



Eighty-Seventh Session
13 – 16 March 2018

EC-87/DG.22
13 March 2018
Original: ENGLISH

NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. I welcome you to the Eighty-Seventh Session of the Executive Council.
2. Allow me to begin by recognising the able leadership of the Chairperson, Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh. It is the first session of the Council in 2018 and the Secretariat will continue to extend its full support to your activities, Mr Chairperson, during the remainder of your tenure.
3. This year is of particular importance to the OPCW since it will include the preparations for the Fourth Review Conference. Arrangements for its convening are under way. The Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference (OEWG-RC) began meeting in January under the leadership of Ambassador I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja of Indonesia. The Secretariat is actively supporting the group's work, and will submit its input to the preparatory process by the end of April. Meanwhile, the Co-Chairpersons of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW, Ambassador Sabine Nölke of Canada and Ambassador Bruce Koloane of South Africa, have submitted their report which includes forward-looking and constructive recommendations. I believe that it would provide a substantive and useful input for the preparation of the outcome document for the Fourth Review Conference.
4. The persistent allegations of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic remain a source of grave concern. The Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) continues its work on the allegations that have been assessed as credible. Current FFM activities cover incidents that took place from the end of 2016, except for those on which the Secretariat has already issued reports. The Secretariat provided a briefing to States Parties last week on the latest activities of the FFM.
5. Over the reporting period, the process of consultations regarding Syria's chemical weapons declaration has been ongoing through the exchange of letters. The Syrian Arab Republic provided to the Secretariat a timeline and an overview of chemical weapons research and development activities carried out on its territory, including documents pertaining to the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC).



6. The results of the technical analysis of Syria's documents conducted by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) have been made available to the Council in my report on the work of the DAT, EC-87/HP/DG.1 (dated 2 March 2018).
7. On 6 March, the DAT gave an informal briefing to the States Parties on the technical aspects and the current status of all outstanding issues related to the initial declaration and submissions of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretariat remains unable to confirm that the Syrian Arab Republic has submitted a declaration that can be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention and the decisions of the Council.
8. On 22 November 2017, a second round of inspections was concluded at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the SSRC. In February this year, samples were sent to two designated laboratories for analysis. The results of the inspection were issued on 28 February as an addendum to my report EC-87/DG.15 (dated 23 February 2018) and it was noted that the inspection team did not observe any activities inconsistent with obligations under the Convention.
9. On the subject of Syria's chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs), the Secretariat has verified the destruction of 25 of the 27 former CWPFs declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. In November 2017, the Secretariat conducted an initial inspection of the last two stationary above-ground facilities in accordance with paragraph 44 of Part V of the Verification Annex to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Secretariat, together with the United Nations Office for Project Services, is to conclude a contract in the next couple of weeks with a company that will assist the Syrian Arab Republic in the destruction of the facilities located at these two sites. Destruction work could take another two to three months.
10. With regard to the special mission conducted in response to the request of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Secretariat deployed a team of experts between 6 and 12 February. Despite some logistical and security challenges, five sites were visited and a summary of the findings was issued as a Note by the Secretariat, S/1596/2018 (dated 2 March 2018). The experts observed a number of chlorine cylinders and a storage tank containing an acidic substance.
11. The recent report that two people became seriously ill in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as a result of exposure to a nerve agent is of serious concern. The Secretariat offered assistance to the United Kingdom last week. The British Foreign Secretary, Mr Boris Johnson, called yesterday evening on this issue and informed me about the results of their investigation at this stage. It is extremely worrying that chemical agents are still being used to harm people. Those found responsible for this use must be held accountable for their actions.
12. Turning now to chemical demilitarisation, the destruction of the remaining declared Category 1 chemical weapons continues, and 96.3% had been destroyed as at 31 January 2018.
13. In the United States of America, progress on the destruction of Category 1 chemical weapons remained the same as previously reported, namely 25,154 metric tonnes (MT) destroyed, or 90.6%. The reason for the unchanged amount is due to technical difficulties encountered at the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant

(PCAPP). The construction and systemisation at the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP) continues.

