



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; EC-79/DG.12, dated 3 June 2015; and EC-82/DG.12, dated 7 June 2016.)

6. This Note concentrates on the activities the Secretariat has undertaken since the last update (EC-82/DG.12), and highlights issues that still require further consideration and attention by States Parties and by the Secretariat.

The Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell and the Situation Centre 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 the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell, with the goal of strengthening the Secretariat’s preparedness for contingency operations, including CIs and IAUs. Additionally, the current Operations Centre and Information Cell within the Inspectorate Division are being combined and transformed into a new Situation Centre. The Situation Centre will provide 24-hour mission support, develop and maintain a comprehensive common operating picture, ensure secure and reliable communications, and provide information analysis to facilitate senior management decision-making in support of CIs, IAUs, contingency operations, and technical-assistance visits, as well as routine missions, when required.

Training of inspectors and operational procedures

8. Inspectorate training in 2016 continued to maintain the mandatory qualifications required under the Quality Management System for the conduct of inspection activities and for the preparation of inspectors and inspection team leaders to perform inspection duties for “non-routine” missions and contingency operations such as CIs and IAUs. There was a continued focus on training inspectors for activities in non-permissive and conflict-affected environments.
9. Two groups of new inspectors came on board in 2016. The first group (Group O) consisted of 12 new inspectors, who joined the OPCW in January 2016 and completed their initial mandatory training by the end of April 2016. The second group of 27 new inspectors (Group P) started their mandatory initial training in October 2016 and completed it by the end of December 2016.
10. The Inspectorate Division completed 3,085 equivalent training days in 2016, including the mandatory initial training and refresher courses. All participants in the training programme, which comprised 60 individual training courses, were inspectors, some of whom attended several training courses. The training courses were delivered within the territories of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, the Netherlands, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as at OPCW Headquarters.

11. In order to maintain and enhance the Secretariat's ability to conduct CIs, IAUs, or other contingency operations, the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell provides regular training to a Core Team, drawn from staff across the Inspectorate Division, on operational procedures and activities, health and safety regulations, and lessons learned from past missions.
12. In accordance with the action plan under programme objective 3 of the Inspections Programme in the Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2017 (C-21/DEC.6, dated 1 December 2016), 19 members of the Inspectorate Division's Core Team for the conduct of contingency operations participated in a training course at the CBRN¹ Centre in Kruševac, Serbia, from 27 February to 3 March 2017. The training was delivered by members of the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell, in close cooperation with other units of the Secretariat. During the course, the participants took part in four days of field training, which included activities related to CIs and IAUs, as well as other scenarios related to contingency operations. These activities included working in toxic environments with live chemical agents, taking into consideration the required safety precautions; establishing a command and control post; hands-on training on encrypted and satellite communication; coordination with the Secretariat support team; investigation of an incident involving the use of toxic chemicals as a weapon; reconnaissance and sampling from a small-scale production configuration of toxic chemicals in a clandestine laboratory; and taking samples and preparing them for transportation for off-site analysis. The training course was conducted in a manner that recognised the many operational commonalities between CIs and IAUs. Some of the recommendations made in the report prepared by Dr Ralf Trapp in 2015 entitled "Lessons Learned from the OPCW Mission in Syria" were used in the planning of the exercise scenarios.
13. The Inspectorate Division regularly conducts the Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments (SSAFE) training course, which is a requirement of the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) for operations in high-risk environments. The most recent training course was conducted at the United Nations Training Center of the Bundeswehr in Hammelburg, Germany, in close cooperation with the German army, from 20 to 24 March 2017. The course comprised a sequence of different scenarios in high-risk environments that might occur in CIs, IAUs, or other contingency operations, simulating real situations. A total of 17 members of the Secretariat participated in the course, both in the form of initial training or as a refresher module. As at 17 May 2017, 45 inspectors had the SSAFE certification, which qualifies them for operations in high-risk environments such as CIs, IAUs, or other contingency operations.
14. As reported previously, the Secretariat has embarked on other relevant training activities. In addition to regular training, the courses particularly relevant for CIs, IAUs, and contingency operations included:
 - (a) non-destructive evaluation training;
 - (b) explosive remnants of war awareness training;

¹ CBRN = chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear.

