



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

Eighty-First Session  
15 – 18 March 2016

EC-81/DG.15  
15 March 2016  
Original: ENGLISH

**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL  
TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS EIGHTY-FIRST SESSION**

Mr Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

1. I welcome you all to the Eighty-First Session of the Executive Council.
2. 2015 ended on a positive note, with Veolia having completed the disposal of 75 cylinders of hydrogen fluoride from the Syrian Arab Republic at its facility in Texas in the United States of America. This achievement marked the destruction of all chemical weapons declared by Syrian authorities.
3. As to the destruction of the remaining chemical weapons production facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic, one aircraft hangar has not yet been destroyed, owing to the security situation, which continues to preclude access. Given that the locations of two other stationary above-ground facilities remain outside the control of the Syrian Government, their condition cannot be confirmed at this time.
4. The latest report of the activities of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) has been circulated (EC-81/HP/DG.1, dated 22 February 2016), and the Council will receive a briefing from the Head of the DAT in the course of this session. The report still identifies several unresolved issues, despite the 15 visits to Syria so far undertaken by the DAT over the past two years. I will consider the next steps for the DAT in light of the outcome of discussions to be held during this session of the Council.
5. In February this year, following its most recent deployment to Damascus, the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) issued an addendum to its report S/1318/2015/Rev.1 on the alleged incident in Darayya. The FFM notes that no new information has come to light necessitating a change to the report's conclusion. The FFM will continue its work in accordance with relevant Executive Council decisions, with due consideration for the safety and security of its staff. Ongoing support from the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) will be an important enabler in this regard, as will the Trust Fund for Syria Missions, established last November. The Fund's balance currently stands at EUR 3.5 million, with a further EUR 4.3 million in pledges. I welcome the generous contributions made to date by the European Union and several States Parties. We intend to extend our contract with UNOPS until the end of November.



6. The OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), which was established pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), issued its first report to the Security Council on 12 February 2016. The report was also made available to our States Parties for their information. The OPCW will continue to support the vital work of the JIM.
7. Our activities related to Syria have amply demonstrated the critical role played by our designated laboratories in analysing samples—often at short notice. In 2015, we called on the expertise of 10 designated laboratories from nine Member States to analyse a total of 366 samples. I wish to thank the staff of these laboratories for their invaluable assistance, and call on all of our designated laboratories to stand ready to respond to our operational requirements. I urge States Parties to facilitate such requests, including by ensuring that the necessary bilateral technical arrangements are in place.
8. On a related note, I am pleased that the Organisation's investment in augmenting the environmental sampling analysis capacity of our laboratory network is being extended to biomedical sample analysis.
9. As part of the efforts to capture lessons learned from the mission of the OPCW in the Syrian Arab Republic, a report by Dr Ralf Trapp was circulated to States Parties and a briefing was held on 27 January. I hope that this consultation has been helpful in shaping contingency planning for possible future interactions between the Secretariat, States Parties, and other stakeholders. The Secretariat has already acted to implement some of the recommendations from Dr Trapp's report, including by establishing a coordination group within the Secretariat.
10. Progress on the destruction of remaining chemical weapons continues, and has currently reached 91.6% of declared Category 1 chemical weapons. I look forward to participating in an Executive Council visit to the last operating Russian destruction facility at Kizner next month.
11. On 24 February, the Council discussed a request by the Libyan National Authority to consider options for destroying its remaining Category 2 chemicals. In its decision EC-M-51/DEC.1, the Council mandated me to identify and evaluate—in consultation with relevant States Parties—technical, operational, security, financial, and legal factors relevant to such options. I wrote that same day to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, advising them of this decision. I will brief the Council on the progress made to date during the current session.
12. The excavation, recovery, and destruction of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China continued during the reporting period. The Secretariat undertook one excavation and recovery observation to Jiamusi, one destruction inspection to Shijiazhuang, and two storage inspections to Ningan and Longjing. Activities also continue at the destruction facility at Haerbaling.
13. As you are aware, a technical-assistance visit (TAV) team deployed to Iraq on three occasions late last year to assist the Iraqi authorities with their investigation into the alleged use of chemical weapons in northern Iraq. The TAV met with relevant authorities, collected samples, and conducted interviews with casualties and

witnesses. Its report was submitted to the Iraqi National Authority, and Iraq has circulated its paper on the results of its investigation, attaching the TAV report. Yesterday, the Iraqi Government shared with the Secretariat information regarding alleged chemical weapons attacks in three places in Iraq. These incidents took place in January, February, and early March. The Iraqi paper has been made available to the States Parties.

