

**NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL****UPDATE ON THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT'S READINESS TO CONDUCT A CHALLENGE INSPECTION OR AN INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED USE****Introduction**

1. The First Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the First Review Conference”) requested the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) to “continue maintaining a high standard of readiness to conduct a challenge inspection in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, to keep the Council informed about its readiness, and to report any problems that may arise in relation to maintaining the necessary level of readiness to conduct a challenge inspection” (paragraph 7.91 of RC-1/5, dated 9 May 2003).
2. The Second Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Second Review Conference”) reiterated this request to the Secretariat (paragraph 9.90 of RC-2/4, dated 18 April 2008).
3. The First Review Conference “stressed the importance of investigations of alleged use or threat of use of chemical weapons. For such situations, the OPCW must have the capacity, and be ready at all times, to investigate the need for follow-on action by the OPCW and by individual Member States” (paragraph 7.100 of RC-1/5). The Second Review Conference reiterated this concern (paragraph 9.105 of RC-2/4), requesting the Secretariat to keep the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) informed about its readiness.
4. The Third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention made two requests of the Secretariat with respect to the conduct of a challenge inspection (CI) or an investigation of alleged use (IAU) (paragraph 9.111 of RC-3/3*, dated 19 April 2013). The first was that the Secretariat continue to improve the standard of readiness to conduct a CI or an IAU in accordance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”). The second was to keep the Council informed about its readiness and to report any problems that may arise in relation to maintaining the necessary level of readiness to conduct a CI or an IAU.
5. The Secretariat has previously submitted to the Council several Notes on its readiness to conduct a CI (EC-36/DG.5/Rev.1, dated 17 February 2004; EC-41/DG.10, dated 2 June 2005; EC-46/DG.6, dated 26 June 2006; EC-49/DG.11, dated 1 June 2007;



EC-54/DG.9, dated 25 September 2008; EC-58/DG.8, dated 28 September 2009; EC-62/DG.8, dated 22 September 2010; EC-66/DG.10, dated 8 September 2011; EC-70/DG.12, dated 12 September 2012; EC-74/DG.15, dated 25 September 2013; EC-76/DG.11, dated 12 June 2014; and EC-79/DG.12, dated 3 June 2015.)

6. This Note concentrates on the activities the Secretariat has undertaken since the last update (EC-79/DG.12), and highlights issues that still require further consideration and attention by States Parties and by the Secretariat.

Creation of the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell within the Inspectorate Division

7. In accordance with decision C-20/DEC.6 (dated 3 December 2015) entitled “Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2016”, the Secretariat has assigned a small cadre of inspectors to a newly created Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell, with the goal of strengthening the Secretariat’s preparedness for contingency operations, including CIs and IAUs.
8. Members of this Cell have the following primary responsibilities:
 - (a) supporting the capacity-building programmes and delivering external training as part of the Secretariat’s international cooperation and assistance activities;
 - (b) planning, coordinating, and providing the training programme for inspectors and support personnel;
 - (c) planning for contingency operations in cooperation and conjunction with all relevant divisions and offices of the Secretariat;
 - (d) preparing, planning, and exercising for contingency operations with other relevant divisions and offices of the Secretariat; and
 - (e) deploying for contingency operations as part of advance teams.

Training of inspectors and operational procedures

9. Inspectorate training in 2015 focused on maintaining the mandatory qualifications required under the Quality Management System for the conduct of inspection activities and for the preparation of experienced inspectors and inspection team leaders to perform inspection duties for “non-routine” missions and contingency operations. Inspectorate training in regard to contingency operations was conducted in a manner that recognised the many operational commonalities between CIs and IAUs. There was a continued focus on training inspectors for activities in non-permissive and conflict-affected environments.
10. The Inspectorate Division completed 2,456 equivalent training days and 590 instructor days within the Inspectorate Training Programme in 2015. The training courses were delivered within the territories of France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as at OPCW Headquarters.