- (c) ordnance refresher training;
 - (d) toxic chemical training with live agents;
 - (e) reconnaissance and sampling; and
 - (f) advanced negotiation and report writing.
15. New training programmes have also been implemented, aimed at reinforcing the Secretariat's capabilities to conduct contingency operations by enhancing the inspectors' current skill sets. These started in 2016 and will continue throughout 2017. These programmes include the forensic awareness training courses provided by the Netherlands Forensic Institute and the interview skills training delivered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The courses have been provided by in-kind-contributions from the European Union, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. As previously, the experience gained during the preparation and conduct of recent missions such as the OPCW mission in Syria and the deployments of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria has assisted the Secretariat in the continued improvement of procedural and short-notice deployment issues. Moreover, the Secretariat has continued to enhance command and control, communications, information handling, the management of a large deployed team, and the executive risk assessment process, which are skills readily applicable to a CI or an IAU. In this context, the Secretariat continues the revision of the relevant standard operating procedures and work instructions.
16. The Secretariat, with cooperation extended by the Police National CBRN Centre of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, will conduct a command and control and investigation course for potential members and leaders of contingency operations. The purpose of this training is to strengthen the inspectors' ability to plan in a tactical and operational context and use their technical knowledge in a comprehensive investigative scenario-based exercise.

Equipment and laboratories

17. Since last year's report, the Secretariat has informed States Parties of the procurement of a number of new items of approved inspection equipment that conform to the operational requirements and technical specifications approved by the Conference of the States Parties. The States Parties have been informed of the newly purchased pieces of approved equipment by Secretariat Notes S/1404/2016 (dated 9 August 2016), S/1430/2016 (dated 20 October 2016), and S/1487/2017 (dated 20 April 2017). Among the new items are the combo-pen auto injectors, as a medical counter measure for chemical nerve agent, new digital cameras, and new laptop computers. Additional new equipment includes a new (explosion-proof) flashlight that provides illumination in places where explosive mixtures of gases or vapours may exist and encrypted universal serial bus (USB) memory sticks to protect the confidential materials collected during CIs, IAUs, or other contingency operations. These items have helped to increase the operational readiness and capabilities of the OPCW, particularly in respect of possible cases of CIs and IAUs.
18. Based on experience gained by the conduct of contingency operations at short notice in recent times, the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store have the supplies and

equipment necessary to deploy and support an inspection team within the timeframes specified in the Convention.

19. The Secretariat maintains a network of designated laboratories available to carry out the off-site analysis of samples in support of a CI, IAU, or contingency operation. The list of designated laboratories is updated following proficiency testing. The current list of laboratories designated for environmental sample analysis can be found in Note S/1481/2017 (dated 29 March 2017), and the current list of laboratories designated for the biomedical sample analysis can be found in Note S/1402/2016 (dated 1 August 2016).

Issues requiring further action by the Secretariat

20. The Secretariat will continue to refine its analysis of key elements to evaluate and validate in future exercises on CIs or IAUs, as well as other contingency operations. In this regard, the role of a mission support group in the Secretariat during the preparation, conduct, and post-mission phases is crucial. In 2017, the Secretariat plans to conduct an additional and fully-fledged contingency operation exercise that will include scenarios relevant to both CIs and IAUs, involving the Secretariat's Headquarters support team, with an element of short-notice deployment. In preparation for this forthcoming exercise, the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell, supported by other Secretariat staff, has conducted short training workshops and table-top exercises, which will continue throughout 2017.
21. 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 UNDSS, 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.
22. As reported previously, the issue of readiness for IAUs and CIs could be compromised if the United Nations laissez-passer (UNLPs) were 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

23. 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. On 19 May 2017, 135

States Parties (70.3%) had either issued, or promised to issue, two-year multiple-entry visas, or had no visa requirements for OPCW inspectors travelling on UNLPs; 31 States Parties (16.2%) had issued multiple-entry visas valid for one year (or less); and 26 States Parties (13.5%) 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 19 May 2017, 135 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 19 May 2017, 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 19 May 2017, only 99 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 99 States Parties, only 39 updated or confirmed their information in 2017. An additional three States Parties had provided information on an expedited methodology for obtaining the necessary frequencies. Finally, 94 States Parties have never provided any records regarding radio frequencies.

Conclusion

- 24. 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, including requests for technical-assistance visits at short notice. Subject to the availability of resources, future short-notice deployment exercises will be conducted in cooperation with a variety of national and international actors, with the objective of maintaining the responsiveness and capabilities of the Secretariat in the event of a CI or IAU. Therefore, 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.