14. The Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Terrorism yesterday held its first meeting for 2016 under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr Bruce Koloane, Permanent Representative of South Africa. The facilitator of the Sub-Working Group, H.E. Ms María Teresa Infante, Permanent Representative of Chile, presented a report on the group's work since its establishment in October 2015 (EC-81/WP.1, dated 22 February 2016). Yesterday's meeting of the OEWG also rendered important insights into the challenges that non-State actors pose for Member States of the African Union, and the challenges of ensuring a coordinated and effective response by the United Nations and international organisations to a terrorist attack using a chemical or biological weapon.
15. The OEWG on Terrorism provides an important vehicle for the OPCW to address the very real threat of chemical terrorism. I encourage States Parties to use the OEWG and other fora within the OPCW to come forward with recommendations and share best practices on what more can be done to augment protective measures against chemical terrorism, and how best to pursue and implement such measures.
16. You will recall that I wrote in November to the Foreign Ministers of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Israel, and South Sudan to advise them of the accession of Myanmar and Angola to the Convention and encourage them to reconsider their positions. I have since received responses from the Foreign Minister of Egypt and a senior Israeli official, in which they restated the position of their countries. The Secretariat's efforts to engage South Sudan have been more encouraging. In a meeting in the margins of the African Union Assembly in late January, the South Sudanese Minister for Foreign Affairs confirmed his country's commitment to joining the Convention. The Secretariat is continuing to follow up with South Sudanese officials.
17. Since the recent appointment of the members of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach, this important initiative has become fully operational. The Advisory Board will meet for the first time at the end of April. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Board will focus on both the strategic and practical aspects of the OPCW's education and outreach programmes, and will act as a source of expert advice for States Parties. I take this opportunity to thank States Parties that submitted nominations and to welcome the appointed Board members.
18. States Parties have recently been consulting in relation to the implementation of Article XI, which has generated a number of initiatives in line with the future priorities of the Organisation. The Technical Secretariat stands ready to work with States Parties to implement relevant initiatives, including through enhanced efforts on capacity building and needs assessment. I hope the discussions on Article XI at this session of the Council will further contribute to promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry and their benefits in the field of economic and technological development.

19. In the context of enhancing engagement with other international organisations to extend the OPCW's reach, the Technical Secretariat has moved to further strengthen its cooperation with the World Customs Organization (WCO) and INTERPOL by expanding joint training endeavours. These include joint courses for customs officials, as well as WCO experts continuing to support training programmes for frontline customs officers and trainers. The first such customs course in 2016 was convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, earlier this month and will be followed by another course for customs officials in Doha, Qatar, next week.
20. The Technical Secretariat has been in close contact with the Office of the Secretary General of the WCO to discuss possibilities of further developing our cooperation. The text of a draft memorandum of understanding between the two organisations is being drafted and will be brought before the policy-making organs at the appropriate time.
21. The Technical Secretariat has responded positively to a request by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to provide trainers to support a subregional course on chemical safety and security management for countries from the central Asian region, as well as a live-agent training course for first responders from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia, to be conducted at NATO's CBRN<sup>1</sup> Centre of Excellence in the Czech Republic in September 2016.
22. I welcome such joint training opportunities with a growing network of partners, and am confident that these initiatives will contribute to enhancing the implementation of the Convention in key areas.
23. Implementation of Articles VII and X continues to be accorded high priority by the Secretariat. We are exploring avenues for deepening cooperation with subregional organisations to enhance capacity in these areas.
24. In keeping with the Secretariat's efforts to promote exchanges of views on enhancing efficiency and effectiveness, I gathered senior staff of the Technical Secretariat—at the level of Directors and Branch Heads—for a one-day retreat. The meeting covered a range of topics relevant to the functioning of the Organisation, including the Programme and Budget process, the Medium-Term Plan, programme evaluation, human resources issues, and the OPCW website. I hope to repeat this exercise at regular intervals to ensure that the Secretariat is well equipped to meet current and emerging challenges under the guidance of the policy-making organs.
25. Preparations are well under way for the inaugural OPCW Day, to be held from 2 to 4 May at OPCW Headquarters. Its centrepiece will be an international conference entitled "Chemical Safety and Security in a Technologically Evolving World", which will bring together participants from diverse stakeholder communities to discuss three broad themes—chemical safety and security, technology foresight, and future scenarios. Among the keynote speakers will be a 2013 Nobel Chemistry Laureate. To appeal to a broad range of participants, especially from the chemical industry, the event will also host an exhibition space with capacity for innovative

