



OPCW

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**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE CONFERENCE
OF THE STATES PARTIES AT ITS TWENTY-THIRD SESSION
(FULL VERSION)**

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. I warmly welcome all delegations to the Twenty-Third Session of the Conference of the States Parties. At the outset, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Yun-young Lee on his election as the Chairperson of the Conference. I wish you success in your new and important mission. Our outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki of Morocco, has earned our gratitude for leading the last session of the Conference ably and efficiently. Acknowledgement is also due to Ambassador Jana Reinišová of the Czech Republic for her effective guidance of the work of the Executive Council as its Chairperson. Her predecessor, Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal of Bangladesh, played his part with skill and dedication.
2. I am deeply honoured to address the Conference of the States Parties, for the first time as Director-General. Your trust and confidence have been heart-warming and I thank all States Parties for the support and cooperation that they have extended to me in my new role. I will not fail to recognise the dedicated staff of the Technical Secretariat for their continuing commitment and professionalism.
3. 2018 has been an eventful year. We have dealt with difficult issues and sought to strengthen the authority of the Convention in order to maintain its enduring relevance. The implementation of the Convention continues to advance on all fronts, and everybody agrees that this Organisation is very much needed. However, the international norm against the use of chemical weapons has come under strain. The repeated use of chemical weapons poses a challenge that must be met with strong and unified resolve.
4. Given our obligation to protect and to preserve the norms of the Convention, the Secretariat on its part has continued to respond to all credible reports indicating a possible violation of its prohibitions.
5. The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) updated the Executive Council at its regular sessions in July and October on its activities in the Syrian Arab Republic. The FFM issued reports on the use of chemicals as weapons in Al Hamadaniyah, Karm Al-Tarrab, and Saraqib, and regarding two incidents in Ltamenah. On 6 July 2018, the Secretariat issued an interim report regarding an earlier incident of alleged use on 7 April in Douma in the Syrian Arab Republic. The FFM continues to collect and



analyse information with regard to this inquiry and will provide a final report on its findings in due course.

6. The Declaration Assessment Team continued its work to resolve all gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration and further submissions.
7. The Secretariat deployed two technical assistance visits to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, upon its request, in response to incidents involving a chemical warfare agent in Salisbury and Amesbury in March and July this year.
8. In June this year, the Conference of the States Parties convened at its Fourth Special Session. It adopted a decision entitled "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use" (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018). This decision calls on the Secretariat to, inter alia, identify those who are responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The decision also looks beyond Syria with regard to the identification of those involved in the use of chemicals as weapons. It enables the Secretariat to assist, upon their request, States Parties in their investigations into the use of chemical weapons in their own territories. As requested pursuant to the decision, I have presented to the Conference elements on how the Secretariat can establish the capability to carry out this task.
9. In its broader approach, the decision also asks the Secretariat to examine ways to strengthen the implementation of the Convention. The Organisation can play a significant role in strengthening global chemical security, to ensure that toxic chemicals do not fall into the wrong hands.
10. For this purpose, the decision requires the submission of proposals to enhance the capacity of the Secretariat and the tools available to it to strengthen implementation of the Convention's verification regime. It also requires the formulation of options covering further assistance that the Secretariat might provide to States Parties.
11. These proposals have also been submitted for the consideration of the Conference. They aim to identify ways and means to assist States Parties to implement their obligations under the Convention, to enhance chemical security, and to enable international cooperation in the field of chemical activities for purposes not prohibited under the Convention.
12. The revised Draft Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2019 (EC-89/CRP.1/Rev.2, dated 12 October 2018 and Corr.1, dated 16 October 2018) is before the Conference for its consideration. It reflects the resource requirements for the Secretariat to carry out its functions in the coming year. It also refers to investments in cybersecurity, physical security, and business continuity.
13. The draft budget addresses the current reality confronting the OPCW with regard to new and evolving threats. It also responds to the increasing responsibilities and expectations that States Parties have reposed in the Secretariat. The proposal has been discussed in the Programme and Budget facilitation process, and in the Executive Council. It is now being presented to the Conference for its consideration.