14. I am pleased to report that Iraq has informed the Secretariat that encapsulation of Bunkers 13 and 41 at the Al Muthana site was completed on 23 November 2017. I should like to acknowledge the presence of H.E. Dr Abdulrazzaq Al Jaleel Essa, the Iraqi Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, among us today. I had the pleasure to present to him this morning a certificate marking the completion of the destruction. Iraq provided the Secretariat with videos detailing all aspects of the encapsulation. Upon review, the Secretariat was able to confirm the completion of the destruction of Iraq's chemical weapons remnants. Additionally, four former CWPFs declared by Iraq have been completely destroyed in accordance with the Convention. This was verified during inspections conducted in December 2017 and February 2018. The Secretariat also verified that one former CWPF had been converted for peaceful purposes. I commend the Iraqi government for its commitment to implementing its obligations deriving from the Chemical Weapons Convention.
15. On 28 November, Libya informed the Secretariat of the completion of the destruction of its entire stockpile of declared chemical weapons. A Secretariat inspection team travelled to Munster, Germany, in the first week of December to confirm the destruction at GEKA mbH.¹ On 11 January, the Government of Germany hosted a ceremony in Munster to mark the conclusion of operations at GEKA mbH and the complete elimination of Libya's chemical weapons stocks. The ceremony was attended by myself; the Foreign Minister of Libya, H.E. Mr Mohamed Taha Siala; the State Secretary of the German Federal Ministry of Defence, H.E. Dr Katrin Suder; permanent representatives to the OPCW; and Secretariat staff.
16. The Secretariat has continued to assess the viability of travel to the Ruwagha Tank Farm in Libya to fulfil the request made by the Council to visit the facility, as soon as security conditions permit. The United Nations Department of Safety and Security has informed the Secretariat that the restriction on travel to Tripoli has been lifted; however, travel to Ruwagha is still not possible. In view of this, the Secretariat had to consider remote verification measures. Consequently, the Secretariat provided training to four Libyan nationals in The Hague between 27 February and 1 March. The individuals were trained on soil sample collection and live video streaming. Libya will conduct soil sampling during the last week of March, which will be observed by Secretariat inspectors in real time via video link.
17. China and Japan have made progress on excavations, recoveries, and destruction operations related to abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs). As at 31 January 2018, over 62,000 items of ACWs had been recovered, of which 49,607 have been verified by the Secretariat as destroyed. In addition, there are approximately 330,000 ACW items buried at Haerbaling, which are being recovered. From 31 January to 1 February, the twenty-seventh trilateral meeting was hosted in Beijing, during which representatives from China, Japan, and the Secretariat discussed technical and practical issues regarding the implementation of the ACW destruction projects.

¹

GEKA = Gesellschaft zur Entsorgung von chemischen Kampfstoffen und Rüstungsaltslasten.

18. The recovery of old chemical weapons (OCWs) continues in a number of States Parties. On 31 January, Latvia informed the Secretariat of the recovery of potential OCWs and requested a technical-assistance visit to further assess the items. The Secretariat has started the preparatory work to perform this visit in liaison with the Latvian authorities.
19. The Secretariat has begun implementing the Council's decision on "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors" (EC-86/DEC.9, dated 13 October 2017). Yesterday, a meeting was held by the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) focusing on mutual legal assistance. This provided States Parties with an opportunity to discuss aspects of legal cooperation regarding the non-State actor threat. Future meetings of the OEWG-T and its Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors will continue to take up different elements of the Council's decision.
20. In addition to these efforts, a conference on countering chemical terrorism will be held at the OPCW Headquarters on 7 and 8 June this year. I encourage all States Parties to register for the conference and to consider including counter-terrorism officials from capitals in their delegations.
21. Relevant to these efforts, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism has finalised its drafting of a "Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact", which is a non-binding framework for enhancing coordination of the work of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force entities. The OPCW has been invited by the United Nations to sign this Compact, which I intend to do soon. The Director of the Office of Strategy and Policy has provided information on this initiative at the OEWG-T meeting held yesterday. The text of the Compact has been posted on the external server.
22. During the reporting period, the Secretariat conducted two Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM) field exercises, to improve the OPCW's capabilities for emergency response to possible chemical attacks by non-State actors. These exercises, which were led by the Secretariat teams in partnership with the Governments of Romania and Serbia and with support from Canada, enabled the Secretariat to identify gaps and enhance procedures for emergency response. On 18 and 19 January, the Secretariat also conducted an in-house RRAM refresher workshop with support from the Government of the Netherlands. I would also like to take this moment to call upon the States Parties to consider providing air transportation support for the RRAM.
23. Since the last session of the Council, the 10-week mandatory initial training was conducted from October to December 2017 for a group of seven new inspectors (Group Q). The new inspectors are now deployed on inspection missions.
24. From 27 November to 2 December 2017, the Secretariat organised the first comprehensive training course on investigation of international crimes for 14 inspectors. The course, which was supported by the Government of Canada, was delivered by the Institute for International Criminal Investigations in The Hague and covered planning and management of investigations, forensic techniques, and interview skills.