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<sup>1</sup>

CBRN = chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear.

displays and a poster competition, and will involve students demonstrating their projects on chemical disarmament. This three-day event will set the scene for a major commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the Organisation in 2017. More information is available on the dedicated website linked to the OPCW public website, and I encourage you to alert your communities to this exciting event.

26. I am pleased to announce that the Secretariat will convene a symposium on the subject of women in chemistry at OPCW Headquarters on 17 May. This event will highlight the many contributions of female professionals in the chemical sciences, and will seek to promote opportunities for women working in this field. It will be followed by an analytical chemistry course for female chemists at the OPCW Laboratory. I encourage all States Parties to participate actively in the symposium.
27. The Secretariat continues to face serious challenges as a result of the current financial situation. The most recent “Monthly Financial Situation Report” (S/1364/2016, dated 8 March 2016) notes a potential year-end cash shortfall, unless overdue payments and assessed contributions are made by States Parties.
28. The collection rate for the 2016 assessed annual contributions stood at 52.1% as at 29 February 2016. These assessed contributions are required to finance 2016 activities, and an amount of EUR 6.7 million of prior years’ contributions, as well as EUR 5.2 million of unreimbursed Article IV and V verification costs, remains outstanding.
29. I take this opportunity to inform delegates that the Director of the Office of Strategy and Policy, Mr Attila Zimonyi, and the Director of External Relations Division, Mr Jun Wang, will be leaving office at the end of this month and the end of May, respectively. I would like to thank Mr Zimonyi and Mr Wang for their valuable contributions and wish them well in their future endeavours. The recruitment process for the Directors of the International Cooperation and Assistance Division, the Office of Strategy and Policy, and the External Relations Division is under way.
30. Mr Chairperson, my report to the Council at its Eighty-First Session is detailed. The full text of my statement will be circulated to delegations as an official document of this session.

### **Chemical demilitarisation and verification**

31. As at 29 February 2016, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the possessor States Parties of 64,604 MTs, or 91.6% of all declared Category 1 chemical weapons.

### **Russian Federation**

32. The Russian Federation had destroyed 36,921 MTs, or 92.4% of its declared Category 1 stockpile as at 29 February 2016. At the facility at Kizner, 2,699 MTs, or 47% of chemical agent have been destroyed. The facility has completed the destruction of sarin-filled 152-mm calibre projectiles and is currently destroying sarin-filled 130-mm calibre projectiles. Work is also under way to design and build the last train (Building 1041A) for the destruction of chemical weapons filled with lewisite. Destruction operations at this facility are scheduled to continue until December 2020.

