



OPCW

Technical Secretariat

Verification Division
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NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

FOLLOW-UP TO JOINT ASSISTANCE 2005

INTRODUCTION

1. As previously reported (S/554/2006, dated 8 March 2006), an OPCW team participated in the Joint Assistance 2005 exercise, which was held in Ukraine from 9 to 13 October 2005. The exercise was a joint effort of the Ukrainian Government, the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and the OPCW. Following the exercise, the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) conducted a thorough evaluation of its procedures and performance. This evaluation included recommendations for improving the Secretariat’s preparedness to respond to a request for assistance and protection under Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”). Based on the evaluation and recommendations, an action plan was developed and approved by the Director-General. A working group (consisting of representatives from the Office of the Director-General, the Office of the Deputy Director-General, the International Cooperation and Assistance Division (ICA), the Inspectorate (INS), and the Verification Division (VER)) was constituted to oversee the implementation of the plan and to ensure a harmonious approach by all divisions involved in its implementation.
2. This Note reports on the main actions taken by the Secretariat, under the guidance of the working group, to implement the Joint Assistance 2005 follow-up plan.

DESIGNATION OF A CORE TEAM

3. The follow-up plan called for the designation of a “core team” on which the Secretariat would concentrate its training efforts. This would allow the Secretariat to move beyond providing training in basic skills in order to build up substantive expertise amongst core-team personnel, thus enabling it to build a team that is able to work together in a coordinated manner from the very outset of an operation. As previously reported to the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”), a similar approach has been used with regard to challenge inspections (EC-46/DG.6, dated 26 June 2006).



4. In regard to Article X, the core team would include both an investigation component and an assistance component. A joint proposal on the membership of the core team was put forward to the Director-General by the INS, VER, and the ICA. This was approved and implemented in March 2006. Since that time, training activities, such as the assistance-related training undertaken in the autumn of 2006 and the participation by Secretariat staff members in an assistance exercise in Finland (TRIPLEX 2006), have concentrated, to the extent that this is operationally possible, on the Article X core team.

THE ROLE OF THE ASSISTANCE COORDINATION AND ASSESSMENT TEAM AND STAFFING PARAMETERS

5. The Secretariat units involved reviewed the issue of the role that the Assistance Coordination and Assessment Team (ACAT) would be expected to play in an Article X mission, and the level of staffing that would be required to enable the ACAT to perform its functions. Agreement was reached in relation to these issues, and is clearly reflected in the revised Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) entitled "Field Activities (Investigation and Assistance-Related) Conducted by the Technical Secretariat in Response to a Request for Assistance and Protection under Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention" (QDOC/ODG/SOP/004.Rev.1), and the work instruction (WI) entitled "Work Instruction on Assistance Coordination and Assessment Team (ACAT) Activities in Response to a Request for Assistance and Protection under Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention" (QDOC/ICA/APB/WI/001.Rev.1). An OPCW team tested these revised instructions in September 2006 during the TRIPLEX 2006 exercise in Finland and found them to be satisfactory.

TRAINING

6. A key pillar of the follow-up plan was the enhancement of Article X-related training. Such training has two key components: the development of investigation skills and of the ability on the part of team members to assess the need for assistance and coordinate its delivery. The training plans for 2006 and 2007 prepared by the INS and the ICA included all training specifically recommended by the evaluation team for Joint Assistance 2005. In light of the financial and inspector-resource constraints under which it operates, the Secretariat considers that the level of implementation in 2006 was satisfactory. During 2007 the Secretariat plans to significantly increase Article X-related training, and it is anticipated that all of the training needs identified as a result of Joint Assistance 2005 will be met.

DATABASE ON PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND LIST OF QUALIFIED EXPERTS

7. There are two crucial requirements in terms of the information that is contained in the database on protective equipment: the population of the database with current information and its maintenance, together with the harmonisation between the current format on the database and the "Assistance Format for the Formulation, Specification, or Renewal of Offers of Assistance under Subparagraph 7(c) of Article X" (C-10/DEC.8, dated 10 November 2005). This database can currently be accessed in the headquarters building by States Parties, and it is planned that availability will be

extended to enable States Parties to make greater use of it. The Head of the Assistance and Protection Branch will provide the Director-General with regular updates on the status of this matter.

