

**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS SEVENTY-NINTH SESSION**

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. I welcome all delegations to the Seventy-Ninth Session of the Executive Council.
2. It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Chairperson of the Executive Council, Ambassador Francesco Azzarello of Italy, as he assumes his new responsibilities for the first time at a regular session of the Council. I also take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to Ambassador Álvaro Moerzinger of Uruguay for his able guidance of the Council during his term as Chairperson.
3. In a historic gathering on 21 April in Ieper, Belgium, we commemorated the centenary of the first large-scale use of chemical weapons. The Ieper Declaration, issued at that gathering, reaffirmed our commitment to the noble goals enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention. It also serves to highlight the Convention's vital role as a global norm against chemical weapons.
4. To follow up on this solemn occasion, I addressed letters to Ministers of Foreign Affairs of all States Parties and States not Party to the Convention, conveying a copy of the Ieper Declaration and underlining the importance of achieving universal adherence to the Convention.
5. On this front, I am pleased to report several positive developments over recent weeks. As stated earlier by the Chairperson, later this week, we will welcome to the Executive Council the Foreign Minister of Myanmar, who will be making an announcement to delegations. Additionally, on 21 April 2015, the National Assembly of Angola passed a resolution approving Angola's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We have been informed that an instrument of accession is currently being prepared for signature by the President. Finally, the Foreign Minister of South Sudan has signed a letter of succession to the Convention, which, I understand, will be deposited soon to the United Nations Secretary-General. These developments will, I hope, send a strong signal to the remaining three States not Party to join the Convention without delay.
6. Turning to Syria, a total of 98.7% of all chemical weapons declared by the Syrian Arab Republic have now been destroyed. With the complete destruction by Mexichem of its allocated quantity of hydrogen fluoride (HF) in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, only 49 HF cylinders remain to be destroyed by



Veolia in the United States of America. Disposal operations will resume, based on an identified option, as soon as arrangements to safely process the corroded HF cylinders have been finalised.

7. All effluents resulting from neutralisation of methylphosphonyl difluoride (DF) and sulfur mustard (HD) aboard the United States vessel MV Cape Ray have now been safely destroyed at the Ekokem facility in Finland and at the GEKA facility in Munster, Germany. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the generous in-kind contributions made by the governments of the United Kingdom and Germany towards these destruction operations, as well as the involvement of the commercial facilities Ekokem and Veolia in them.
8. Significant progress has also been made in the destruction of the remaining 12 chemical weapons production facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretariat has verified the destruction of four underground structures, and verification activities are ongoing at the fifth and last remaining underground structure. Installation and testing of monitoring equipment at four destroyed underground structures will be concluded this week. Removal of soil from all seven aircraft hangars has been completed. Drilling to accommodate explosive charges at six aircraft hangars has also been completed. Personnel overseeing destruction of the hangars received the explosives at the beginning of last week. The first aircraft hangar is expected to be destroyed this week. The security situation continues to preclude safe access to one remaining aircraft hangar.
9. The Head of the Chemical Demilitarisation Branch will provide more detailed information on these activities during this session.
10. The ninth visit of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to the Syrian Arab Republic took place from 17 to 29 May. Samples collected during site visits have been sent to OPCW designated laboratories for analysis. The fifth status report on the activities of the DAT has been made available to delegations (EC-79/P/S/1, dated 1 July 2015) and, in line with previous practice, the DAT Leader will brief delegates in the course of this session. The next DAT visit to Damascus is scheduled for 19 to 31 July.
11. Ambassador Medeiros is scheduled to visit the Syrian Arab Republic next at the end of this week.
12. Since the last session of the Executive Council, two Fact-Finding Mission teams deployed to look into two separate sets of allegations of use of toxic chemicals in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. One team conducted its work in relation to the allegations raised by the Syrian Government, and the other in the context of allegations made earlier this year of the use of chlorine as a weapon in Idlib province. On 24 June, the Secretariat provided a briefing to States Parties about this latest phase of the work of the Fact-Finding Mission. Both teams are currently examining all the information and data in their possession and will report their findings once they finalise their work.
13. I am pleased to report that the OPCW's partnership with industry has taken a significant step forward since the last Council session. The International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) has responded positively to my proposal to establish a

framework for cooperation with the OPCW, following a series of exploratory meetings I have reported on at previous sessions of the Council. A steering committee will soon be established to regulate this framework. Deepening our links with industry will be a key enabler for the full and effective implementation of the Convention. I encourage all delegations to promote this important initiative with their national industry associations.

