



**NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT**

**THE OPCW'S ROLE IN THE FIELD OF CHEMICAL SECURITY**

**DISCUSSION PAPER**

**BACKGROUND**

1. This Note takes as its basis the definition of chemical security that was advanced in the Note by the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) S/1129/2013, (dated 30 September 2013), entitled “The Contribution of the OPCW to Chemical Safety and Chemical Security” in the following terms: “ ‘Chemical security’ refers to measures to prevent deliberate releases of toxic chemicals and to mitigate the impact if such events occur. In a wider context, it also includes policies to prevent attempts to acquire toxic chemicals or chemical weapons precursors. In general terms, the relevant regulatory framework is under development or discussion at both the international and national levels.”
2. Chemical security is an issue of concern throughout the life cycle of chemicals, from research and development, to manufacture, storage, transportation, distribution, end-use, and recycling. These activities involve many different stakeholders (chemical manufacturers, distributors, brokers, traders, academia, etc.) that operate different types of facilities (production plants, laboratories, warehouses, etc.). As a result, security risks are often inherently different for the aforementioned activities and are consequently addressed through different means.
3. The OPCW has been recognised by States Parties as having a coordinating role to play in supporting global chemical security. The Third Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Third Review Conference”), recalling States Parties’ prime responsibility for chemical security, noted the Secretariat’s capacity-building (paragraph 9.126 of RC-3/3\*, dated 19 April 2013) and coordination role (subparagraph 9.131(k) of RC-3/3\*), including with regard to chemical facilities and transportation.
4. Since 2009, the Secretariat has carried out a chemical safety and security programme intended to:
  - (a) create a framework for cooperation and coordination at the national, regional, and international levels to minimise the incidence of chemical accidents/incidents and the potential misuse of chemicals;



- (b) build the national chemical safety and security capacity, with a view to the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”);
  - (c) promote awareness among States Parties on chemical threats and suggest chemical threat reduction methods by assessing security risks; and
  - (d) share knowledge and experiences among States Parties in respect of chemical safety and security principles and develop networks among them.
5. Since its inception, the programme has trained more than 1,300 experts, in cooperation with 36 States Parties from all regions, and in partnership with other international organisations, government agencies, and specialised centres. E-learning tools, technical presentations, and booklets have also been developed. In furtherance of decision C-16/DEC.10 (dated 1 December 2011) on the components of an agreed framework for the full implementation of Article XI, the Secretariat has invited States Parties to submit their needs and best practices, tools, and guidance on chemical safety and security management. Based on the responses received, a consultant will assist in producing a report and compilation of best practices, which will be shared with States Parties upon their publication.
6. A number of regional and international initiatives and mechanisms serve to strengthen global chemical security, in particular in the economic and geographical domains. These include voluntary, industry-led measures, and codes and programmes promoted by intergovernmental organisations such as the World Customs Organization and the International Maritime Organization. In contrast to the chemical safety domain, however, there are no comprehensive international coordination mechanisms on chemical security in existence, nor is there a focal point for information exchange.

#### **THE OPCW’S FUTURE ROLE**

7. As an international organisation with almost universal membership, the OPCW is in a unique position to support the development of global chemical security by expanding its support for States Parties’ implementation of the Convention. Its role, in line with the outcome of the Third Review Conference and the Medium-Term Plan (MTP) for the period from 2017 to 2021 (EC-83/S/1 C-21/S/1, dated 8 April 2016), could be to act as a global platform for cooperation and exchange and to support requesting States Parties in their national capacity building.
8. One of the OPCW’s core missions is preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. Noting that “[s]uch re-emergence could manifest itself through the acquisition and/or use of chemical weapons, including by non-State actors”, the MTP stated that “[a]s a result, the relevant provisions of the Convention to prepare for and respond to chemical weapons attacks apply to them too.” Accordingly, the MTP provided a key performance indicator in this area, namely that “[t]he Organisation has developed into a leading global platform for issues related to chemical security, and for establishing a chemical security culture.” This key performance indicator draws on the guidance provided by the Third Review Conference, as set out above.
9. Some measures intended to contribute to the realisation of this goal are given below. These measures would be undertaken in addition to the OPCW’s existing activities in

the field, and build upon those proposed in Note S/1387/2016 (dated 19 May 2016) in relation to the Secretariat's role in supporting chemical security.

**Facilitation of an exchange of best practices on implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention as a contribution to countering the threat of chemical terrorism**

10. The Third Review Conference “[e]ncouraged the States Parties and the Secretariat to promote the OPCW’s role as a platform for voluntary consultation and cooperation among States Parties in the areas of chemical safety and security, including through the exchanges of information and best practices, and to support national capacity building, upon request” (subparagraph 9.131(k) of RC-3/3\*). This can be only achieved through the engagement of all relevant stakeholders such as the chemical industry, scientific committees, academia, and so on.
11. In accordance with the mandate of the Third Review Conference, the Secretariat could properly play a role in supporting States Parties by facilitating an exchange of best practices among them on global chemical security and its contribution to countering the threat of terrorism. The focus of such an exchange should include the implementation of all articles of the Convention that have a bearing on chemical security. Initial activities could include:
  - (a) the completion of a “needs assessment” exercise, with inputs from States Parties;
  - (b) the organisation of a series of workshops, with each focusing on one step of the chemical life cycle and its chemical security implications. Workshops could be organised, for instance, on research and development, manufacturing, storage, distribution, and national and international transportation. The purpose of each workshop would be to gather experts in the field in order to foster international exchanges on chemical security and to initiate the collection of best practices; and
  - (c) the establishment of an OPCW chemical security portal, linked to the OPCW website, which would serve as a living compendium of best practices, starting with those identified in the initial workshops. The portal could be designed to respond to the needs both of States Parties and of key non-governmental players in the chemical security life cycle.

**Creation of an international chemical-security stakeholders’ network**

12. Drawing on the example of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), which brings together intergovernmental organisations actively involved in chemical safety, the OPCW could propose the creation of an international network dedicated to chemical security. However, membership should not be limited to intergovernmental organisations, as is the case with the IOMC, but should also involve the 1540 Committee and international non-governmental associations such as the International Council of Chemical Associations and the International Chemical Trade Association, as well as regional initiatives such as the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Centres of Excellence.

13. Through the creation of a coordinating committee, the members could meet on a regular basis to coordinate their activities. The OPCW could host such meetings.

**Provision of assistance to States Parties**

14. Following the establishment of the OPCW chemical security portal, the Secretariat could continue promoting and supporting global chemical security by providing specific assistance to States Parties. The assistance should be limited in the first instance to helping States Parties to identify existing best practices in response to a specific need.
15. This assistance could be extended to additional activities, should the Secretariat receive the support of recognised experts in the field of chemical security through in-kind contributions from States Parties, and if agreeable by the State requesting assistance. These activities could include, for example, the review of chemical security-related measures (both of a regulatory and non-regulatory nature) in place in the State Party requesting assistance or the provision of support for a national chemical security risk assessment (including threat analysis and security risk characterisation).

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