25. In accordance with the Programme and Budget for 2018, the number of Article VI inspections planned for this year is 241. Of these, 11 are planned at Schedule 1 facilities, 42 at Schedule 2 plant sites, 19 at Schedule 3 plant sites, and 169 at other chemical production facilities (OCPFs).
26. The OPCW's network of designated laboratories remains an integral part of the verification system. As a result of the latest environmental proficiency test, I am pleased to announce that two new laboratories have achieved designated status. Consequently, we now have a total of 25 laboratories from 19 Member States in our network. Of these 25 laboratories, 22 are accredited for environmental sample analysis while 17 are for biomedical sample analysis. There are still nine laboratories from seven States Parties that have not entered into a technical agreement for receiving samples for off-site analysis. I once again urge these States Parties to assist their laboratories in completing an agreement.
27. Our project to modernise the facilities of the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store should remain a priority for the Organisation. A briefing on the upgrade of the Laboratory to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology was held yesterday. We are also working closely with the Government of the Netherlands to identify an appropriate site for the new centre. I would like to reiterate my request to all Member States for voluntary contributions to the trust fund that was created to raise the required capital to enable the project to be realised.
28. Since the last session of the Council, the Secretariat has delivered 21 courses, seminars, and workshops building the capacity of over 500 participants to support the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.
29. The Secretariat encourages States Parties that have yet to prepare the initial draft of their national legislation implementing the Convention to participate in the Internship Programme for Legal Drafters and National Authority Representatives. Two sessions are currently planned, namely, in August and October 2018. Since its inception in 2012, 37 States Parties have benefitted from this programme, with seven having adopted implementing legislation covering all initial measures, while the remainder are at various stages of the legislative adoption process.
30. In the domain of assistance and protection under Article X, the Secretariat continued to implement capacity-building activities in combination with its regionally focused strategy aimed at fostering national and regional capacity to respond to the use or threat of use of chemical weapons, in line with Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention.
31. I am pleased to inform the Council that the fifth annual webinar of the Associate Programme Alumni Association was held from 25 November to 1 December 2017. The rich discussions and exchange of ideas between the 65 alumni who attended the event generated valuable recommendations aimed at streamlining the training content and upgrading the programme impact.
32. The Secretariat organised for the first time a course from 11 to 15 December 2017 at the OPCW Laboratory for analytical chemists who support customs services. Ten participants from 10 countries (Algeria, Belarus, El Salvador, Ghana, Mauritius,

- Mongolia, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Serbia, and Viet Nam) attended the course, specifically chemists from customs and forensic laboratories.
33. The Secretariat continues to cooperate closely with the World Customs Organization (WCO), and in this regard has started to use the secure information exchange (SIX) system for the exchange of relevant information.
 34. The next session of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) will take place from 19 to 23 March, during which the SAB will finalise its report to the Fourth Review Conference. I look forward to receiving the Board's recommendations. I also invite delegations to attend today's "Science for Diplomats" briefing, during which the SAB Chairperson will provide a preview of the findings of the scientific review from which the SAB report is being produced.
 35. The first meeting of the SAB's temporary working group (TWG) on investigative science and technology was held from 12 to 14 February. The TWG received briefings from the Secretariat and external experts in order to gather insights for its deliberations. The report of the TWG (SAB-27/WP.1, dated 26 February 2018) has been circulated to States Parties, and the TWG will meet again in November.
 36. Four members of the SAB will be completing their terms in 2018, and a formal call for nominations was issued in January (S/1568/2018, dated 16 January 2018). I encourage States Parties to submit their nominations to this important advisory body by 31 July. I also invite States Parties to consider the Secretariat's call for voluntary contributions to support the work of the SAB (S/1569/2018, dated 16 January 2018).
 37. Upon my request, the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO) has prepared a substantial report on education and outreach theory and practices of relevance to the OPCW. The report has been published as an official-series document (ABEO-5/1, dated 12 February 2018). The Secretariat will implement as many of its recommendations as feasible. I also encourage the States Parties to benefit from the ABEO's report.
 38. Given that current members of the ABEO will complete their mandate at the end of 2018, the Secretariat has issued a call for nominations to the Board for the period from 2019 to 2021 (S/1574/2018, dated 31 January 2018). I encourage all States Parties to put forward well-qualified candidates by the deadline of 31 May.
 39. The work to overhaul the OPCW's official public website continues. The new website is expected to go live this summer. Once the website has been launched, I will invite States Parties to provide feedback about their experience with it. Planning is also under way for successive phases of the official public website that will integrate other Secretariat projects related to recruiting new talent, distributing official-series documents, and promoting tenders.
 40. Our digital outreach is also strengthening. By the end of 2017, the OPCW had attracted nearly 651,000 unique visitors to its digital properties. This is a 53% increase since the end of 2016 (approximately 425,000) and the first time the Organisation had exceeded the 2013 peak (approximately 629,000). Continued interest in the work of the Organisation, developments in the Syrian Arab Republic, and the OPCW's social media strategy has contributed to these numbers.