14. The Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism convened its second meeting of 2015 yesterday. A representative of the Transnational Threats Department of the Organization for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) in Europe provided an overview of his unit's work. In response to States Parties' growing interest in exploring how the OPCW could address the threat from non-State actors, the Secretariat had put forward two topical papers, which stimulated a useful discussion. Follow-up work is expected to take place in a sub-working group.
15. The Technical Secretariat continues to facilitate the initiative to establish ethical guidelines for chemical professionals. A follow-up to the March workshop on "Guidelines for the Practice of Chemistry under the Norms of the Chemical Weapons Convention" is scheduled to take place at OPCW Headquarters on 17 and 18 September, when a draft text will be produced for consideration by stakeholders.
16. The implementation of the 2015 Verification Plan is a priority for the OPCW. The Technical Secretariat continues to conduct all assigned inspections. However, the deployment of the Fact-Finding Mission required additional human resources that may not be provided from within the Secretariat. To address this issue, I have decided to recruit former inspectors, to be contracted on a special-services agreement (SSA) basis, who will undertake Article IV, V, and VI missions.
17. On other matters, several countries have registered for the Secure Information Exchange (SIX) system since the last session of the Council, bringing the total number of registered users to 38 from 22 States Parties. Encouragingly, during this period, the Secretariat received several declaration-related documents via SIX. The Secretariat continues to analyse ways of expanding the use of SIX and to provide updates to States Parties through the Industry Cluster and at regional meetings of National Authorities, as well as to offer support for adopting this strategic communication tool.
18. The Technical Secretariat continues to update the Matrix of Actionable Items identified at the Third Review Conference, as requested by the Council at its Seventy-Third Session. The Matrix demonstrates that the Technical Secretariat has done considerable work across the whole range of its work programmes in responding to those identified actionable items. The Secretariat is examining methods to streamline the Matrix and make it more user-friendly, including restructuring its format.
19. As you will recall, at its last session, the Council was briefed on the recommendations of the Scientific Advisory Board's temporary working group on education and outreach, which included a proposal to establish an expert advisory body. To take this proposal forward, the Council has before it a draft decision on the creation of an Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (EC-79/DEC/CRP.4, dated

29 May 2015). Once approved, the decision will recommend that the Conference of the States Parties establish the new Board at its Twentieth Session in December this year, with a view to the Board's commencing work in 2016. The new Advisory Board is intended to be a key component of the future education and outreach efforts of the Organisation. Further details on the proposed Advisory Board can be found in an explanatory Note (EC-79/DG.11, dated 29 May 2015), which I circulated together with the draft decision. I look forward to your positive consideration of this proposal and to the future contribution of the Advisory Board to achieving the goals of the Organisation.

20. The project to implement a new enterprise resource planning (ERP) system is under way. To date, the implementation team has completed the project governance stage, which articulated the governance structure, as well as put into place management strategies governing delivery, risks, issues, change, and quality. The next steps will include the selection of the ERP solution and the ERP implementation partner, both of which are anticipated to be completed by the end of this year.
21. The Draft Programme and Budget is now available to you (EC-80/CRP.1, dated 3 July 2015). As I stated when I presented the document to you last week, we have sought to set out a programme of work for 2016 that allows us to respond in a cost-efficient and results-orientated way to the challenges that lie ahead. A key focus of our planning approach for 2016 has been to ensure that our programme objectives and priorities tie in with the strategic direction of the Organisation. To ensure this, the Secretariat undertook a review earlier this year, taking into consideration the current Medium-Term Plan and the recommendations of the Third Review Conference. We will also continue to strengthen results-based management, to enhance our planning capability and foster a culture of innovative thinking at a time of transition.
22. As I mentioned during my presentation of the Draft Programme and Budget, we have begun a comprehensive revision of the Medium-Term Plan so that it defines a future vision for the Organisation based on a single strategic scenario.
23. Delegates have had the opportunity to consider the vision paper prepared by the Secretariat, "The OPCW in 2025: Ensuring a World Free of Chemical Weapons" (S/1252/2015, dated 6 March 2015). I would encourage States Parties to provide feedback on the paper and to draw on it in pursuing initiatives, as they deem appropriate. A retreat for Ambassadors, currently planned for late September, will provide a useful forum for discussion in this regard. I would like to thank the Dutch Government for offering a venue for the retreat.
24. You also have before you the draft decision, "Proposal for the Establishment of an OPCW Day" (EC-79/DEC/CRP.3, dated 22 May 2015). I have briefed regional group meetings since the last session of the Council on the rationale for re-designating the date of the Convention's entry into force—29 April—as OPCW Day, to allow all of us to celebrate the Organisation's foundation. We will commemorate Victims Remembrance Day on 30 November, or the first day of the regular session of the Conference of the States Parties. I hope that the Council can agree on putting this matter to the Conference this year for a decision.

25. To enable States Parties to better understand current and emerging priorities affecting the Organisation's activities, the Technical Secretariat has continued to provide detailed briefings on a range of issues over the intersessional period—notably, the vision paper, the proposed Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, and the Mid- to Long-Term Staffing Plan for the Technical Secretariat, as mandated by the Conference at its Seventeenth Session (subparagraph 3(t) of C-17/DEC.4, dated 27 November 2012). I hope that the Mid- to Long-Term Staffing Plan, as outlined in the Note S/1292/2015 (dated 30 June 2015), will better inform States Parties about the structure we hope to achieve by 2020. To this end, an internal working group will be established. Structural and staff changes will be gradually submitted for consideration by States Parties through the Draft Programme and Budget over the coming years. However, approval of the Conference of the States Parties will be required for the proposed top structure for the Secretariat.
26. The Technical Secretariat remains at the disposal of States Parties at all times in responding to requests for information briefings to supplement those already being given on administrative and other matters.
27. I am pleased to inform you that, as of this week, we are able to offer an e-subscription service on the OPCW's External Server, which will enable users to receive notifications when new official-series documents have been distributed. If you wish to subscribe, you may do so from the home page of the OPCW's External Server, specifying your preference to receive notifications for documents in English and the additional language of your choice. Further instructions on how to use this service will be circulated in due course.
28. I also wish to note that the invitation for nominations for the second annual OPCW-The Hague Award has been posted on our website. As you know, the rationale for the award is to preserve the legacy of the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize by recognising contributions that advance the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention. I encourage you all to publicise the award, in order to attract the attention of worthy candidates.
29. Several Permanent Representatives will not be returning to the OPCW after the summer break, as their assignments draw to a close. I wish to convey to them my sincere appreciation for the cooperation we have enjoyed and my best wishes for the future. I also welcome the ambassadors who have recently joined us, and look forward to working with them.
30. As you are aware, Ambassador Grace Asirwatham will be completing her tenure as Deputy Director-General and taking up a new assignment at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka. I am sure that I speak for colleagues here in expressing to you, Ambassador Asirwatham, my sincere appreciation for the important contribution you have made to the work of the Secretariat and the Organisation. I take this opportunity to commend your professionalism and leadership at what have been challenging times. I wish you every success in your future endeavours and look forward to welcoming your successor, Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao of India, who will be joining us later this month.

