

**NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT****UPDATE ON THE SECURE INFORMATION EXCHANGE SYSTEM****Introduction**

1. Timeliness of exchange of information between the States Parties and the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) is crucial for the effective and efficient implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”).
2. The traditional way of exchanging classified information, through diplomatic pouch, imposes logistical difficulties. These can cause delays and may, therefore, adversely impact the timely fulfilment by the States Parties of their obligations under the Convention, such as the timely submission of declarations. This may also have repercussions for important activities carried out by the Secretariat, such as the evaluation of declarations and the planning of inspections.
3. To address this issue, the Secretariat has designed and put in place a system for the secure electronic transmission of classified documents, known as the secure information exchange (SIX) system, in accordance with the Note by the Secretariat on this subject S/1192/2014 (dated 1 July 2014).
4. The present Note describes the current status of the project and the priorities for the future of this critical communication mechanism.

Overview of system utilisation

5. Since its launch in July 2014, 28 States Parties have registered for the SIX system, resulting in authorisation for 47 individual users to use the system. An up-to-date list of registered States Parties is maintained on the dedicated section of the OPCW external server.¹
6. To provide a comparative perspective, within its first year of deployment, the electronic declaration tool for National Authorities (EDNA) was adopted by 12 States Parties.

¹ See the “SIX Documents” link on the left-hand side of the OPCW external server home page.



7. States Parties from all OPCW regional groups are represented amongst the users, with 43% from the Western Europe and Other Countries group, 25% from Eastern Europe, 14% from Latin America and the Caribbean, 14% from Asia, and 4% from Africa.
8. The number of registered States Parties has been growing steadily since the system launch. The highest increases in the number of newly registered States Parties have been observed in the periods when States Parties are preparing and submitting annual declarations, such as in the first quarter of 2015, when the previous number of registered States Parties (nine) increased by 111% (to 19). As a result, 15 annual declarations on past activities (for 2014) were received for the first time through electronic means using the SIX system. Five of these declarations were on time, despite the fact that they were sent in the last two days before the declaration deadline, which would not have been possible without the SIX system.
9. Overall, the Secretariat has so far received 111 documents from States Parties through SIX. The majority of these documents were annual declarations of past and anticipated activities, as well as amendments to previously submitted declarations under Article VI of the Convention. In addition, other types of documents have been received, such as declarations under other articles (Article III, for example), responses to official letters from the Secretariat, and operational documents related to the SIX system itself.
10. When it comes to submission of documents from the Secretariat to the States Parties, the system has so far been used mainly to submit reconciliation letters. In addition, final inspection reports have been transmitted through SIX after explicit requests from the States Parties concerned.
11. In addition to the exchange of classified documents between States Parties and the Secretariat, in 2015 the system has been configured for the purpose of the secure exchange of documents between OPCW field missions and the Headquarters.

Current and future activities

12. The majority of the Secretariat's activities since the system was launched have focused on providing support to the States Parties in regard to registering and using the system and on promotion of the system amongst the States Parties. This also included training activities, implemented in two different ways:
 - (a) instructor-led training, such as the training course organised by the Secretariat during the Nineteenth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, which was attended by 12 representatives from 11 States Parties. It is possible that these activities also facilitated a substantial uptake in early 2015; and
 - (b) development of the e-learning module "Introduction to SIX", which was released to States Parties in March 2015 and is available through the OPCW Learning Management System (LMS), as well as on the dedicated section of the OPCW external server.

13. To ensure that the system is operational and available to users, the Secretariat performs regular system updates and maintenance activities, including upgrades of key system modules, software packages, and infrastructure components, as well as periodical health checks of these components. These routine operational activities are critical for the security of the system and are led by the Information Services Branch.
14. To ensure continued security of the SIX system, the Secretariat performs a number of regular information security activities. These activities are organised and coordinated by the Office of Confidentiality and Security and include systematic monitoring, security awareness raising, internal reviews and auditing of applied security controls, and periodical assessment of new threats and risks. In addition, annual security tests are performed by third party specialists with the objective of reassessing the security of the system and identifying areas for further improvement. The last such security test took place in December 2014 and the next is scheduled for December 2015.
15. The Secretariat has also continued consultations regarding the SIX system in the Industry Cluster meetings. At a meeting held on 2 June 2015, a decision was made to conclude the facilitation of this topic in the Industry Cluster, with a view to providing regular updates regarding the status of the system and the related activities. The above was reported by the facilitator of the SIX system to the Executive Council at its Seventy-Ninth Session (EC-79/WP.2, dated 7 July 2015).
16. In the last update provided to the Industry Cluster on 5 October 2015, several delegates expressed their support for the SIX system. They indicated that the system improved the way information is transmitted and made the execution of related business processes more efficient. States Parties that use SIX would like to see further expansion of the coverage of SIX in the near future.
17. In terms of the planning of system enhancements and expansion, the Secretariat's planning is driven by the interest expressed by the States Parties, taking into consideration the outcomes of the internally conducted cost-benefit analysis. Based on this, the two main directions of further enhancements are as follows:
 - (a) The scope of document types to be exchanged through SIX will be expanded. These include documents under other articles of the Convention (such as Articles VII and X), as well as specific types of documents, such as transfer discrepancy letters. The work on this expansion is in progress and is expected to be completed by the third quarter of 2016.
 - (b) The exchange of classified information could possibly be extended to State Party-State Party communication, for example for the purpose of resolving transfer discrepancies. The Secretariat will work on implementing a prototype of the nodal communication mechanism for implementation of this request in a semi-automated mode in 2016 and will plan further work based on the outcomes of the prototype.
18. In addition, the Secretariat will continue its work on improving the overall functionality and usability of the system, as well as on enhancing the user manuals and related documentation, in order to improve user experience, improve efficiency of system utilisation, and automate operational tasks to the greatest extent possible.

Conclusion

19. In its first year of operation, the SIX system has demonstrated the increased efficiency it will bring to the Secretariat and the States Parties. The expected key benefits have already started to materialise in that declarations could even be submitted just a few days before the deadlines. The Secretariat will continue its efforts to increase and expand the utilisation of the system, as well as to further improve the quality of this service provided to the States Parties.
20. Further questions or comments concerning SIX can be sent to the following:

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