11. As part of the training programme, the Secretariat held a CI field exercise from 20 to 27 February 2015 in Rieti, Italy. The scenario began with the initial request and covered all phases of the CI process. Sixteen inspectors took part in the exercise, which was supported by the Italian Ministry of Defence and a team of evaluators from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as OPCW staff members. The experience gained and lessons learned from this exercise proved very useful for the preparation and conduct of the fact-finding missions in 2015.
12. At the beginning of 2016, a new group of inspectors consisting of 12 members (Group O) followed a 13-week training programme. This programme included, for the first time, a one-week module on contingency operations, which was delivered in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, from 10 to 16 April 2016. The course modules included activities related to CIs and IAUs and also covered scenarios related to fact-finding missions and technical assistance visits. The training was delivered by members of the Capacity Building and Contingency Planning Cell and supported by the personnel of the Bulgarian Ministry of Defence.
13. As reported previously, the Secretariat has embarked on various training activities. In addition to regular training, the courses particularly relevant for CIs and IAUs included:
 - (a) non-destructive evaluation training;
 - (b) report writing;
 - (c) explosive remnants of war awareness training;
 - (d) ordnance refresher training;
 - (e) toxic chemical training with live agent;
 - (f) advanced agent handling and analysis;
 - (g) reconnaissance and sampling; and
 - (h) safe and secure approaches in field environments training.
14. New training programmes have also been implemented, aimed at reinforcing the Secretariat's capabilities to conduct contingency operations by enlarging the inspectors' skill sets. These programmes include the forensic awareness training provided by the Netherlands Forensic Institute (three courses planned in 2016) and the interview skills training delivered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
15. In the case of a request for assistance under Article X of the Convention, an Assistance Coordination and Assessment Team (ACAT) could be tasked with establishing relevant facts related to the request, as well as with determining the type and scope of any supplementary assistance needed. In this context, an ACAT training course was held at OPCW Headquarters in October 2015, the objective of which was to provide participants, selected from among the OPCW staff as potential ACAT members, with an in-depth understanding of some of the key issues that they are

likely to face on such a mission, including relationships and coordination with other international actors, preparation of operational plans of action, interaction with local emergency management authorities, safety and security, communications, and other logistical aspects of the deployment.

16. As reported previously, the experience gained for the preparation and conduct of recent missions like the OPCW Mission and the OPCW Fact-Finding Missions in Syria permitted the Secretariat to continue to improve on procedural and deployment issues such as command and control, communications, information handling, the management of a large deployed team, and the executive risk assessment process. These are readily transferable to a CI or an IAU, should either be requested. In this context, the Secretariat undertook the revision of the relevant standard operating procedures and work instructions.
17. On 16 December 2015, a report on the lessons learned from the OPCW Mission in Syria was submitted by Dr Ralf Trapp to the Director-General. This report contains several recommendations relating to contingency operations, covering issues such as human factors, operational concepts, management and content of information flows, and equipment and methods. The implementation of such recommendations should also contribute to the readiness to conduct a CI or an IAU.

Equipment and laboratories

18. Since last year's report, the Secretariat has informed States Parties of the procurement of a number of additional items of inspection equipment that conform to the operational requirements and technical specifications approved by the Conference of the States Parties. The annex to Note S/1375/2016 (dated 18 April 2016) contains the consolidated list of approved inspection equipment purchased by the Secretariat for inspection or verification purposes as at 7 April 2016. Among the new items are the digital cameras and the OPCW-made special interview packages, consisting of camcorders with external microphones, tripods, and dictaphones for conducting detailed interviews of subjects. The mission teams have also been using new laptops, printers, and secure voice telephones since September 2015. Additional new equipment includes another hand-held chemical weapons detector/monitor and a new (explosion-proof) flashlight that provides illumination in places where explosive mixtures of gases or vapours may exist. These items have helped to increase the operational readiness and capabilities of the OPCW significantly, especially in respect of possible cases of CIs and IAUs.
19. The OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store have the supplies and equipment necessary to field an inspection team within the time frames specified in the Convention.
20. The Secretariat maintains a network of designated laboratories available to carry out the off-site analysis of samples in support of a CI or an IAU. The list of designated laboratories is updated following proficiency testing, and the current list of laboratories can be found in Note S/1369/2016 (dated 30 March 2016). In June 2016, the Secretariat will publish a list of laboratories designated for the off-site analysis of biomedical samples.