31. I now turn to my customary report on the activities of the Secretariat in the period since the last session of the Council. I will read only the highlights; my detailed statement will be made available to the Council as an official document of this session.

Chemical demilitarisation and verification

32. As at midnight on 30 June 2015, the total amount of Category 1 chemical weapons verified as destroyed amounted to 63,500 metric tonnes (MTs), or 90.075% of all declared chemical weapons.
33. With 1,853 MTs of chemical agent verified as destroyed since the last session of the Council, the Russian Federation has so far destroyed 35,818 MTs, or 89.62% of its total declared amount of Category 1 chemical weapons.
34. The Maradykovsky facility continues to destroy Vx-filled aerial bomb blocks, the last type of munition remaining to be destroyed at this site. During the intersessional period, the facility at Pochep completed the destruction of 500-kg spray tanks, as well as of 150-kg aerial bombs, both filled with viscous soman. Currently, the facility is destroying the remaining 250-kg aerial bombs filled with viscous soman. Shchuchye has carried on with the destruction of Vx-filled 650-mm calibre warheads, also the last munition type to be destroyed at this facility.
35. The facility at Leonidovka has completed the destruction of both soman- and Vx-filled aerial bomb blocks. At Kizner, the facility has continued the destruction of sarin-filled rocket warheads. This process is scheduled to be completed by the end of August, followed by the destruction of 52-mm artillery munitions. As a result of maintenance- and safety-related activities conducted at the chemical weapons storage facility at Kizner, a number of chemical weapons had been identified as leaking and hazardous; these munitions have been destroyed at the chemical weapons storage facility under the Secretariat's systematic verification.
36. In parallel with the destruction of chemical munitions, the facilities at Maradykovsky and Leonidovka have continued the final disposal, by thermal treatment, of the reaction mass resulting from previous destruction campaigns, which was stored in high-volume tanks at tank farms. The facility at Pochep has scheduled the destruction of the reaction mass resulting from previous campaigns, which is currently stored in high-volume tanks at the tank farm, to take place in the fourth quarter of this year.
37. While destruction operations will continue at Kizner beyond December 2015, CWDFs at Maradykovsky, Leonidovka, Pochep, and Shchuchye are planning to conclude the destruction operations by the end of 2015.
38. In the United States of America, the first campaign operations at the explosive destruction system (EDS) installed at the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP) began on 18 March. The EDS at the PCAPP is being used to destroy problematic mustard-filled munitions in a safe and efficient manner. To date, a total of 392.28 kg of sulfur mustard (HT and HD) contained in Department of Transportation bottles, M60 105-mm projectiles, and M2 4.2 inch cartridges have been destroyed at Pueblo using this system.

39. In its latest progress report, the United States of America informed the Secretariat that systemisation at the PCAPP has now reached 77%. The final engineering review of this facility is tentatively scheduled for November 2015 and the commencement of operations is planned for December 2015.
40. Similarly, the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP) in Richmond, Kentucky, has reached 94% construction and 30% systemisation. The United States will use a static detonation chamber (SDC) to eliminate a portion of the chemical munitions at Blue Grass that are considered unsafe for destruction in the main BGCAPP facility. The construction work for the SDC at Blue Grass is 37% complete, including completion of the fabrication of the SDC equipment, as well as initial site preparatory work. The United States plans to commence SDC destruction operations at Blue Grass in 2017.
41. As at 30 June 2015, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the United States of America of 24,924 MT, or nearly 89.8% of its total declared amount of Category 1 chemical weapons.
42. At the invitation of the United States of America, an Executive Council visit took place to the PCAPP and the PCAPP EDS, Colorado, from 22 to 27 March 2015. The visit provided a better understanding of the efforts undertaken to address workforce issues, technical challenges, regulatory constraints, and financial expenditures surrounding the destruction of chemical weapons in the United States. The visit also highlighted the United States' firm commitment to continuing to explore options to accelerate the current schedule for the destruction of the remaining chemical weapons stockpiles.
43. Libya recently submitted a national paper in which it outlines its plans for the destruction of the remaining Category 2 chemical weapons using a phased approach, which allows for the destruction of some of the chemicals in a relatively short time frame and provides for continued storage of the remaining chemicals until their destruction, without posing any safety or environmental risks.
44. This plan envisages the destruction of isopropanol by dilution with water, in order to render it unsuitable for chemical weapons production. On 18 June, Libya informed the Secretariat that during operations that started at Ruwagha on 1 June, all declared stockpiles (114.103 MTs) of isopropanol had been destroyed. This brings the total amount of Category 2 chemical weapons destroyed by Libya to 669.813 MTs, or 47.78%. Libya further informed the Secretariat that the measures agreed with the Secretariat for the remote verification of isopropanol destruction were fully implemented during recent operations, and that Libya will provide all required documentation for review by the Technical Secretariat during this session of the Council.
45. At Ruwagha, Libya also plans to destroy two organic chemicals (pinacolyl alcohol and 2-chloroethanol) using an incinerator equipped with a pollution abatement system in the period from September to December 2015. The remaining three chemicals—phosphorous trichloride, thionyl chloride, and tributyl amine—are currently stored in tanks and drums, which have been identified as hazardous due to their long exposure to extreme climatic conditions in an open area. These chemicals

