



NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

REPORT OF THE NINETEENTH ANNUAL MEETING OF NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

INTRODUCTION

1. The Nineteenth Annual Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention was held from 22 to 24 November 2017 at the OPCW Headquarters and World Forum in The Hague.
2. The main objectives of the annual meeting were to provide opportunities to the National Authorities and relevant stakeholders to exchange information to enhance their capacity to fully and effectively implement the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”), to promote further cooperation and networking between them, and to foster cooperation with the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”).
3. A total of 178 participants from 123 States Parties attended the meeting, of which 100 from 100 States Parties were sponsored by the Secretariat. The meeting was also attended by representatives of the Caribbean Community, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Centre for Security Cooperation of the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC). In his inaugural remarks, the Director-General highlighted the importance of the meeting and noted that the Convention owes its success to the dedication of its States Parties and to the tireless efforts of their National Authorities. He further underscored the crucial role of the National Authorities, which not only are perpetually on the front line of efforts to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, but which must also directly tackle new challenges.
4. The meeting proceedings included the following:
 - (a) informative sessions by the Secretariat;
 - (b) an industry segment;
 - (c) national presentations;
 - (d) regional group meetings; and
 - (e) bilateral consultations.



Informative sessions by the Secretariat

5. Different units of the Secretariat delivered presentations on various programmes and initiatives undertaken in support of States Parties' efforts to implement the Convention. The subjects included:
 - (a) international cooperation and assistance capacity-building programmes and the proposed programme for 2018 in support of States Parties' efforts to effectively implement Articles VII, X, and XI of the Convention;
 - (b) Article VI inspection processes;
 - (c) various policy-related topics, including developments in science and technology, the OPCW's contribution to anti-terrorism efforts, the work of the OPCW's Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities, and preparations for the Fourth Review Conference;¹
 - (d) recent developments in education and outreach; and
 - (e) the Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM), established by the Secretariat to enhance its capacity and readiness to provide, upon request, emergency measures of assistance to States Parties.
6. The Secretariat highlighted the importance for States Parties and stakeholders to use the knowledge gained from the different capacity-building programmes when implementing the Convention, as well as the need to assess the impact of such programmes. Such steps enable the Secretariat to measure the progress made and to identify the challenges and gaps ahead, with a view to further improving the effectiveness of such programmes. A special focus was placed on the need to select relevant and appropriate participants in capacity-building events.
7. The meeting also provided the Secretariat with an opportunity to brief participants on certain initiatives that have been undertaken to improve the work of States Parties and facilitate communication with them. These include the still ongoing overhaul of the Organisation's new website, which is aimed at improving communication and information sharing, and the electronic event management platform (Eventus), which is aimed at streamlining the submission of national nominations for capacity-building programmes. These initiatives were welcomed by the participants, although some delegations made suggestions to improve the Eventus tool, mainly as regards the ability of candidates to apply directly for events, as the National Authorities sought to ensure that they would be involved in the selection and endorsement of the candidates.

¹ Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Industry segment

8. A half-day industry segment session was held on 23 November 2017, and was organised for the first time within the framework of the National Authority Days. The main purpose was to give the industry sector, and in particular those entities that are not affiliated in International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA), to interact with the National Authorities and the Secretariat, and to exchange views in order to explore ways and means to further improve collaboration for the sake of effective implementation of the Convention.
9. The segment included a number of presentations from the Secretariat and ICCA.
10. Although National Authorities were invited to include industry representatives in their respective delegations, none did so, aside from the ICCA representatives who had attended the meetings as panellists.
11. The industry segment consisted of three panel discussions on the following themes:
 - (a) engagement with chemical industry;
 - (b) efforts to reduce transfer discrepancies in regard to Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 chemicals; and
 - (c) the future of Article VI implementation.

Panel 1: Engagement with chemical industry

12. The first panel discussions focused on the collaboration and interaction between the National Authorities and the Secretariat, with presentations from ICCA and the Secretariat.
13. The ICCA presentation on “The Role of the International Council of Chemical Associations” highlighted the importance of the private sector for Convention implementation and the need for dialogue between the chemical industry and the National Authorities. It also outlined the contributions of ICCA, both prior to entry into force of the Convention and recently, while referring to the various joint OPCW-ICCA activities.
14. The Secretariat’s presentation focused on engagement with chemical industry and emphasised its significant role as an essential partner in achieving a world free of chemical weapons. The presentation showcased the cooperation between ICCA and the OPCW and ICCA-OPCW coordination mechanisms.
15. A second presentation by the Secretariat on the “Outcomes of the 4th Annual Meeting of Chemical Industry Representatives and the Convention National Authorities” outlined a number of themes discussed during the meeting: chemical terrorism, chemical security, and the Convention; industry outreach and declaration reviews; and the recommendation of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) Temporary Working Group (TWG) on Verification. The presentation also highlighted the main outcomes that emerged from the deliberations.