41. Following the adoption of the decision on the scale of assessments for 2018 (C-22/DEC.6, dated 30 November 2017), the Secretariat issued 192 individual assessment letters to States Parties requesting payment for assessed contributions for 2018. States Parties are encouraged to pay their 2018 assessed contributions on time and in full, in line with the requirements of the Convention and the Financial Regulations and Rules of the Organisation.
42. As reported to States Parties on 19 February, the go-live of the core solution of the enterprise resource planning (ERP) system has been delayed, pending completion of the solution build and confirmation by additional user acceptance testing that meets the operational business requirements. We continue to plan for the go-live in 2018. The implementation of the talent management component of the ERP system has started and will be delivered in three parts throughout 2018. The Secretariat will hold a briefing for States Parties on the status of implementation of the ERP system on 15 March.
43. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Mr Christopher Buck as the new Director of the Administration Division of the Secretariat. The OPCW will benefit greatly from his previous experience.
44. Mr Chairperson, my report to the Eighty-Seventh 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

45. As at 31 January 2018, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the possessor States Parties of 67,867 MT, or 96.3% of all declared Category 1 chemical weapons.

United States of America

46. As at 31 January 2018, the United States of America had destroyed 25,154 MT, or 90.6% of its declared Category 1 chemical weapons. The PCAPP facility has so far destroyed 229.51 MT of mustard agent. The destruction operations of mustard agent-filled M104 and M110 155-mm projectiles have been on hold since September 2017 due to maintenance operations. However, the facility has continued the reconfiguration of mustard agent-filled M60 105-mm boxed munitions. The energetic components removed from these reconfigured munitions have been regularly shipped to and destroyed at the PCAPP's non-contiguous Static Detonation Chamber (SDC), located in Anniston, Alabama.
47. The BGCAPP has completed 100% of construction work and systemisation is currently at 57.6%. Similarly to Pueblo, the United States of America will supplement destruction efforts by the use of the SDC to destroy chemical munitions considered unsafe for destruction at the BGCAPP facility. Construction work and systemisation for the SDC stand now at 87% and 80% completion, respectively.

Libya

48. On 28 November 2017, Libya completed the destruction of its entire declared stockpile of chemical weapons.

Iraq

49. On 23 November 2017, Iraq completed the destruction of its entire declared stockpile of chemical weapons remnants stored at Al Muthana.

Industry Cluster

50. Consultations under the Industry Cluster held this week addressed the recommendations of the SAB, as well as relevant Article VI topics. The Secretariat stands ready to support delegations as the Industry Cluster seeks to make a recommendation to the Council in the near future. The Secretariat also made its regular report to the Industry Cluster regarding the performance of the site selection methodology. Finally, the Secretariat reported on the discussions held at the Nineteenth Annual Meeting of National Authorities on the future of Article VI implementation, and one delegation invited industry representatives to share their views in this regard.

Declarations

51. Regarding submission of initial declarations, only one State Party, Tonga, has yet to submit its initial declaration under both Article III and VI of the Convention. The Secretariat will continue to work with Tonga for the submission of its outstanding initial declaration.
52. During the reporting period, around 10% of States Parties responded to the Secretariat's letter² regarding update of declarations on riot control agents. I invite all States Parties to review their respective declarations and inform the Secretariat of the results.
53. In relation to annual declarations, the Council received a status report on the timely submission of declarations under Article VI for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017 (EC-87/DG.8, dated 12 January 2018) for consideration at this session.
54. The timeliness of submissions of annual declarations on past activities (ADPA) remains similar over the last four years. As at 31 December 2017, 83% of the States Parties with declarable facilities and/or declarable activities had submitted their ADPA 2016 on time. I encourage the States Parties to submit their next ADPA before the Convention deadline of 31 March 2018.
55. In the case of annual declarations on anticipated activities (ADAA), 96% of States Parties with declarable facilities and activities submitted at least part of their ADAA 2018 on time; I welcome this improvement.
56. In July 2017, the Secretariat issued a survey on national measures regarding the collection and declaration of import and export data for Schedule 2 and 3 chemicals (S/1511/2017, dated 5 July 2017). The purpose of the survey was to further analyse the ways to reconcile discrepancies in import and export declarations.

²

L/VER/DEB/212700/17, dated 21 November 2017.