Issues requiring further action by the Secretariat

21. The Secretariat will continue to refine its analysis of key elements to evaluate and validate in future exercises on CIs or IAUs. In this regard, in September 2016 the Secretariat plans to conduct a full-fledged contingency operations exercise that will include scenarios relevant to CIs and IAUs, which should involve at least 15 inspectors. In preparation for this forthcoming exercise, the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell, supported by other Secretariat staff, will be developing a number of short training workshops and table-top exercises.
22. Increasing dialogue on contingency operations with other relevant international organisations will also continue. These include the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Mine Action Service, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, and INTERPOL. Smaller, more focused regional exercises should provide a good opportunity to ensure broader geographical coverage. In this context, the Secretariat fully appreciates the support of States Parties in providing opportunities for exercises and training and encourages further cooperation in this regard.
23. As reported previously, the issue of readiness for IAUs and CIs could be compromised if the United Nations laissez-passer (UNLPs) are not available for visa applications. This could be the case when staff members are travelling with UNLPs or when the UNLPs are at an embassy or consulate for another visa application procedure. The UNLPs could also be with the United Nations Office in Geneva for renewal. The visa procedures take an average of one week, although they can, in some instances, be prioritised.

Issues requiring further action by States Parties

24. As mentioned in previous reports, the ability of the OPCW to respond promptly to requests for a CI and/or an IAU could be seriously impacted by a lack of standing arrangements that require action by States Parties in accordance with Part II of the Verification Annex to the Convention (hereinafter “the Verification Annex”):
 - (a) In accordance with paragraph 10 of Part II of the Verification Annex, States Parties are under an obligation to provide designated OPCW inspectors with multiple-entry visas that are valid for at least two years. At the end of May 2016, 134 States Parties (69.8%) had either issued, or promised to issue, two-year multiple-entry visas, or had no visa requirements for OPCW inspectors travelling on UNLPs; 30 States Parties (15.6%) had issued multiple-entry visas valid for one year (or less); and 28 States Parties (14.6%) had either not responded or had provided incomplete general visa information that does not apply to OPCW inspectors travelling on UNLPs. It may be worthwhile recalling that States Parties that impose visa requirements on UNLP holders could also consider agreeing to a waiver of the standard visa requirements for UNLP holders in the event of a CI or an IAU.

- (b) In accordance with paragraph 16 of Part II of the Verification Annex, States Parties are under an obligation to designate the points of entry (POEs) that are to be used by mission teams. As at 20 May 2016, 136 States Parties had provided information regarding POEs.
- (c) In accordance with paragraph 22 of Part II of the Verification Annex, States Parties are under an obligation to inform the Secretariat of the standing diplomatic clearance number (SDCN) for non-scheduled aircraft. As at 30 May 2016, 32 States Parties had provided SDCNs on a permanent basis, while 40 had provided information on expediting them in the event that a requirement arises. It should be noted that an additional 37 States Parties provide SDCNs on an annual basis.
- (d) In accordance with paragraph 44 of Part II of the Verification Annex, inspectors shall have the right to communicate with the Headquarters of the Organisation and to use their own two-way system of communications between team members during inspections. Accordingly, States Parties must inform the OPCW of the radio frequencies available for use by the inspection teams for such purposes. As at 17 May 2016, only 98 States Parties had provided frequencies or had given the Secretariat authorisation to use OPCW default frequencies and/or had provided conditions for their use. Of these 98 States Parties, only 37 updated or confirmed their information in 2016. An additional six States Parties had provided information on an expedited methodology for obtaining the necessary frequencies. Ninety-four States Parties have never provided any records regarding radio frequencies.

Conclusion

- 25. The full range of operational activities that have taken place during the reporting period has augmented the preparedness of the Secretariat to conduct effective CIs, IAUs, or other contingency operations at short notice. The upcoming activities, such as the full-fledged contingency operations exercise in September 2016 that will include scenarios relevant to CIs and IAUs, should reinforce the responsiveness and capabilities of the Secretariat in the event of a CI or an IAU. The necessary readiness to conduct a CI or an IAU requires the support of States Parties for these efforts. The Secretariat reiterates its appreciation for the assistance that States Parties have extended thus far, and hopes that this will continue. As in the past, the Secretariat would like to encourage States Parties to come forward to jointly organise, participate in, and conduct exercises, training, and other operational activities.