, in particular those falling under subparagraphs 2(e) and (g) of the SAB's terms of reference, including any further work necessary on S&A, as well as the issue described in paragraph 15 above. The Director-General will shortly prepare a mandate for the TWG, which should hold its first meeting before the end of the first quarter of 2013.
17. The Director-General emphasises the importance of intersessional work by members of the SAB and the relevant TWGs. The Secretariat is ready to facilitate this work in practical ways, including through interactions by individual members of the Board at relevant science and technology events, the use of web-based tools, and so on.
18. As previously reported, interaction between the SAB and the policy-making organs has increased in recent years. The Director-General welcomes this development and recognises the significant attendance by delegations at the informal briefings on the SAB on the margins of the Sixty-Eighth and Sixty-Ninth Sessions of the Council. This demonstrates the interest in the activities of the SAB among States Parties, and such briefings also help to sensitise the members of the SAB to the issues being considered by the policy-making organs. The Chairperson of the SAB will continue to be invited to provide such briefings on the margins of sessions of the Council and the Conference of the States Parties. Additional means by which interaction can be enhanced will continue to be explored, which could include the following: Having a standing item on science and technology on the agenda of the annual meetings of National Authorities; and discussing science and technology during the Third Review Conference.
19. The Director-General notes the intention of the SAB to convene its Twentieth Session from 10 to 14 June 2013. The Secretariat will make appropriate arrangements for this session. Meetings of the TWG will be held as appropriate and, subject to funding, the intention is to hold two meetings for each TWG in 2013.