57. Seventy-five States Parties responded to the survey. Based on these responses, industry and trade have been identified as the primary stakeholders in data collection for trade declarations, followed by customs officials, licences, and end users. The majority of States Parties using customs officials as a source for data collection have indicated in their responses that they had implemented the latest version of the Harmonized System (HS), which includes the unique HS code for 33 of the most traded scheduled chemicals.

Article VI inspections

58. As at the end of February 2018, 42 Article VI inspections had been carried out. This figure includes one inspection at a Schedule 1 facility, six at Schedule 2 plant sites, two at Schedule 3 plant sites, and 33 at OCPF plant sites. This represents 17% of the 241 inspections provided for in the Programme and Budget for 2018. We are confident that the Inspections Programme will once again be fully implemented this year.
59. To date in 2018, one Article VI inspection with gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) sampling and analysis has been completed at a Schedule 2 plant site. Thus, the total number of Article VI inspections in which the GC-MS sampling and analysis methodology has been used has reached 105 to date.
60. For sampling and analysis, the use of GC-MS analytical methods and equipment has been supplemented by the use of the First Defender equipment (the so-called Raman technology). This was field tested for routine use to identify scheduled chemicals. In addition, the First Defender was used independently in four Schedule 1 inspections in 2017. The intention is to use the First Defender as an independent tool in more such appropriate situations this year.

Inspectorate training

61. During the reporting period, the Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell of the Inspectorate Division provided or coordinated 20 individual training courses. The courses comprised 1,005 inspector days and 301 instructor days, and included a total of 218 participants. Some of the instructors were directly involved in the Secretariat's regional or national capacity-building programmes for States Parties, such as assistance and protection courses organised in Pakistan, Singapore, and Uganda.
62. From 15 January to 2 February, the Inspectorate conducted specialised courses for inspectors from the Capacity-Building and Contingency Planning Cell on the theory and practice of non-destructive evaluation techniques, levels I and II, as well as health physics level 4-A, which was also attended by an inspector from the Health and Safety Branch, as a requirement for supervising the use of these techniques in the Netherlands.
63. From 12 to 16 February, the OPCW conducted the "Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments" course for eight inspectors at the United Nations training campus in Turin, Italy.

64. From 19 to 22 February, 16 inspectors and Secretariat staff completed a course on negotiation and report-writing skills for contingency operations. The training was supported by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
65. During the reporting period, the United States of America continued to provide initial and refresher courses on hazardous waste operations and emergency response (HAZWOPER), a requirement under United States regulations for individuals who operate within the United States chemical weapons destruction facilities.
66. I would like to thank Canada, the Netherlands, Romania, Serbia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America for the technical and in-kind support provided during the reporting period for these training modules for inspectors.

Education and outreach

67. At the ABEO's Fifth Session, which was held from 27 February to 1 March, the Secretariat initiated a discussion with the Board on how to implement some of the recommendations of its "Report on the Role of Education and Outreach in Preventing the Re-Emergence of Chemical Weapons" (ABEO-5/1). At the same session, I tasked the ABEO with developing some of its proposals for projects and activities into a brochure that States Parties could use in their education and outreach activities.

Cooperation with the World Customs Organization

68. The Secretariat continues to cooperate closely with the World Customs Organization (WCO). In the area of identifying traded scheduled chemicals by allocating unique codes, the Secretariat collaborated with the WCO to include 15 additional chemicals in the next edition of the HS, to be implemented in 2022, bringing its total to 48 of the most traded scheduled chemicals.
69. To allow the exchange of sensitive information, the SIX system will be used as a means of secure communications between the Secretariat and the WCO. This will be the first time the SIX system will have been used to communicate with an international organisation.
70. Under its Strategic Trade Control Enforcement programme, the WCO hosted an "Operation COSMO 2 Global Planning Seminar" at its Headquarters in Brussels from 9 to 11 January. As a result, it was agreed that the OPCW, as well as other international organisations, will work more closely with the WCO on strategic trade control matters and in support of future operational activities.
71. The forthcoming Operation COSMO 2 will target the global illicit trafficking of strategic goods, including the most traded scheduled chemicals under the Convention. The Secretariat will aid the WCO with a liaison element to advise on Convention-related issues. Support of this operation will help improve the Secretariat's level of preparedness for possible future assistance provided to other international organisations.

Specialised information technology solutions for verification activities

72. The Secretariat continues its modernisation of specialised information technology solutions for verification-related routine and non-routine activities.

Enterprise content management system

73. The implementation of the first phase of the new enterprise content management system started in 2017 and continues with configuration and customisation to provide initial document and records management, as well as workflow functionalities, along with additional functionalities required to support management of information related to non-routine missions.

Data analytics tool

74. The first phase of the data analytics project also started in 2017, bringing together declarations and inspections data in a consolidated data warehouse. This will result in easier integration of new analytical tools or data sources into the data flows following evolving requirements of improved reporting.