will be loaded from their original containers into new ones, starting in September 2015. These developments require amendments to the agreed plan for verification of the destruction of chemical weapons at the Rabta Toxic Chemical Destruction Facility, which have been submitted for the consideration and approval of the Council at this session (EC-79/DEC/CRP.6, dated 26 June 2015), as well as certain modifications to the facility agreement, which have been presented to the Council in a Technical Secretariat Note (EC-79/S/7, dated 26 June 2015).

46. The excavation, recovery, and destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China have continued. The Secretariat undertook four abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) inspections, the first two of which were carried out at ACW storage locations.
47. A final inspection at the Wuhan Mobile Destruction Facility (MDF) was completed in May. This brings destruction operations at this location to an end, with 264 items of ACWs destroyed. After completion of scheduled maintenance activities in Japan, this MDF will be deployed to Harbin to continue destruction operations at that location. The Secretariat has also inspected the Test Destruction Facility at Haerbaling and carried out verification of all items destroyed since the commencement of destruction operations at this location.
48. In June, China and Japan hosted the second Executive Council visit to the Haerbaling Test Destruction Facility. On completion of its visit to Haerbaling, the Council delegation was briefed on the progress made since its last visit in 2013 in relation to the construction of the site infrastructure and the test destruction operations. The delegation commended the continued commitment of Japan as the abandoning State Party and China as the territorial State Party to destroy all ACWs as soon as possible and to fulfil their obligations under the Convention.

Declarations

49. As at 30 June 2015, 189 States Parties had submitted their initial declarations. One State Party has yet to submit its initial declaration, both under Article III and under Article VI, and one State Party has yet to submit its partial initial declaration under Article VI of the Convention.
50. Since the last session of the Executive Council, 11 States Parties have updated their riot control agent declarations.
51. In relation to annual declarations, the Council has received a status report on the timely submission of declarations under Article VI for the period from 1 January to 31 May 2015 for consideration at this session (EC-79/DG.13, dated 11 June 2015).
52. The timeliness of submissions of annual declarations on past activities (ADPA) has been improved over the last two years. The timely submission report for 2014 indicates that out of 88 States Parties with declarable facilities and/or activities, 75 States Parties, or 85%, have submitted their declaration on time. The number of States Parties that submitted their ADPA more than 30 days late has been reduced from 11 for ADPA 2013 to one for ADPA 2014. I encourage States Parties to provide timely and accurate declarations to the Secretariat.

53. For ADPA 2014, the majority of States Parties continued to fully replace their list of other chemical production facilities (OCPFs), with currently over 99% of declared OCPFs being up to date.

Status of implementation of decision C-14/DEC.4 (dated 2 December 2009)

54. Since the last session of the Council, 14 States Parties have informed the Secretariat of their status of implementation of the decision through the fourth survey (S/1213/2014, dated 12 September 2014).
55. As at 30 June, based on survey results undertaken from 2011 to 2014 and previous submissions under paragraph 5 of Article VII, 38 States Parties had implemented the decision, and 20 States Parties had informed the Secretariat that they were in the process of doing so or that they had not yet implemented the decision. Additional details are provided in the Verification Implementation Report (VIR) for 2014 (EC-79/HP/DG.1, dated 1 May 2015).

Transfer discrepancies

56. To work towards the resolution of the long-outstanding issue of transfer discrepancies, a number of suggested approaches have been implemented by the Secretariat. While these new initiatives need to be in place before their impact can be evaluated, the situation of transfer discrepancies has been steadily improving. Since the Secretariat issued transfer discrepancy letters for ADPA 2013, more than 5,000 MTs of transfer discrepancies have been resolved. However, still over 157,000 MTs of transfer discrepancies remain unresolved.
57. The Technical Secretariat continues to work with the World Customs Organization (WCO) to include the unique identifiers of the most traded scheduled chemicals in the international Harmonized System codes. This will significantly facilitate customs authorities in identifying internationally traded scheduled chemicals. The next edition of the Harmonized System, scheduled for 2017, will include the 33 most traded scheduled chemicals. The Secretariat and the WCO continue to work on including additional 16 scheduled chemicals in the 2022 edition of the Harmonized System.