14. In order for the Secretariat to continue to fulfil its vital mandate, a Conference-approved Programme and Budget for 2019 is necessary. Ensuring that the Secretariat is effectively staffed and managed is critical to our continuing effectiveness and success.
15. The consistent support of States Parties has made the Convention one of the most effective and successful international treaties in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. I trust that at this defining juncture, States Parties will be ready to once again extend their support in preserving the institutional efficiency and effectiveness of the OPCW.
16. This year, we engaged independent experts to assess the impact of the tenure policy on the OPCW (EC-89/DG.28, dated 2 October 2018). The report of those experts, which was already presented to you, puts forward a number of recommendations to ensure the effectiveness of the implementation of the tenure policy at the OPCW. I would encourage you to give these your serious consideration, with a view to introducing adaptations suited to the continued financial and operational effectiveness of the Secretariat.
17. Moving on to the topic of demilitarisation, as at 31 October 2018, a total of 68,044 metric tonnes (MT) or 96.5% of the declared Category 1 chemical weapons had been destroyed under verification by the Secretariat. Also as at 31 October 2018, the Secretariat had verified the destruction by the United States of America of 25,320 MT, or 91% of its declared Category 1 chemical weapons.
18. The destruction of abandoned chemical weapons (ACW) by Japan on the territory of China continued in 2018 at the Haerbaling destruction facility. Since the beginning of the process, as at 31 August, 51,000 items of declared ACW have been destroyed. This represents a significant proportion of the more than 63,000 such items that have so far been recovered. Since the last session of the Conference, 12 related inspections have been conducted in China.
19. In Europe, seven inspections of old chemical weapons (OCW) were conducted in six States Parties, namely, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
20. In Libya, sampling operations at the former chemical weapons storage site in Ruwagha, concluded on 5 April. The overall project will complete the destruction of the remaining Category 2 chemical material tanks. In addition, the degradation products of Category 1 chemicals previously destroyed on the territory of Libya will be stabilised. All subsequent waste will be processed by solar evaporation in an environmentally compliant manner. I thank the governments of Canada, Cyprus, Finland, New Zealand, Spain, and Tunisia, as well as the European Union, for their generous support of these activities in Libya.
21. Verification activities remain on track for the current year. In 2018, 241 Article VI inspections are being carried out by the Secretariat as scheduled.
22. Progress has been made in our project to upgrade the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology. The new Centre will increase the Secretariat's ability to effectively implement the Convention in key areas

of verification and international cooperation. The contributions received or pledged to date total approximately EUR 7 million. I wish to thank the Government of the Netherlands, our Host Country, which has pledged financial support needed for land acquisition for the new Centre. I wish also to extend my gratitude to the governments of Belgium, Canada, Estonia, the Republic of Korea, Poland, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for their generous voluntary contributions. This project will create tangible benefits for all our members and I renew my appeal to all States Parties to support it.

23. In the area of international cooperation and technical assistance, over 96 training courses, workshops, seminars, and other capacity-building programmes have been delivered in 2018, to the benefit of 2,016 participants. I would like to thank the many States Parties that have provided generous voluntary financial and in-kind contributions to our work in this area.
24. The Africa Programme remains a critical capacity-building mechanism. It is designed to meet the specific needs of States Parties from Africa in terms of their implementation of the Convention. The fourth phase of the programme is under way and its progress is outlined in the report “The Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention” (EC-89/DG.14 C-23/DG.10, dated 5 September 2018).
25. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) held its Twenty-Seventh Session in March. The SAB produced a working paper on new types of nerve agents and submitted its report on developments in science and technology to the Fourth Review Conference. This report, inter alia, reiterates the SAB’s recommendation for a review of the Convention’s schedules of chemicals to ensure that they are accurate and up to date.
26. On 16 October, I received a joint proposal from Canada, the Netherlands, and the United States of America for a technical change to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention. In accordance with Article XV of the Convention, the Secretariat is currently evaluating the proposal.
27. This month, November 2018, we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Armistice that put an end to the First World War, also known as the Great War. In Ieper, Belgium, some infamous battles took place. On 22 April 1915, more than 150 tonnes of chlorine gas were released on the Allied trenches. In a matter of minutes, more than 1,000 soldiers died, and hundreds were badly injured.
28. With these few words, I would like to invite us all to remember those who died and suffered on that day, and since then, those who have been killed or injured by these horrendous weapons. I would like to pay tribute and express my deepest respect. Today, there is no doubt that the lessons that humanity learned from this war need to remain with us forever. It is our common and individual responsibility to impart the memory of this experience to the new generations.