EDNA³ and SIX

75. In 2017, 54 States Parties prepared their annual declarations using EDNA, which relates to more than 98% of declared plant sites. The number of States Parties using the SIX system has increased, reaching a total of 52, which represents an increase of 21% in comparison to year-end of 2016. The SIX system is now available for participating States Parties to exchange information on issues regarding transfer discrepancies in a fast and secure way, using the Secretariat as a hub.

International cooperation and assistance

Implementation support

76. Since the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties, the Secretariat has continued to provide support to the States Parties in advancing the national implementation of the Convention, through targeted capacity-building activities and calibrating approaches in the programme activities in 2018, based on the assessment of results achieved in 2017.
77. The provision of support to the States Parties for the adoption of national implementing legislation has remained a priority. Three regional stakeholders' fora on legislation were held in the Africa, GRULAC,⁴ and Asia regions in 2017, in which challenges, practices, and ideas with a view to legislation adoption were discussed amongst the target States Parties. It was recognised, once again, that general awareness amongst various national stakeholders regarding the Convention is an indispensable prerequisite for the adoption of national legislation. The Secretariat is ready to support States Parties in a tailored manner to address the priorities identified by the respective authorities.

³ EDNA = electronic declarations tool for National Authorities.

⁴ GRULAC = Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

78. A national workshop on the Convention was held in Namibia in December 2017, as a follow-up to the Influential Visitors Programme held for that State Party in April 2017. The urgency of adopting national implementing legislation was once again highlighted during the workshop. The authorities of Namibia informed the Secretariat that its draft bill would be tabled for consideration in the first quarter of 2018.
79. For States Parties that require the necessary political momentum to advance the passing of their draft legislation, the Secretariat has issued a call for expressions of interest to participate in the Influential Visitors Programme (S/1583/2018, dated 15 February 2018). The programme has proved to be effective in raising the awareness of high-level policy-makers of the urgency of adopting legislation implementing the Convention, and States Parties are encouraged to inform the Secretariat of their interest in participating.
80. The Secretariat issued a note verbale in February, requesting updates and information from States Parties on the status of implementation of Article VII of the Convention. The information received will be incorporated in the annual reports on the status of implementation of Article VII for the period from 2017 to 2018, which will be submitted to the Council at its October session. I encourage States Parties to submit their responses in a timely manner.
81. In January 2018, the Secretariat issued a new call for expressions of interest in participation in the Mentorship/Partnership Programme (S/1573/2018, dated 31 January 2018). States Parties that are willing to engage in a bilateral support programme with another State Party are encouraged to apply. During the reporting period, under the partnership between Panama and Brazil, a visit by the Panama National Authority to Brazil took place in the first quarter of 2018.
82. The Secretariat continues to enhance the National Authorities' capacity for national implementation of the Convention by offering a general course, to be held in The Hague this April. From this year onward, target participants have been expanded to include the national stakeholders, in addition to the National Authorities. The event attempts to serve as a support to States Parties to sensitise and engage different national stakeholders in a holistic manner.
83. As part of the efforts of the Secretariat to promote bilateral, subregional, and regional cooperation in national implementation, a subregional stakeholders' forum is being planned for the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in April. This is an important pilot activity to build on the close regional cooperation that already exists, which is apparent from the "East Asia Summit Leaders' Statement on Chemical Weapons", issued by the Heads of State and Government of ASEAN and other States at the 12th East Asia Summit in the Philippines in November 2017.

Assistance and protection

84. During the reporting period, the Secretariat provided tailored training programmes designed to strengthen the ability of first responders from all regional groups, to deal with the emergency situations arising from chemical attacks. A training cycle for Arabic-speaking participants was finalised with a course held in Qatar from

4 to 8 December 2017. Twenty-two participants from 10 States Parties benefited from the event. A second training cycle in the Asia region was concluded in 2017 with an exercise held from 18 to 22 December 2017 in Singapore, with 21 first responders from 13 States Parties participating. A new subregional training cycle targeting States Parties in South Asia was initiated with a basic training course in Dhaka, Bangladesh, held from 5 to 9 March 2018, attended by 22 experts from six States Parties.