Electronic declarations

58. In comparison to the previous declaration round in 2013, the analysis of ADPAs for 2014 indicates that the number of States Parties declaring in electronic format has increased by four to 52, with seven States Parties declaring electronically for the first time.

Article VI inspections

59. In relation to Article VI verification activities, 137 inspections, or 57% of the 241 inspections planned for 2015 in the Programme and Budget for 2015 (C-19/DEC.4, dated 3 December 2014) have been conducted since the beginning of the year.
60. Of these inspections, three utilised sampling and analysis in Schedule 2 inspections to further demonstrate the transparency of the activities conducted at the inspected plant

sites. For the first time, trials of sampling and analysis were successfully conducted both at a Schedule 3 and an OCPF plant site. This demonstrates significant progress in the enhancement of verification capabilities by the Technical Secretariat in 2015.

61. The “Technical Secretariat’s Procedure for Handling Cases of Schedule 1 Chemicals as Unavoidable By-products” manual was published on 1 May (S/1272/2015). This procedure will ensure consistent handling of such cases. To inform States Parties of this process, a presentation was made to the Industry Cluster facilitation on 2 June.

OPCW Laboratory

62. In April, our recently built multipurpose training laboratory within the Rijswijk facility became fully operational. Two laboratory training courses have been conducted there to date: on liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry for our analytical chemist inspectors, held in April, and on advanced proficiency testing, held in May. The courses were aimed at enhancing the skills of participating experts and facilitating the process for their laboratories to receive designated status.
63. The 37th OPCW Proficiency Test and the fifth biomedical samples analysis exercise are currently under way. Next week, the OPCW Laboratory will host participants from both programmes in two days of meetings and discussions.
64. Following a review of the proficiency testing programme, undertaken by an external panel of experts, the Secretariat intends to commence a programme to enable the Director-General to designate laboratories for the off-site analysis of biomedical samples. A programme for biomedical proficiency testing is expected to commence in February 2016.

Inspectorate

65. During the intersessional period, the Inspectorate Division provided 14 individual courses, comprising 971 inspector days, to 140 participants.
66. Within the framework of routinely scheduled training courses mandated by the Technical Secretariat’s Quality Management System, several specialised training courses were provided in relation to contingency operations readiness.
67. Five representatives of the Secretariat participated in the “Balkan Response” exercise, a multinational live agent field exercise hosted by Serbia, in which participants practised a coordinated response to a chemical weapons attack by a non-State actor against a State Party.
68. Germany hosted the “Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments” (SSAFE) course for Technical Secretariat personnel deployed to high security risk areas. The Netherlands Forensics Institute hosted a forensics awareness course for inspectors, focusing on best practices in evidence management and collection.
69. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland provided specialised training in investigative interview techniques to inspectors and hosted an advanced chemical production technologist mock inspection at one of its industrial facilities in

order to prepare newly promoted inspection mission leaders to lead Article VI missions.

70. The United States of America hosted two Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response Standard (HAZWOPER) course sessions that are mandated by United States regulations for individuals who are working within United States CWDFs.
71. During the intersessional period, the Technical Secretariat held training activities in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Serbia, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom. France, Germany, the Netherlands, Slovakia, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom provided training, technical and/or financial support to the Secretariat in this regard.

Scientific Advisory Board

72. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) held its Twenty-Second Session from 8 to 12 June, during which the Board endorsed the report received from its temporary working group on verification¹ and submitted a report with further advice on medical countermeasures² for exposure to nerve agents. I am reviewing these reports, along with the report of the meeting and the recommendations of the SAB, and will provide my response in the next few weeks.
73. At this session of the Council, our “Science for Diplomats” initiative will continue with a briefing from Professor Slavica Vučinić on the science of medical countermeasures. The Secretariat has also made all materials from the Science for Diplomats series available on the public website in the new Science and Technology section.³ This new section of the OPCW website hosts a number of science and technology resources that may be relevant to both technical experts and policy-makers.⁴

Privileges and immunities

74. Since the last session of the Council, I am pleased to note the entry into force of a bilateral agreement on privileges and immunities between the OPCW and Burundi. The agreement entered into force on 30 April 2015.

International cooperation and assistance

75. The Technical Secretariat continues to provide support to States Parties in the context of international cooperation and assistance, including on issues related to legal and structural obligations under Article VII, assistance and protection under Article X, and international cooperation on the peaceful uses of chemistry under Article XI.

¹ https://www.opcw.org/index.php?eID=dam_frontend_push&docID=18795

² https://www.opcw.org/index.php?eID=dam_frontend_push&docID=18641

³ <https://www.opcw.org/special-sections/science-technology/science-for-diplomats/>

⁴ <https://www.opcw.org/special-sections/science-technology/>

During the intersessional period, the Secretariat conducted 51 training, capacity building, and outreach activities and projects, engaging over 880 participants.