United States of America

33. As at 29 February 2016, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the United States of America of 24,925 MTs or 89.8%, of its declared Category 1 chemical weapons. The United States of America has successfully completed the destruction of problematic mustard-filled munitions at the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant Explosive Destruction System (PCAPP EDS). As at 29 February 2016, a total of 1,729 MTs of sulfur mustard, contained in mortar cartridges and projectiles, had been destroyed. In addition, the United States of America has destroyed two chemical munitions, containing 0.0045 MTs of unknown agent, at the Aberdeen Proving Ground Chemical Transfer Facility/Munitions Assessment and Processing System in Aberdeen, Maryland.
34. The Secretariat conducted the final engineering review at the PCAPP in early January 2016. As a result of this review, the agreed detailed plan for verification of this facility was slightly modified and submitted to the Council for consideration at this session (EC-81/S/5, dated 12 February 2016). The United States of America has informed the Secretariat that systemisation at the PCAPP has now attained 97%. Due to the extensive testing of equipment during systemisation, a requirement was established to further improve the performance of several plant systems. While the previously reported start date of destruction operations of June 2016 remains valid, options to enable an earlier start of operations—without compromising the safety of the community, the plant personnel, or the environment—are currently under active consideration.
35. The Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP) has completed 100% of the construction work and systemisation stands at 43%. Similar to the facility at Pueblo, the United States of America will supplement destruction efforts through the use of a static detonation chamber (SDC) to destroy chemical munitions considered unsafe for destruction at the BGCAPP facility. The construction work and systemisation for the SDC now stand at 65% and 28%, respectively. Destruction operations at the SDC are scheduled to begin in 2017.

Libya

36. As at 29 February 2016, Libya had destroyed 689.066 MTs, or 49.2% of its declared Category 2 chemical weapons.
37. The Technical Secretariat continued to assist Libya with respect to the implementation of the concept plan for the destruction of the remaining Category 2 chemical weapons. The Libyan National Authority has confirmed the destruction of 19.257 MTs of pinacolyl alcohol at a location in the eastern portion of Tripoli, using a ground flare system previously purchased. The Secretariat is awaiting the agreed verification documentation, including video-recordings, to be provided by Libya. Based on the contracts already concluded with UNOPS, through the use of funds made available by the Government of Canada, Libya has received ISO tank containers for the re-packing of Category 2 chemicals currently stored in a hazardous condition.

## **Declarations**

38. On 3 February 2016, Kiribati submitted its initial declaration under Article VI, and partially Article III, to the Technical Secretariat. As at 16 February 2016, two States Parties had yet to submit their initial declarations under both Articles III and VI of the Convention. The Technical Secretariat will continue to work with those two States Parties regarding their outstanding initial declarations.
39. The Council has received a status report on the timely submission of annual declarations under Article VI for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015 for consideration at this session (EC-81/DG.4, dated 14 January 2016).
40. I welcome the previously reported positive trend regarding timely submissions of annual declarations on past activities (ADPA)—the ADPA for 2014 marked the highest number ever of timely ADPA submissions—and encourage States Parties to submit their ADPA for 2015 by the forthcoming deadline of 30 March.

## Transfer discrepancies

41. The Secretariat continued to engage with States Parties, their National Authorities, customs authorities, and other relevant stakeholders, with a view to resolving transfer discrepancies. Despite concerted efforts to this end, the discrepancies in the latest trade declarations remain considerable. I encourage States Parties involved in transfer discrepancies to work closely with the Secretariat, and on a bilateral basis, to reconcile these discrepancies.
42. During the reporting period, the Secretariat continued its close cooperation with the WCO to facilitate the identification of scheduled chemicals for the purpose of the submission of accurate trade declarations.

## Electronic declarations tool for National Authorities

43. On 18 January, the new version—version 3.2.2—of the electronic declarations tool for National Authorities (EDNA) was announced. A report on the status of the Verification Information System, including the EDNA project, has been submitted to the Council for consideration at this session (EC-81/S/2, dated 12 January 2016).