85. In addition to these general training packages on chemical response, the Secretariat also maintained its specialised training programmes, equipping participants from numerous countries with specialist knowledge and skills. The fifteenth workshop on the Convention for States Parties from South-Eastern Europe was held at the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre from 6 to 8 February 2018 and was devoted to understanding non-proliferation in the context of the Convention.
86. The Secretariat also continued to provide training opportunities for emergency management personnel, ensuring that the specific requirements of handling a chemical attack are considered and built into emergency-response planning. To this end, an international course for police first responders was conducted in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 16 to 20 October 2017, with 32 representatives from 14 States Parties, and a table-top exercise for first responders from the GRULAC region was held in Mexico City, Mexico, from 6 to 10 November 2017, with 20 emergency response managers from 19 States Parties participating in the event.
87. In the framework of the fourth phase of the OPCW Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention and with the support of the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Secretariat continued to help enhance the protective capacity of Member States of the East African Community by means of an operational training programme held in Jinja, Uganda, from 18 to 25 November 2017, attended by 39 first responders from five States Parties in the subregion.
88. In order to continue discussions and draw recommendations with regard to common issues concerning the provision of capacity building under Article X, the third meeting of assistance and protection training centres was held in Qatar from 6 to 8 December 2017, attended by 22 representatives from 17 training institutions from all geographical regions.
89. To encourage further training at the national level and to promote the sustainability of OPCW capacity-building efforts, the Secretariat continued to implement the Instructor Development and Exchange Programme across the assistance and protection programme of activities.
90. The Secretariat continues to constantly review and maintain the relevance of its capacity-building programmes in assistance and protection under Article X through active consultations and engagement with all States Parties, donors, and beneficiaries.

International cooperation

91. Within the framework of the cooperation with the International Foundation for Science (IFS), and with the support of the National Authority of Argentina, on 11 and

- 12 December 2017, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the Secretariat conducted a regional workshop on chemistry for safety, security, and environmental protection. The key topic of the workshop was green and sustainable chemistry. The programme highlighted the progress made in research projects on related topics taking place in the GRULAC region supported solely by the OPCW or jointly by the OPCW and IFS. The event was attended by 27 participants representing 12 countries, in addition to some 20 observers from local institutions.
92. Furthermore, under the Chemical Safety and Security Management Programme, a capacity-building workshop was held from 26 to 28 February 2018 in Doha, Qatar, which focused on chemical safety and security risk assessment and mitigation strategies to prevent chemical accidents and potential misuse of chemicals.
 93. In this area, and in collaboration with the OPCW Laboratory, an analytical skills development course was held from 4 to 8 December 2017, which equipped six participants from Morocco with knowledge and analytical skills in the use of mass spectrometry to analyse chemicals related to the implementation of the Convention. This course was funded through a voluntary contribution from Spain.
 94. A similar course was organised on defence science and technology from 4 to 15 December 2017, in Melbourne, Australia, for ASEAN and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Member States of the OPCW. In addition to training on the analysis of Convention-related chemicals using GC-MS, special focus was placed on equipment maintenance and sample collection and storage.
 95. In addition, the Secretariat organised a course from 11 to 15 December 2017 at the OPCW Laboratory for analytical chemists from laboratories supporting customs services; the first time that this course was organised at the OPCW Laboratory. Ten participants from 10 countries (Algeria, Belarus, El Salvador, Ghana, Mauritius, Mongolia, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Serbia, and Viet Nam) attended the course, specifically chemists from customs and forensic laboratories. Previously, the Secretariat had organised four courses with the Institute of Industrial Organic Chemistry, Poland, between 2011 and 2015.
 96. In December 2017, as part of its continued efforts to build the capacities of the laboratories of the Member States, the Secretariat also donated, under the Equipment Exchange Programme, a portable spectrometer and a fume hood to the Gambia. Another portable spectrometer and another fume hood were donated to Senegal. The Secretariat also continued to encourage relevant Member States to make donations under the Equipment Exchange Programme.
 97. Since the last session of the Council, a total of 33 scientists have been sponsored, under the Conference Support Programme, to attend five scientific conferences in Finland, Kenya, and Malta on topics related to the Convention and peaceful chemistry.
 98. Under the Programme for Support of Research Projects, the Secretariat held the twenty-eighth meeting of the Review Committee for Research Projects on 4 December 2017, during which funding was approved for 12 from a total of 17 submitted proposals for co-funding with the IFS. The new projects to be supported are being implemented in Benin, Brazil, Cuba, Ethiopia, Kenya (4), Malaysia, Togo,

and Viet Nam (2). The Secretariat also continued its support of 21 research projects that are funded solely by the OPCW.

99. The Secretariat, furthermore, continued its efforts to reach out to States Parties that are under-represented in international cooperation programmes, and encouraged them to take part in and benefit from these programmes. Special attention continued to be given to formalising and further strengthening the alumni networks of these programmes, which made it possible to follow up and support the alumni's initiatives to disseminate the knowledge and experience gained during the various activities.