76. Among these, the first edition of the Influential Visitors Programme took place in April, with participation by a delegation from Uganda, led by the Speaker of the Parliament.
77. Pursuant to the decision of the Conference of the States Parties at its Sixteenth Session for the establishment of the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons, a number of international medical experts were invited to develop a guidebook on medical management of chemical casualties, to be used as a practitioner's guide for medical personnel. The panel of experts held their coordination meeting at OPCW Headquarters on 29 and 30 April. The electronic version of the guidebook is expected to be launched during the Twentieth Session of the Conference of the States Parties.
78. The 2015 edition of the Associate Programme will be launched on 23 July. A separate component on chemical safety and security will be added to the programme, which has been developed in cooperation with the Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) and the Dutch Chemical Industry Association training unit.
79. The education and outreach project that commenced earlier this year has received very positive feedback. With regional workshops conducted in Asia and Africa, this project has attracted relevant specialists and professionals. The Secretariat will continue to develop this initiative further.
80. I wish to use this opportunity to express appreciation to all States Parties that have been supporting and contributing to our international cooperation and assistance activities. Your support remains crucial in ensuring the success of these activities.
81. A more detailed report on international cooperation and assistance activities will be circulated to all States Parties.

Implementation support

82. Under the legal internship programme, the Secretariat hosted representatives from Mongolia to assist them with the preparation of draft legislation.
83. The Council will recall that a mentorship and partnership programme is under way between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic. So far, under the second phase of the mentorship programme, five representatives from the National Authority of the Syrian Arab Republic were hosted by the National Authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran from 23 to 27 May in Tehran.
84. In March 2015, a basic course for National Authorities was held at OPCW Headquarters, and a subregional training course for customs authorities of States Parties from Central, West and North Africa was held in Senegal.
85. In cooperation with the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC), a seminar on the Chemical Weapons Convention entitled "Convention Implementation – Legal Aspects" was organised in Rakitje,

Croatia, from 8 to 10 April. The event, which was attended by representatives from RACVIAC's seven member states in South Eastern Europe, provided a good opportunity to address and discuss legislative and administrative requirements in the subregion.

86. Regional meetings continue to provide a platform for States Parties to address issues related to national implementation, as well as to exchange experiences and best practices. I would like to thank Algeria, China, Panama, and Slovenia for successfully hosting the regional meetings of National Authorities for the African, Asian, Latin American and Caribbean, and Eastern European regions respectively.
87. Following the successful regional meeting on education and outreach held in Argentina last year, similar regional meetings were organised for the Asian and African regions this year. These meetings were held in tandem with the regional meetings of National Authorities. Participants comprised eminent experts from academia and curriculum specialists from States Parties, who discussed the ways and mechanisms to promote Convention-related knowledge and to integrate key aspects of this knowledge into school and university curricula. As a result, a number of recommendations for the effective conduct of education and outreach activities have been made, which may be considered for implementation.

Assistance and protection

88. A full training cycle for the GRULAC⁵ region started with a basic course in chemical emergency response (CAPEQ-4), held from 23 to 27 March in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Forty-two participants from 17 States Parties from the region participated in the course, co-organised with the Brazilian National Authority in coordination with the Brazilian Ministry of Defence.
89. In the framework of the OPCW Programme for Africa, a planning and coordination meeting to launch a project in support of the Eastern African Community (EAC) States took place in Arusha, the United Republic of Tanzania, from 23 to 25 March. The project is aimed at strengthening the capacities of States Parties in protecting their civilian population. Other international organisations participating in the meeting included the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).
90. A table-top exercise to address operational and procedural issues of international assistance delivery and consequence management in the case of a major chemical incident took place from 24 to 26 March in Denpasar, Indonesia. Twenty-five experts from 14 States Parties from the Asian region participated in the exercise.
91. The subregional project in assistance and protection for Central America and Mexico continued in its third stage with a table-top exercise on chemical emergency response held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, from 7 to 9 April. Twenty-three first responders from nine States Parties attended the exercise. Instructors from Costa Rica, Guatemala, and

⁵ GRULAC = Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Peru supported the exercise, which aimed to address subregional coordination matters. A number of regional organisations also made contributions to this event.

92. The fourth advanced regional assistance and protection course on chemical emergency response for participants from the GRULAC region was jointly organised by the Technical Secretariat and the Argentine National Authority, in close cooperation with the Argentine Federal Police, from 20 to 25 April 2015 in Buenos Aires. The training was the second stage of the regional assistance and protection full-cycle training project that started in March 2015 with a basic course in Brazil involving the same participants.
93. The fourth edition of the training course on conducting sampling and analysis in a highly contaminated environment was conducted at the Polish Central School of the State Fire Service of Czestochowa, Poland, from 4 to 8 May. Sixteen participants from 14 States Parties attended this specialised course.
94. Within the framework of the OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention (the “Africa Programme”), an assistance and protection workshop was held in Kampala, Uganda, from 11 to 15 May. As an outcome document, the workshop produced a national and regional threat and risk assessment report, which will assist all EAC States Parties in further developing national and subregional emergency response capabilities.
95. Another edition of the train-the-trainer course was held in Lázně Bohdaneč, the Czech Republic, from 20 to 27 May. Sixteen highly qualified participants from 16 States Parties were trained in this specialised course, in order to ensure sustainable use of available resources for capacity building.
96. The first regional basic course on assistance and protection for Arabic-speaking States Parties was held in Algiers, Algeria, from 18 to 22 May. The course, which was jointly organised by the Government of Algeria and the Technical Secretariat, provided training to 20 participants from 12 Arabic-speaking States Parties and was aimed at strengthening protective capabilities against chemical warfare agents.
97. A combined basic and advanced training course for Russian-speaking first responders to incidents involving chemical contamination was held from 1 to 9 June in Svetlaja Roshcha, Belarus. The course was jointly organised by the Government of Belarus and the Technical Secretariat, and covered topics related to assistance and protection for a group of 21 experts from 10 States Parties.
98. Capacity building for a medical response to mitigate the impact of chemical attacks and accidental releases of toxic chemicals remains a priority for the OPCW in the area of assistance and protection. In this regard, an international course on medical aspects of assistance and protection was conducted in Kaunas, Lithuania, from 2 to 5 June. The training was provided in coordination with the Military Medical Service of the Lithuanian Army and attracted 20 participants from 19 States Parties.
99. The eleventh international assistance and protection training course was organised in cooperation with the Government of Serbia and conducted at the nuclear, biological, chemical (NBC) training centre of the Serbian Army in the city of Kruševac from 15 to 19 June. Nineteen participants from 14 States Parties, as well as a