Panel 2: Efforts to reduce transfer discrepancies in regard to Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 Chemicals

16. The second panel discussions focused on the outstanding issue of transfer discrepancies, with presentations from ICCA and the Secretariat.
17. The ICCA presentation entitled “Convention Transfer Discrepancies” discussed various aspects of this issue, including identification and declaration of transfers, the sources of such discrepancies, and potential solutions.
18. The Secretariat’s presentation on “Efforts to Reduce Transfer Discrepancies of S2 and S3 Chemicals” included facts and figures regarding transfer discrepancies, views of States Parties in regard to transfer discrepancies, and the actions the Secretariat has taken to help them solve this issue. Particular focus was placed on the Secretariat’s survey on national measures and results, as well as the methods of data collection of the top 12 States Parties with transfer discrepancies.
19. The presentations were followed by positive discussions from the audience on various aspects of the issue of transfer discrepancies. While the sharing of information on imports and exports was encouraged, several delegations noted that some information for the declaration may be missed, as the National Authorities may not always have access to the information regarding trading and distributing companies.

Panel 3: Future of Article VI implementation

20. The third panel discussions focused on the future of Article VI implementation, with presentations from ICCA and the Secretariat.
21. ICCA delivered a presentation highlighting its views on “The Future of Article VI Implementation”. After a brief description of ICCA, the presentation addressed the two following topics of concern proposed by the TWGs of the SAB:
 - (a) production by synthesis (recommendation by the SAB’s TWG on the Convergence of Chemistry and Biology regarding processes designed for the formation of a chemical substance); and
 - (b) mixtures (recommendation by the SAB’s TWG on Verification that the list of declarable other chemical production facilities (OCPFs) should include all facilities regardless of the purity level of a discrete organic chemical (DOC) or DOC mixtures produced).
22. ICCA’s presentation stated that the recommendations of the SAB in this respect, if implemented, would significantly change the scope of the verification regime and that, as a result, careful deliberation was required. It further pointed out that the addition of bio-mediated processes in particular would roughly double the number of facilities to be inspected, and that the addition of mixtures would greatly increase the number of facilities to be inspected.
23. The Secretariat’s presentation on “The Future of Article VI Implementation” explored, from the Secretariat’s perspective, the future prospects of Article VI implementation. This included the Secretariat’s views as expressed in its vision paper

“The OPCW in 2025: Ensuring a World Free of Chemical Weapons” (S/1252/2015, dated 6 March 2015)”, the recommendations of the SAB, and the views of States Parties and industry. The presentation then looked to the future of Article VI implementation through key verification aims and indicators of achievement.

24. The discussions that followed the presentation resulted in various comments and suggestions. ICCA suggested revisiting the issue of the frequency of Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 inspections. While the value of publicly available information was recognised, the relevance and modalities of its use by the Secretariat was questioned by some delegations.
25. During this segment, one of the important comments expressed by a participant following the panel discussion was that the Secretariat should not focus solely on States Parties with large industries. Similar comments were made during other events organised by the Implementation Support Branch last year, namely that States Parties with small or emerging chemical industries posed even more significant challenges to the Secretariat in terms of (future) implementation of Article VI, and from the perspective of chemical security and emerging threats. In this respect, the Secretariat should take on board the needs of this large group of States Parties.

National presentations

26. The annual meeting also provided an opportunity for National Authorities to learn about the experiences and best practices of countries derived from their participation in capacity-building activities. Benin shared the experience it gained and the results it achieved through participating in the OPCW Internship Programme for Legal Drafters and National Authority Representatives. Guatemala informed the National Authorities about the results of its cooperation with Argentina in the context of the Mentorship/Partnership Programme for National Authorities of States Parties to the Convention, which is implemented by the Secretariat.