8. The ICA, in cooperation with the INS, VER, the Health and Safety Branch, and the Office of the Legal Adviser, prepared a comprehensive concept paper that was presented to management in 2006, and was approved by the Director-General in October of that year. The concept paper on the use of qualified experts identified the operational, administrative, and logistical issues related to the participation of qualified experts in Article X missions, and also the particular fields of expertise that could be required by the Secretariat in the event of such a mission. These will be specified in a new call for qualified-expert nominations, which will be issued shortly by the Secretariat. The data received from Member States will be used to update the Secretariat's current list of experts, and mechanisms have been put into place to ensure systematic updating of the list. Use of the database will be part of the regular ACAT training conducted by the ICA.

EQUIPMENT

9. The follow-up plan called for the Secretariat to conduct an overall evaluation of what equipment was needed for Article X missions. This evaluation is ongoing as part of the Secretariat's overall review of equipment needs.
10. Certain specific equipment issues that were highlighted as a result of Joint Assistance 2005 have already been addressed. Specifically:
 - a) equipment for which the ICA was responsible has been transferred to the Technical Support Branch, so that all of the equipment required for an Article X mission is available and maintained by one Branch;
 - b) new non-destructive evaluation equipment has been purchased, and training in its use has been provided to inspectors; and
 - c) updated communications equipment has been procured and is expected to be deployed soon.

GUIDANCE ON HANDLING THE MEDIA FOLLOWING A REQUEST UNDER ARTICLE X

11. The enhancement of the Secretariat's capacity to interact with the media and other key players during an Article X mission was an important element of the follow-up plan for Joint Assistance 2005. It became clear after the exercise that the Secretariat needed to develop both a policy on how information should be released during an Article X mission and a WI that a mission team leader could consult in relation to handling the media during such a mission. A WI that covers both these matters was issued in November 2006.

REPORTS AND TEMPLATES

12. In accordance with the action plan, the Secretariat reviewed the issue of what kinds of reports need to be written during an Article X mission. It was agreed that the following reports would be required: daily investigation-progress reports from the mission team leader, an initial report by the ACAT, a daily ACAT progress report, an on-site preliminary-findings report, a preliminary report to the Director-General, to be completed no later than 72 hours after the team returns to its primary work location, and a final report to the Director-General, to be completed no later than 30 days after the team returns to its primary work location. Formats for all of these reports were thoroughly reviewed and revised, and were then approved in accordance with the Secretariat's normal procedures.

ANALYSIS OF LIKELY ARTICLE X SCENARIOS

13. Information available within the Secretariat and in the public domain was used to analyse a range of alleged-use scenarios and to consider how the OPCW could respond to them. A comprehensive report on these scenarios was prepared and submitted in 2006 to the Deputy Director-General, the overall manager from the Secretariat of this exercise. This report is an important tool, because it clearly defines what capabilities should be developed and maintained in relation to the requirements of Article X, so that the Secretariat can conduct investigations of alleged use and facilitate the delivery of assistance to States Parties.

TECHNICAL IMPROVEMENTS

14. In addition to the broad issues requiring attention discussed above, the follow-up plan to Joint Assistance 2005 called for the implementation of a number of technical changes to various Secretariat working procedures. All the required changes have now been introduced, and the formalisation of these changes by means of amendments to SOPs is now complete. Moreover, a number of new working procedures were developed within the Secretariat to provide clear guidance on various technical and operational matters.
15. A particularly important technical exercise was the testing of the Secretariat's procedures for, and capability of, collecting and transporting biomedical samples. This was done during a field-trial exercise conducted in the Czech Republic in March 2006, and the results were satisfactory.

CONCLUSION

16. As the above discussion demonstrates, the follow-up to Joint Assistance 2005 was a major undertaking by the Secretariat and lasted for the better part of a year. The formal phase of the follow-up process has now been concluded with the implementation of the lessons learned from the exercise. The Secretariat units involved will, of course, continue follow-up work to ensure that the Secretariat's preparedness to launch an Article X mission is maintained.