representative of the EAC, received comprehensive training in assistance and protection against chemical weapons.

100. During the intersessional period, cooperation also continued with international organisations. The Technical Secretariat supported UNICRI's endeavours in the development of national CBRN⁶ action plans by providing expertise for the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam.
101. The fifteenth annual assistance coordination workshop was held from 30 June to 2 July in Antalya, Turkey, with attendance by representatives from 21 States Parties. The workshop served as an exchange platform to address issues and obtain useful recommendations for the implementation of Article X.

International cooperation

102. The 2015 Associate Programme, accommodating 32 participants from 32 States Parties, will commence on 23 July and will run for 10 consecutive weeks this year. Starting from this year and as part of the continuous Technical Secretariat's efforts to meet the specific needs of the participating Member States, the programme will be augmented with a one week-segment dedicated to chemical safety and security. This new segment includes a specialised course delivered by TU Delft, with the support of the Association of the Dutch Chemical Industry (VNCI).
103. Preparations are well under way for each segment of the programme, including the three-week industry placements for participants. In this regard, I wish to reiterate my gratitude to Member States and industry representatives for their valuable support and cooperation.
104. Under the analytical-skills-development programme, the Secretariat conducted four courses during the intersessional period. Two courses for the GRULAC region were held in Argentina and Spain; a course for customs laboratories was held in Poland; and a course for the African region was held in South Africa.
105. The fifth course on the analysis of chemicals related to the Chemical Weapons Convention in the framework of OPCW proficiency testing for chemistry practitioners from the GRULAC region was held in Madrid, Spain, from 18 to 29 May. The course was attended by 16 participants from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Spain, and Uruguay. The course is intended both for laboratories that are active or plan to become active in the analysis of chemicals related to the Convention, and for those that are participating or intend to participate in OPCW proficiency testing.
106. A course for States Parties in the GRULAC region on chemical safety and security management in laboratories was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 15 to 19 June. The course, organised by the National Authority of Argentina with the support of the OPCW, was intended for the personnel of chemical, physical, microbiological, and other laboratories to gain knowledge about safety and security aspects. It focused on

⁶ CBRN = chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear.

the importance of applying safety standards in relation to sites and the handling of chemicals and microbiological agents, and related processes.

107. The OPCW and the Institute of Industrial Organic Chemistry (Instytut Przemysłu Organicznego (IPO)) organised the fourth course for analytical chemists from laboratories supporting the customs services in Warsaw, Poland, from 13 to 17 April. Participants from 13 States Parties including Algeria, Burundi, China, Costa Rica, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Paraguay, Serbia, Sudan, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates attended the course. The training programme structure was designed to further enhance the knowledge of qualified analytical chemists and scientists on the role of customs service-oriented laboratories in the implementation of Article XI of the Convention and the promotion of chemical safety in laboratories.
108. Under the Africa Programme, in the area of chemical analysis, the seventh analytical chemistry course took place at Protechnik Laboratories in Pretoria, South Africa, from 4 to 15 May. Twenty-three African chemistry professionals from 17 States Parties attended the training on the analysis, synthesis, and quality control of chemicals related to the Convention. Participants from Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, South Africa, Sudan, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe successfully completed the course.
109. Under the Industry-Outreach Programme, a workshop on chemical security and safety for Member States of the South Asian Association for the Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) was conducted in Hanoi, Viet Nam, from 19 to 21 May, to discuss issues of safety and security management. The workshop was attended by 46 participants from 15 Member States.
110. With the support of the Federal Foreign Office of the Government of Germany, the OPCW, in cooperation with the Bergische Universität Wuppertal, organised a second training course on chemical-safety management for Member States in the Asian and GRULAC regions, held from 13 to 17 April. A total of 11 qualified participants from 11 countries (Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, China, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Mexico, Paraguay, Saudi Arabia, and Sri Lanka) participated in the course.
111. Under the Conference-Support Programme, a total of 43 participants have been sponsored to attend nine conferences in Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Iran (the Islamic Republic of), Italy, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Poland, and Switzerland, covering a broad range of relevant subjects including verification analysis of the Convention, contaminated sediments, CBRNe⁷ science and consequence management, engineering crystallography, electrochemistry, inorganic chemistry, toxicology, and industrial accident prevention.
112. Since the last session of the Council, the 25th meeting of the Research Support Programme Review Committee has approved funding for five new research projects; two from Brazil, two from Pakistan, and one from Tunisia. Seven projects have been approved for final co-funding from Argentina, China, Ecuador, India (2), and Malaysia (2).