## Secure Information Exchange (SIX) project update

44. Progress continued regarding the use of the Secure Information Exchange (SIX) system to exchange information and to submit declarations. A total of 49 users from 30 States Parties—as compared to 27 users from 16 States Parties last year—are now registered for the SIX. As reported in the Secretariat's Note S/1327/2015 (dated 13 November 2015), the enhanced use of SIX has had a positive impact on the timeliness of submissions of declarations and has strengthened the overall efficiency of the declaration process, including the facilitation of the flow of information. The Secretariat stands ready to provide assistance to States Parties on the use of electronic communication tools in the declarations process.

**OPCW Laboratory**

45. Our network of designated laboratories for off-site analysis of environmental samples currently stands at 19 laboratories from 15 States Parties. The Technical Secretariat has entered into formal agreements for off-site analysis with 11 of these 19 laboratories. I strongly encourage all Member States that host designated laboratories to assist their laboratories in arranging agreements with the Secretariat.
46. The first biomedical proficiency test is currently under way. On 26 February, samples were shipped to 26 participating laboratories in 22 Member States; the participating laboratories have a timeframe of two weeks to analyse the samples and send the reports back to the OPCW Laboratory. I hope that a number of laboratories can obtain provisional designation for the off-site analysis of biomedical samples this summer.
47. In 2015, the Secretariat completed the expansion of the laboratory facilities located in Rijswijk. The OPCW Laboratory now has the capacity to increase the number of analytical skills and laboratory programmes for States Parties in the coming year. The Laboratory is preparing a number of courses to be taught in its training facility: two courses are expected to be given in May, and additional courses are in the planning phase.

**Inspectorate training**

48. During the reporting period, the Inspectorate Division provided 22 training courses comprising 869 inspector and 321 instructor days to a total of 190 participants. The training programme comprised the mandatory initial training, which has been under way since the beginning of January, for the 12 newly arrived inspectors of Group O; the two-week toxic chemical training (organised in cooperation with the Government of Slovakia), which provides knowledge and skills to enable inspectors to safely and effectively perform verification activities in a toxic environment; four specialised courses in the area of non-destructive evaluation techniques; and two courses on hazardous waste operations. This week, another edition of the mock inspection training will be organised in cooperation with National Authorities in Italy and Spain. I would like to thank Austria, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America for the technical and in-kind support and/or financial contributions provided to the inspector training programme.

**Article VI inspections**

49. In relation to Article VI verification activities, 241 inspections had been carried out, as planned, by 18 December 2015. A reduction of the number of inspector days per inspection was achieved through the conduct of sequential inspections, the temporary recruitment of staff under special-service agreements, and the dispatch of verification officers in an inspector capacity. These measures also permitted the Secretariat to carry out the scheduled Article VI inspections, despite significant additional responsibilities related to the Organisation's activities in the Syrian Arab Republic.
50. 2015 marked the completion of the tenth year of the use of sampling and analysis methodology during Article VI inspections. Thus far, a total of 86 such inspections

have been conducted at approximately 50% of Schedule 2 sites. Further to the successful use of the sampling and analysis technique for the second time at an other chemical production facility (OCPF) site last month, the Secretariat is now in a position to carry out routine inspections involving the sampling and analysis methodology at OCPF and Schedule 3 plant sites.

51. As at the end of February 2016, the Secretariat had carried out 34 of the 241 Article VI inspections planned for this year. Owing to the turnover of inspectors during the first quarter of 2016, Article VI inspections are currently slightly behind schedule. The Secretariat is considering measures to be taken to remedy the delay.

#### Engagement with the chemical industry

52. The Chemical Industry Coordination Group, composed of representatives of the Secretariat and the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA), held its second meeting on 27 January. Several issues were discussed, including matters related to education and outreach, as well as verification-related topics. The participants identified common projects which have been submitted for approval by the OPCW-ICCA Steering Committee at its forthcoming meeting on 13 April.

#### Medium-Term Plan

53. The Secretariat will soon finalise the revised Medium-Term Plan (MTP). The MTP is based on a single future scenario, develops clear mid-term goals for the period from 2017 to 2021, and will be published in time to inform the deliberations on the 2017 Programme and Budget of the Organisation.