Regional group meetings

27. The National Authority Days proceeded with separate, half-day meetings of the regional groups—Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC), and the Group of Western European and Other States (WEOG)—to discuss issues of concern and challenges regarding Convention implementation specific to their respective regions. A focus was also placed on capacity-building needs, and ways and means to streamline regional and subregional cooperation for the full and effective implementation of the Convention. A summary of the outcomes and recommendations that emerged from the deliberations was presented in the final plenary meeting.
28. Representatives of the African Group identified the following key priorities for the region in terms of national implementation of the Convention: domestication of the Convention; building capacity in chemical management, with a focus on control of the cross-border transfer of scheduled chemicals; emergency response; improvement of knowledge and technology transfer; and expansion of education and outreach in Africa.

29. The African Group came up with interesting ideas on how to improve national implementation of the Convention on the continent, including the establishment of a peer review mechanism, Africa-to-Africa assistance programmes, and the promotion of the development of national road maps that would indicate concrete steps towards Convention implementation. The Africa Group also agreed that the 2018 regional meeting of National Authorities in Africa would be hosted by Morocco. Rwanda and Ethiopia expressed their interest in hosting the regional meeting in 2019.
30. The Asian Group highlighted the importance of both national implementing legislation and its enforcement as the main departure point for national implementation of the Convention, and of partnerships and cooperation as a necessary prerequisite for fulfilling this vital obligation. The Group noted that Asia had been under-represented at the Secretariat. The Group also discussed a number of other issues, including: the threat of the re-emergence of chemical weapons and the threat of non-State actors, and strategies to counter such threats; the strengthening of the advisory function of the RRAM; the maintenance of disarmament as a top priority in discussions of the OPCW's future priorities within the framework of the Convention; the search for ways to solve transfer discrepancies; and best practices on education and outreach.
31. GRULAC National Authorities focused on the priorities for the Latin American and Caribbean region, including: increased support from the Secretariat in the implementation of the Convention, including for customs controls of transfers of chemical substances; the promotion of international cooperation among all four pillars of the Convention; identification of education and outreach activities to strengthen links between National Authorities and all relevant sectors, including academia; and strengthening of efforts to counter terrorism. A special focus was placed on other needs to be addressed, including: a regional communication and information exchange mechanism; the establishment of a mechanism to identify States Parties at an advanced stage of Convention implementation that can assist other countries; training impact assessments; collaboration with other regional and international agencies; and effective coordination between National Authorities and the Secretariat to maintain a common database of trained staff.
32. The Eastern European Group went through the list of events organised by the region to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the OPCW, as well as different events and training courses organised with the support of the Secretariat. The completion of the Russian Federation's chemical weapons destruction programme was noted as a significant milestone. The Group agreed that the 2018 regional meeting of National Authorities in Eastern Europe would be hosted by the Czech Republic.
33. The Eastern European Group proposed to invite chemical industry representatives to the regional meeting. The Group also discussed the challenges of implementing the Convention, which included, among other things: the effectiveness of the implementation of all provisions of the Convention; interconnection with other chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) regional programmes (European Union (EU) Centres of Excellence); and cooperation with relevant international organisations, including the 1540 Committee of the United Nations Security Council and the EU, to enhance chemical safety and security.

34. The WEOG discussed the Secretariat's survey on production by synthesis through bio-mediated processes, the sharing of national survey responses by WEOG countries, the declarability of DOC mixtures, and OCPF declaration exemptions. The Group convened to further discuss these topics within the Industry Cluster organised by the Secretariat.
35. The Group welcomed the efforts deployed by the Secretariat to solve transfer discrepancies, and highlighted the difficulties of having legislation regarding international information sharing. Furthermore, the Group observed differences regarding the use of Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) numbers assigned for a particular mixture. The Group discussed OPCW inspection issues (from the re-hiring of inspectors to the use of specific equipment), as well as its support of the Secretariat's capacity-building efforts.

Bilateral consultations

36. More than 150 bilateral consultations were organised between the representatives of States Parties and between these representatives and the Secretariat, to discuss various issues of mutual interest and to explore avenues to identify the needs of States Parties and to strengthen Secretariat programmes.

CONCLUSION AND OUTCOMES

37. The Nineteenth Annual Meeting of National Authorities successfully achieved its anticipated results. National Authority representatives had ample opportunities to discuss various aspects of national implementation of the Convention, including developments and experiences in the implementation of their obligations under the various articles of the Convention. Overall, the feedback from participants was quite positive.
38. The new segment on engagement with chemical industry was highly appreciated, as it took place in the form of a panel discussion between the Secretariat, ICCA, and the National Authorities. Nevertheless, the discussions could have been better informed if the National Authority delegations had included representatives from the industry sector.

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