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CBRNe = Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive.

113. Under the Internship-Support Programme, five new internships have begun, with scientists from Algeria, India, Lesotho, Pakistan, and Serbia carrying out internships at universities in Australia, Botswana, Finland (2) and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

External relations and universality

114. Since the last session of the Council, I have hosted a number of high-level visitors, including Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden; the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica; the Speaker of the Parliament and the Minister of State for Labour, Employment and Industrial Relations of Uganda; the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic; the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cuba; the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia; the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh; the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union; the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs; the Minister of State for Security Policy and International Cooperation of Hungary; the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka; a delegation of Members of the European Parliament; a delegation of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Swedish Parliament, the Under Secretary-General and Executive-Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services; and the Under Secretary-General and Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations.
115. Since the last session of the Executive Council, we have welcomed five new Permanent Representatives to the OPCW, who presented their credentials—from Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, the Holy See, and the Republic of Moldova.
116. During the intersessional period I paid official visits to Algeria, China, Kazakhstan, Slovenia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. During my visits, I met with government officials and delivered statements to various audiences. I also visited the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organisation in Vienna, Austria, in June and met with Executive Secretary Zerbo. In May, I delivered a lecture to more than 100 international students of the World Class programme at the OPCW.
117. In April, the Deputy Director-General held a briefing for Permanent Representatives to the OPCW based outside the Netherlands, in Brussels, Belgium. She also hosted delegations of parliamentarians from South Africa. In May, the Deputy Director-General visited China, where she opened the regional meeting on education and outreach for States Parties in Asia, and in June, she received representatives of the German Bundestag Sub-Committee on Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.
118. The Secretariat has continued to promote universal adherence to the Convention. A tailor-made programme focusing on preparing officials from Angola and from Myanmar for receiving industry inspections and for acting as inspection escorts concluded last month in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Four representatives from each of these countries participated in a workshop co-organised by the Technical Secretariat and the National Authority of the United

Kingdom, which also included a mock industry inspection hosted by a chemical plant in Liverpool.

119. Since the last session of the Council, in addition to the above, the Secretariat has sponsored four representatives of Myanmar and one representative of Angola, who participated in international cooperation programmes.

Media and public affairs

120. The Technical Secretariat has continued to respond to a large number of media queries related to the mission to eliminate the Syrian chemical weapons programme and to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission.
121. As part of the preparations for the Ieper centenary, the Technical Secretariat made a short documentary film, *Remembering Ieper*, about the legacy of the Ieper chemical attacks, which was shown at the OPCW commemorative gathering on 21 April. The Technical Secretariat also arranged participation in the commemorative gathering by international and local media, including a press conference with the Director-General. This was well attended and resulted in positive media coverage, which also extended to the OPCW exhibition at *Souterrain* in Ieper. This exhibition is currently on display at OPCW Headquarters.
122. *Buried Memories*, a new film from the OPCW's FIRES documentary project, had its premiere in the margins of the last session of the Council. The film is available on the OPCW public website, as are the two other films, *A Teacher's Mission* and *Ich liebe Dich*. I encourage you to draw on this valuable resource, as well as *Remembering Ieper*, which is also available on the OPCW public website, in your own outreach and awareness-raising efforts. I take this opportunity to express appreciation to the Government of Poland for its generous support for the making of *Buried Memories*.
123. The Secretariat has commenced a comprehensive review of multilingual official-series documents, with a view to ensuring that they are posted on the OPCW public website, in response to requests from several States Parties.

Administrative and financial matters

124. Turning now to administrative and financial issues, our ability to meet our core objectives and produce related outcomes in 2015 has continued to depend on receiving States Parties' contributions in full and on time. As at 30 June 2015, the collection rate for the 2015 assessed annual contributions stood at 76.7%, compared to 79.0% as at 30 June 2014. I encourage the 108 States Parties that have not paid their 2015 assessed contributions to do so at the earliest opportunity. In particular, the 33 States Parties that have lost their voting rights should contact the Secretariat and request multi-year payment plans to settle their long-outstanding obligations.
125. There are also concerns in relation to two States Parties that have not reimbursed the costs of the Article IV and V verification activities. As the activities have already been implemented by the Secretariat, uncollected revenue is causing cash shortage problems for the Secretariat.

126. I am pleased to inform you that the Secretariat has submitted the Financial Statements as at 31 December 2014 to the External Auditor. The audited Financial Statements, together with the External Auditor's report, will be submitted to the Council at its next session, in October.
127. In response to continuing concerns expressed by staff members in relation to the Provident Fund, such as the Fund's financial reliability and whether it provides an adequate social security scheme, I have established an internal working group, chaired by the Director of Administration, to explore the possibility of having OPCW staff members participate in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), as initially called for by the Preparatory Commission as far back as its first session in 1993. In this regard, the Secretariat has prepared a Note to inform States Parties of the latest developments.
128. Mr Chairperson, this concludes my report. Thank you for your attention.

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