OPCW   **Executive Council**

NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

STATUS REPORT ON THE
VERIFICATION INFORMATION SYSTEM

Introduction

1.   The Verification Information System (VIS) is the information system that has been developed by the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter "the Secretariat") to manage all verification-related information and to support its verification activities.

2.   The concept for the development of the VIS was presented by the Director-General in a Note to the Executive Council (hereinafter "the Council") at its Fortieth Session (EC-40/S/2, dated 27 January 2005). Further Notes from the Director-General to the Council at its Forty-Second (EC-42/S/3, dated 2 September 2005), Fifty-First (EC-51/S/2, dated 20 November 2007), Fifty-Fifth (EC-55/S/3, dated 30 January 2009), Fifty-Ninth (EC-59/S/3, dated 1 February 2010), Sixty-Third (EC-63/S/4, dated 20 January 2011), Sixty-Seventh (EC-67/S/2, dated 25 January 2012), Seventy-First (EC-71/S/1, dated 16 January 2013), Seventy-Fifth (EC-75/S/4, dated 15 January 2014), Seventy-Eighth (EC-78/S/1, dated 7 January 2015), and Eighty-First (EC-81/S/2, dated 12 January 2016) Sessions provided updates on the status of the development of the VIS.

Status of the Verification Information System

3.   The VIS is the key business-enabling technology platform that supports verification activities. With a view to streamlining and supporting verification business processes more effectively and to increasing the Secretariat's analytical capabilities, the VIS is continually being improved.

4.   In 2016, the Secretariat completed several activities to improve the VIS with an emphasis on unifying and streamlining business processes and eliminating ad hoc ways of capturing and tracking information. One of the key results of this effort is the new Issue Management Module which offers a platform for the integrated and centralised management of issues arising from either the Article VI declaration evaluation process or from the inspections carried out. This new module enables all issues to be analysed in the central repository and allows substantive officers to review any outstanding issues during the conduct of their duties, be they related to declaration evaluation or inspection planning. As a consequence, the Verification Division is working to eliminate other tools and methods that were used previously for tracking and sharing this information.

5.   In 2016, another priority area for VIS was the development of a new module to track and manage information regarding old and abandoned chemical weapons. The work on this module started in the fourth quarter of 2016 and will continue in 2017.

6.   One of the key projects undertaken by the Secretariat in 2016 was the upgrade of the Security Critical Network (SCN). As part of this project, upgrades were made to several key components, such as personal computers and their operating systems and other critical software tools, as well as the servers that host the VIS. This was a long-pending effort that was completed through the joint work of several units. Consequently, the Verification Division gained access to a contemporary computing environment and up-to-date versions of critical software tools.

7.   Another important project that the Verification Division embarked on in 2016 concerns the establishment of an advanced data analytics environment that will meet the needs of the Division to explore and take advantage of new tools that are available on the market. A project feasibility study was completed in the fourth quarter of 2016 and this important project will continue in 2017.

8.   In 2016, the Secretariat continued its efforts to implement a contemporary enterprise content management solution for the integrated management of documents and records related to verification activities on the SCN. The procurement of the new system was completed in 2016 and the Secretariat is planning to initiate the implementation phase in early 2017.

Electronic declarations and secure information exchange

9.   In the year under review, the Secretariat observed that States Parties demonstrated a continued interest in the submission of declarations in electronic format. Five new States Parties used the Electronic Declarations Tool for National Authorities (EDNA) for the first time, resulting in 53 States Parties in total using EDNA for the preparation of annual declarations of past activities for the year 2015.

10.   In continuation of the effort to improve the EDNA software, the Secretariat released an updated version (EDNA version 3.3) in July 2016, including fixes for the most important software errors discovered in previous versions.

11.   In 2016 the Secretariat also observed a rise in interest among States Parties in using the newly established Secure Information Exchange (SIX) system, which was made available to States Parties in July 2014 (as reported in the Secretariat's Note S/1192/2014, dated 1 July 2014). By the end of 2016, 38 States Parties had registered to use the system, in comparison to 29 States Parties as reported to the Council in the previous status report (EC-81/S/2). During the Eighteenth Annual Meeting of National Authorities in November 2016, the Secretariat conducted several bilateral meetings with the representatives of States Parties to assist with the registration process. The Secretariat will continue its efforts to increase and expand the use of the system, and to provide further information and updates to the States Parties.

12.   In furtherance of the efforts to broaden the use of existing tools and systems and to promote new systems, the Secretariat continues to provide regular training activities. During the Twenty-First Session of the Conference of the States Parties, the Secretariat held training courses on EDNA and SIX, with several States Parties

attending. In addition, the Secretariat completed the translation into French and Spanish of the two dedicated e-learning modules for EDNA and SIX, and these modules are now being deployed.

Further information

13. The Secretariat considers the VIS to be an established system. It is in routine use and the main development activities have been completed. As a key enterprise software system that supports all verification activities, the VIS will continue to be subject to continual improvement, with maintenance and enhancement activities carried out as subprojects. The Secretariat will continue to report on this system, focusing on key developments such as new releases of EDNA software, developments with regard to electronic declarations and secure information exchange, and reports of the user-group forums.

14. Information on the VIS, EDNA, and SIX can also be found on the OPCW external server and is regularly updated as new information becomes available. Questions about the VIS or EDNA can also be sent to a dedicated email address (vis@opcw.org); questions concerning SIX can also be sent to a dedicated email address (six@opcw.org). Interested States Parties can also make enquiries by telephoning the OPCW central telephone number (+31 (0)70 416 3000) and asking for the EDNA or SIX help desk.

- - - o - - -