External relations

100. During the intersessional period, I paid visits to Germany, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, and Austria. On 11 January, I attended the ceremony marking the completion of destruction of Libya's chemical weapons at GEKA mbH, Germany. On 21 and 22 January, I visited the United Kingdom, where I addressed the Wilton Park Conference. On 22 and 23 January, I visited Paris to attend a meeting of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. In February, I visited Germany on the occasion of the Munich Security Conference, where I met with H.E. Dr Patricia Flor, Federal Government Commissioner for Disarmament and Arms Control. In the same month, I visited Vienna, where I met with H.E. Dr Karin Kneissl, Austrian Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs. I also delivered a statement to the International Club of the Foreign Policy and United Nations Association of Austria.
101. Over the reporting period, I received at the OPCW Headquarters a delegation from the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence of South Africa; the Minister of State for Defence on the United Kingdom, H.E. Mr Earl Howe; and the Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research of Iraq, H.E. Mr Abdulrazzaq Al Jaleel Essa.
102. The application process is now open for the ninth edition of the TMC Asser Institute's annual programme on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in a Changing World. The course, which will take place from 1 to 5 October, helps junior to mid-career professionals improve their knowledge about the diplomatic, legal, and technical aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The OPCW will continue to provide a number of speakers and assist with promoting this valuable initiative. I encourage States Parties to use this opportunity to expand the pool of their national experts on WMD issues.
103. As part of the efforts to raise and improve the profile of the OPCW, a branding strategy was implemented that showcased the Organisation's visual identity through improved signage, way-finding systems, screens, and video products. The updated approach to the OPCW's visual identity will continue to be rolled out across various projects.
104. The Secretariat produced a live webcast of the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties, which attracted over 6,500 viewers. Videos capturing the statements of delegates of States Parties, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were published individually on YouTube,

promoted across social media, and distributed to stakeholders for further promotion. These 93 video statements were published less than 24 hours after the statements were delivered. A video containing highlights from the session was also published on YouTube and promoted across the OPCW's social media channels. The presence of civil society was further emphasised through the release of a video on civil society's role within the session of the Conference and under the Convention.

105. A multi-channel social media campaign was launched to support the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference. Social media posts reached approximately 244,000 people on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Key areas highlighted by the campaign included the OPCW-The Hague Award ceremony, video interviews of the OPCW-The Hague Award winners, the appointment of the next Director-General, the Day of Remembrance for all victims of chemical warfare, side events, and NGO participants' and plenary statements.
106. On our ongoing engagement with civil society, 52 NGOs, represented by nearly 100 individuals, attended the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference. These numbers testify to an increase in NGO interest in participation in sessions of the Conference since its Twenty-First Session.
107. To facilitate participation by NGOs from developing and transitioning economies, 24% of the registered NGOs (up from 20% at the Twenty-First Session) were able to attend the Twenty-Second Session, thanks to support from the European Union funds provided to the OPCW for this purpose.
108. Since the last session of the Council, we have welcomed 10 new Permanent Representatives to the OPCW, who have presented their letters of credentials, from Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Sudan, and Uruguay.

Administrative and financial matters

109. The Organisation has incurred significant costs in undertaking activities under Articles IV and V of the Convention. As at 28 February 2018, invoices for EUR 5.5 million remained unpaid by two States Parties. I urge payment of these invoices.
110. Unpaid assessed contributions and unreimbursed Article IV and V verification costs will continue to create financial challenges. As you will note from the Monthly Financial Situation Report as at 28 February 2018 (S/1601/2018, dated 13 March 2018), the Secretariat may need to withdraw EUR 1.4 million from the Working Capital Fund before the end of 2018, unless all outstanding contributions are made by States Parties. The Secretariat continues to take measures to address the financial situation. These measures include reminding States Parties of their financial obligations, closely monitoring the implementation of the 2018 Programme and Budget, improving the robustness of the Working Capital Fund, and using trust fund resources.
111. Following a decision of the Conference at its Twenty-Second Session (C-22/DEC.12, dated 30 November 2017), amendments to the OPCW Financial Regulations and Rules are in effect from January of this year.

112. In addition, following the recommendation of the Council and subsequent decision by the Conference, a special fund to cover the costs of the Fourth Review Conference has been created and funded using a portion of the 2015 cash surplus (C-22/DEC.7, dated 30 November 2017).
113. The Secretariat has implemented the United Nations compensation package for the Professional and higher categories as approved by the Conference of the States Parties and has subsequently amended the Staff Regulations of the OPCW (C-22/DEC.13, dated 30 November 2017), effective 1 January 2018, except for the new education grant scheme, which will enter into effect for the school year in progress on 1 January 2019. The necessary implementing administrative directives were issued at the end of 2017.

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