#### Science and technology and the Scientific Advisory Board

54. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) is scheduled to hold its Twenty-Third and Twenty-Fourth Sessions in April and October of this year, respectively. In addition, the SAB is expected to issue two working papers which will, in response to my request, cover the subjects of isotopically labelled scheduled chemicals, stereoisomers of scheduled chemicals, and the stability of environmental and biomedical samples. The SAB Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson will continue to hold briefings for the States Parties on the sidelines of the SAB sessions.
55. Furthermore, the SAB will commence preparations for the development of a report, to be submitted to the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, on advances in science and technology, including an assessment as to their potential impact on the implementation of the Convention. In this context, the SAB will conduct a series of workshops with technical experts to discuss and consider relevant developments in this area in 2016 and 2017: the two workshops scheduled to be held in 2016 will review advances in chemical forensics as well as toxicology of chemical warfare agents. The reports of these workshops will be made available to States Parties and will be the subject of briefings.
56. The Secretariat will continue to bring forward the SAB's recommendations, as outlined in the action plans I have issued (EC-80/DG.7, dated 28 August 2015) in response to the Board's report of its Twenty-Second Session (SAB-22/1, dated

21 July 2015), as well as the report of the temporary working group on verification (SAB/REP/15/1).

57. Our Science for Diplomats initiative for fostering discussion and engagement of delegations with technical experts will resume this year at the Eighty-Second Session of the Council. A compilation of all of the presentations of the series from 2014 and 2015 is available on the OPCW website.<sup>2</sup>
58. The second term of office for six members of the SAB will come to an end in 2016. I have issued a call for nominations (S/1343/2016, dated 28 January 2016) to fill these seats and look forward to receiving nominations.
59. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage States Parties to respond favourably to my request for voluntary contributions to the SAB Trust Fund, which was issued in January (S/1344/2016, dated 29 January 2016), and to thank those that have responded. The Trust Fund is an important source of funding for the substantive work of the SAB, especially its workshops and working groups in preparation for the Fourth Review Conference.

#### **International cooperation and assistance**

60. Since the Twentieth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, the Secretariat has delivered 12 courses, seminars, and workshops for 259 participants as regards the implementation of Articles VII, X, and XI. In 2016, under the International Cooperation and Assistance Programme, we are planning to deliver 122 events and activities in support of States Parties' efforts to improve and expand their implementation of the Convention.

#### **Implementation support**

61. The Secretariat, in consultation with States Parties, has developed an annual plan of capacity-building activities and events. The Secretariat will also focus on strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders, including international and regional organisations, chemical industry, academia, and civil society.
62. In an innovative approach, an integrated course combining aspects of Article VI declarations and inspections was conducted at the OPCW Headquarters from 7 to 11 March. The course, which was attended by 45 participants from 44 States Parties, was conducted in English with Spanish interpretation, and included a mock inspection at two industrial plant sites in the Netherlands.
63. On 20 and 21 March, the Secretariat will organise another training course for customs authorities of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and other Arabic-speaking States Parties. The event will be followed by a training course for National Authorities on fulfilling Article VI declaration requirements. Both courses will be hosted by Qatar and implemented with voluntary contributions from Qatar.

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[www.opcw.org/fileadmin/OPCW/Science\\_Technology/Diplomats\\_Programme/Science\\_for\\_Diplomats\\_at\\_the\\_OPCW\\_2014\\_2015.pdf](http://www.opcw.org/fileadmin/OPCW/Science_Technology/Diplomats_Programme/Science_for_Diplomats_at_the_OPCW_2014_2015.pdf).

64. In the context of the first phase of the National Authority Mentorship/Partnership Programme between Namibia and Switzerland, representatives of the National Authority of Namibia conducted an official visit to Bern and Spiez, Switzerland, in February. The programme has helped the Namibian National Authority to gain knowledge and experience on implementation of the Convention. A follow-up visit to Namibia by the Swiss National Authority is planned.