Chemical demilitarisation and verification

29. As at 31 October 2018, a total of 70,494 MT of Category 1 chemical weapons had been declared by the possessor States Parties. Of that amount, 68,044 MT, representing more than 96.5% of the declared Category 1 chemical weapons, had been destroyed under verification by the Secretariat. The aggregate amount destroyed includes 2.914 MT that have been withdrawn from Category 1 chemical weapons stockpiles pursuant to Article VI of the Convention and subparagraph 2 (d) of Part VI of the Verification Annex for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. The destruction of all Category 1 chemical weapons stockpiles declared by a State Party, Albania, India, Libya, the Russian Federation, and the Syrian Arab Republic has been completed.

United States of America

30. In the United States of America, the Pueblo Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP) resumed destruction operations in June 2018 after several technical issues were resolved. As at 31 October 2018, a total of 395 MT of chemical agent had been verified as destroyed at PCAPP. A total of 350 problematic chemical weapons have been shipped to the PCAPP Explosive Destruction System (EDS) and will be destroyed during the second campaign of operations at the facility. Parallel to the destruction operations, PCAPP has reconfigured chemical weapons boxed into palletised configuration. The corresponding energetic components, when removed, have been shipped to and destroyed at the PCAPP's non-contiguous static detonation chamber (SDC) site in Anniston, Alabama.
31. The construction of the main plant at the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant (BGCAPP) is complete and destruction operations are scheduled to start in autumn 2019. The systemisation of this facility stood at 70.0% as at 31 October 2018. The SDC at the BGCAPP has completed 98% of construction and 89.0% of systemisation. The Secretariat conducted an initial visit to the SDC in October 2018. This facility is scheduled to begin destruction operations in summer 2019.
32. The Secretariat verified the destruction by the United States of America of 0.001220 MT of unknown agent at the Aberdeen Proving Ground Chemical Transfer Facility/Munitions Assessment and Processing System at Aberdeen, Maryland. In early January 2018, the Secretariat conducted the desktop annual review for the destruction of recovered chemical weapons destroyed in 2017. A similar review is planned for January 2019 to verify the destruction of the recovered chemical weapons destroyed in 2018.
33. The United States is the only remaining possessor State Party. In accordance with its detailed plan for the destruction of remaining chemical weapons after the final extended deadline of 29 April 2012 (EC-68/NAT.2, dated 13 April 2012), the forecasted date for the completion of destruction is September 2023.

Libya

34. Sampling operations at the former chemical weapons storage site in Ruwagha, Libya were conducted in March and concluded on 5 April 2018. Because of the ongoing situation in Libya, live streaming video was used to observe trained Libyan operators obtaining samples from the area of the deteriorated and leaking containers.
35. The Secretariat is now facilitating the clean-up of the former chemical weapons storage site at Ruwagha, Libya with contributions from Canada, Cyprus, Finland, Spain, and the European Union. The decanted containers that remained in Libya following removal operations have been cleaned, cut, and destroyed. The rinse water is being held pending finalisation of the evaporation lagoons. Treatment of the degradation products of Category 1 chemicals previously destroyed on the territory of Libya will begin shortly. The project is anticipated to be completed by August 2019. I thank the Governments of Canada, Cyprus, Finland, New Zealand, Spain, and Tunisia, as well as the European Union, for their generous support of our activities in Libya.

Old and abandoned chemical weapons

36. The destruction of ACW by Japan on the territory of China continued this year at the Haerbaling ACW destruction facility. From the start of the destruction operations until 31 August 2018, around 51,000 of the over 63,000 items of declared ACW on the territory of China were destroyed. This figure accounts for all items destroyed at the mobile destruction facilities (MDFs) in Nanjing, Shijiazhuang, Wuhan, and Haerbaling, and all of the items transferred from surrounding locations to the MDFs for destruction, using a controlled detonation chamber and a static detonation chamber.
37. Twelve inspections of chemical weapons abandoned by Japan on the territory of China have been conducted in China. In addition, the Secretariat observed two excavation and recovery operations at the sites in Mudanjiang and Haerbaling.
38. Seven inspections of OCW were conducted in six States Parties, namely, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. While there has been considerable progress in destruction operations, recoveries of significant quantities of OCW continue to be made.

