



OPCW

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**SUMMARY REPORT
OF THE FIRST AFRICAN SEMINAR ON ANALYTICAL ISSUES RELATED TO
THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION (ASAI 1999)**

1. The Technical Secretariat, the South African Council for the Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Protechnik Laboratories (Pty) Ltd, held the first African Seminar on Analytical Issues related to the Chemical Weapons Convention (ASAI 1999), from 16 to 18 November 1999, at the Centurion Golf Club, near Pretoria, South Africa.
2. The seminar was attended by 73 participants from 20 States Parties – Algeria, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Kenya, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Poland, South Africa, Sudan, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Zimbabwe – and the Secretariat. One observer from Egypt also attended. The participants included representatives of national laboratories that have expressed their interest in becoming involved in the implementation of the Convention, OPCW designated laboratories, government institutions, industry, the Scientific Advisory Board, and the Secretariat.
3. The seminar was opened by South Africa's Deputy Minister for Trade and Industry, Mrs Lindiwe B. Hendricks. In her welcoming address, Minister Hendricks stressed South Africa's commitment to ensuring the comprehensive and effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention, and its intention to foster regional cooperation in developing peaceful applications of chemistry. She characterised the seminar as an important event in Africa's renaissance, signalling a move from political commitment to effective practical implementation and capacity building.
4. In a total of six sessions and 38 presentations, the speakers covered a wide range of issues: the designation of laboratories by the OPCW and their analytical tasks, relevant properties of chemical agents, synthesis of verification reference compounds, protection against CW agents, detection of CW agents, and analytical techniques. The discussions following the presentations contributed to a better understanding of the requirements that laboratories must meet before they can become involved in tasks related to the implementation of the Convention. The discussions also further clarified

the different requirements for OPCW designated laboratories and for other laboratories.

5. Several of the companies represented at the seminar exhibited their products, which included individual protective equipment and detectors for toxic agents. They also gave presentations on their products during the seminar.
6. The seminar provided a valuable opportunity for the participating representatives of national laboratories from many parts of Africa to exchange their experiences in performing analytical work related to the implementation of the Convention, and to gather information and expert advice from laboratories that have already achieved OPCW designated status. The seminar laid the foundations for future cooperation in Africa in the field of analytical chemistry relevant to the Convention. It also illustrated the need to develop further the concept of a national laboratory that, even if it is not actually seeking OPCW designation, is nevertheless involved in the implementation process at the national as well as international levels. Although the functions of such "other" laboratories have been addressed by the OPCW (cf. Conference decision C-I/DEC.67, dated 22 May 1997), little further thought has so far been given to identifying the detailed requirements for setting up and operating such laboratories, and their potential role in the national implementation process. This is an area that will need careful consideration in the future, and the seminar was a useful first step in this respect.

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