Assistance and protection

65. Further to the pilot project for the East African Community aimed at increasing the assistance-and-protection capability of regional economic communities in Africa, the Secretariat has prepared a counter-chemical threat and hazard capability development plan with States Parties of the Economic Community of West African States. As I had reported previously, the Technical Secretariat will launch similar projects with the Southern African Development Community during the course of 2016. This initiative is developed in the context of strengthening chemical security in Africa and aims to create the necessary action plans at the national and regional levels before following up with chemical response training for first responders. These activities are conducted under the third phase of the OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention.
66. The training cycle for Arabic-speaking countries, which had been initiated in Algiers in May 2015, was completed in Doha, Qatar from 21 to 24 December 2015. Fifteen trainers from the Middle East and North Africa consolidated their previously acquired knowledge and skills related to response to chemical attacks in an advanced course and exercise.
67. In February, in accordance with an offer made by Switzerland pursuant to paragraph 7 of Article X, a basic course for francophone States Parties in Africa, a specialised laboratory course, and an exercise were conducted in Switzerland for the benefit of 35 experts from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
68. In Rakitje, Croatia, from 15 to 18 February, the Secretariat, together with the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre, organised the twelfth annual seminar on the implementation of the Convention for States Parties of South Eastern Europe. The seminar was attended by 23 participants representing military and civilian agencies from countries of the subregion.
69. The 2016 training cycle for GRULAC<sup>3</sup> States Parties started with a basic assistance-and-protection course held for a group of 20 first responders from 7 to 11 March in Lima, Peru, with the support of the Peruvian National Authority and the Voluntary Firefighters Corps.
70. You will recall that, in accordance with paragraph 4 of Article X, each State Party shall provide annually to the Technical Secretariat information on its programmes related to protective purposes. Pursuant to the relevant decision of the Conference, States Parties should provide this information annually for the previous calendar year

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GRULAC = Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

not later than 120 days after the end of that year using the available format. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage States Parties that have not yet submitted the required information for the year 2015 to fulfil this important confidence-building obligation under the Convention in a timely manner.

#### International cooperation

71. The Secretariat's International Cooperation Programme continued to enhance its capacity-building activities during the reporting period. These activities are tailored to meet national and regional needs and to promote and disseminate best practices in close engagement with the industry, and include gender mainstreaming.
72. Preparations for the 2016 Associate Programme are well under way, with the industry attachment segment scheduled to take place from 5 to 23 September. I encourage Member States with modern chemical industries to facilitate offers of placements for the participants.
73. The third alumni meeting was held from 18 to 25 November 2015 under the theme "Keeping the Flag High". The meeting generated numerous recommendations, including expanding the alumni's education and outreach efforts to promote the objectives of the Convention.
74. The Secretariat has launched a periodical "Alumni Bulletin" with the aim of sharing updates on its programmes and activities as regards implementation of Article XI through the voices of alumni and partners. The first edition of this bulletin was dedicated to the Associate Programme. I hope the bulletin will serve as an effective channel of communication among various stakeholders, including the supporters and beneficiaries of the OPCW's international cooperation programmes, with the aim of further enhancing their impact.
75. From 23 to 25 February, a seminar on the Chemical Weapons Convention and chemical safety and security management for Member States in the Asian region was organised in Doha, Qatar. The seminar was attended by 76 participants from 23 Member States. This was the fifth edition of this seminar, held at the Doha Regional Centre for CBRN Training.
76. This week, from 14 to 18 March, a training workshop on best practices to develop the Responsible Care® programme in the chemical industry is being held at the D. Mendeleev University of Chemical Technology of Russia. The course accommodates 20 industry specialists from 20 States Parties in Central Asia and Eastern Europe and is provided in the Russian language. It is the first OPCW training event hosted by the Russian Federation and is the first initiative within the Secretariat dedicated to the Responsible Care® programme, which is highly relevant to the sustainable and safe development of the chemical industry. I hope this initiative can be replicated in other regions in the future.
77. Under the fellowship programme, six researchers from six Member States in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe received support from the OPCW to undertake on-the-job training in the areas of green, analytical, and environmental chemistry, and toxicology during the first half of 2016. These fellowships will be hosted by institutions of five Member States in Africa, Asia, and Europe.

78. In the framework of the Conference Support Programme, five participants were sponsored to attend a scientific conference on research in natural products and agricultural sciences, held in Laos, from 20 to 23 February. In addition, 11 participants have been selected for sponsorship to attend the E-SALAMA<sup>4</sup> Laboratory Managers Workshop in Uganda from 21 to 25 March 2016. Under the Equipment Exchange Programme, 16 OPCW laptops were donated to National Authorities following the last Annual Meeting of National Authorities and the regular session of the Conference of the States Parties.

### **External relations**

79. Since the last session of the Conference of the States Parties, I have visited France and, on two occasions, Germany. I delivered a lecture at a Nobel Peace Prize series at the Frauenkirche in Dresden on 1 February and attended the 2016 Munich Security Conference later that month.

### **Administrative and financial matters**

80. As at 31 December 2015, 94.8% of annual contributions had been collected for 2015, as compared to 94.9% at the same time in 2014. Thirty-six States Parties that had not fully paid their assessed contributions for the previous years up to 2013 lost their voting rights on 1 January 2016. Since then, two States Parties had paid their arrears and regained their rights by 29 February 2016. The Secretariat stands ready to work with those States Parties that may experience financial difficulties in meeting their obligations, to develop a multi-year payment plan to settle balances through payments in instalments. I strongly encourage those States Parties that have not paid their assessed contributions for 2014 and 2015 to pay their outstanding balances as quickly as possible.
81. To ensure compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and recommendations made by the previous and current External Auditors, I have exercised my discretion under Financial Regulation 10.5 to write down EUR 3.9 million and EUR 0.9 million of Article IV and Article V verification costs to be collected from the Syrian Arab Republic and Libya, respectively, in the 2015 Financial Statements.
82. The write-down action is purely for accounting purposes and does not discharge the legal obligations of the Syrian Arab Republic and Libya to reimburse their Article IV and Article V costs. Only the Conference of the States Parties, on the recommendation of the Executive Council, is authorised to discharge these States Parties' legal obligations, which is called a "write off".
83. I will continue to urge the Syrian Arab Republic and Libya to make every effort to reimburse the outstanding amounts, and will continue to report to States Parties on the status of these amounts in my monthly report on the financial situation, quarterly report on income and expenditure, and other documents for the policy-making organs.

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E-SALAMA = Eastern and Southern Africa Laboratory Managers Association.

84. I have also written down an additional EUR 0.1 million of doubtful amounts of the assessed contributions—which now total EUR 0.7 million from 30 States Parties—in the 2015 Financial Statements.
85. The final cash deficit for 2014 was determined as EUR 0.7 million, as adjusted following the February report on the financial situation (S/1364/2016). This amount still needs to be audited by the External Auditor of the OPCW in April, but the final cash deficit means that, instead of distributing a cash surplus to States Parties, the Secretariat will need to discuss with States Parties how the cash deficit will be shared. As soon as the amount is audited and certified, I will raise this matter with the Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters.
86. As a result of a request for proposal, the enterprise-resource-planning (ERP) project team is currently reviewing vendor submissions to identify a potential ERP solution that meets the Organisation's defined business requirements and also has the lowest possible total cost of ownership. When the ERP solution has been identified, the Organisation will initiate a process to select an implementation partner, after which the implementation phase of the project will start.

Office of Internal Oversight

87. The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) in the Netherlands conducted a quality assessment of the OPCW's internal audit function in accordance with the auditing standards promulgated by the IIA. The Institute concluded that the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO) complies with the IIA's standards for professional practices in internal auditing. The IIA Netherlands presented the corresponding certificate to me and the Director of the OIO on 19 February during a ceremony at OPCW Headquarters.
88. Mr Chairperson, this concludes my statement. Thank you for your attention.

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