Syrian Arab Republic

Fact-Finding Missions

39. The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) continued to study all available information related to allegations of use of chemical weapons on the territory of that State Party in 2018. The FFM issued three reports on the use of chemicals as weapons: in Al-Hamadaniyah and Karm Al-Tarrab (S/1642/2018, dated 2 July 2017), in Saraqib (S/1626/2018, dated 15 May 2018 and Corr.1, dated 18 July 2018), and regarding two incidents in Ltamenah (S/1636/2018*, dated 13 June 2018). On 6 July 2018, the Secretariat issued an "Interim Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria Regarding the Incident of Alleged Use of Toxic Chemicals as a Weapon in Douma, Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 April 2018" (S/1645/2018). The FFM

continues to collect and analyse information with regard to the alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Douma and will provide a final report on its findings in due course. A summary update of the activities carried out by the FFM was submitted to the States Parties on 10 October 2018 (S/1677/2018).

Declaration Assessment Team

40. The Secretariat completed the analysis of the information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic in a note verbale (dated 10 July 2018), which addressed questions raised as a result of the Secretariat's analysis of documents submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic on 10 November 2017.
41. In response, a letter was sent to the Syrian Arab Republic on 28 September 2018 conveying the Secretariat's assessment that the information did not substantially clarify the outstanding issues. It further invited the Syrian authorities to continue working to clarify all gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies noted in the initial declaration and further submissions.

Chemical weapons production facilities

42. As at 31 October 2018, all 97 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by 14 States Parties have been either destroyed or converted. Among them, 74 have been verified as destroyed and 23 have been verified as converted for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. At present, 19 former CWPFs remain under verification. These include 14 converted CWPFs and five underground structures of the CWPFs already destroyed. During the reporting period, the Technical Secretariat conducted seven inspections at seven CWPFs and five visits in relation to CWPFs.
43. In Iraq, the Secretariat verified in February 2018 the destruction of the remaining buildings at the Falluja-1, Falluja-3, and Al-Muthanna CWPFs. It also verified the compliance of the converted Al-Rashad CWPF site during the inspection in August 2018.
44. In the Syrian Arab Republic, destruction of the final two CWPFs took place on 7 and 23 June 2018. On 12 July, the Secretariat conducted inspections at both sites and verified that all declared buildings had been destroyed and debris removed. The visits to the five underground structures in November 2018 reported no pending issues or issues requiring further attention. The Secretariat has now verified the destruction of all 27 CWPFs declared by the Syrian Arab Republic.
45. The contract with the United Nations Office for Project Services has been extended until the end of March 2019 to secure the continued support of our work in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Declarations

46. In January 2018, the Secretariat released a new version of its Electronic Declarations Tool for National Authorities (EDNA). The new version addresses a number of issues raised by States Parties and introduces improvements and usability enhancements.

47. In September 2018, the Secretariat began development of the next version of EDNA, the Electronic Declaration Information System (EDIS). EDIS will further strengthen the verification regime by bringing usability enhancements and new functionalities to the declaration preparation and submission process. The first release of the system is scheduled for 2019 and will include all of the existing EDNA features, with the addition of a new user management module and Article III riot control agent declarations.
48. The percentage of annual declarations on past activities (ADPA) submitted on time has remained high at over 80% for the last four years. The Secretariat received declarations from 51 States Parties for ADPA 2017 in electronic format, amounting to a total of 96% of declared plant sites.
49. In relation to annual declarations on anticipated activities (ADAA) at Schedule 1 facilities for 2019, 96% of States Parties submitted their declarations on time by the deadline of 2 October 2018. This is the highest percentage ever achieved. Regarding ADAA for Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 chemicals, 56 States Parties submitted their ADAA for 2019 by the 1 November deadline. I thank States Parties for their timely submissions and encourage them to continue meeting the declaration submission deadlines set by the Convention.

Transfer discrepancies related to the import and export of Schedule 2 and Schedule 3 chemicals

50. The Secretariat appreciates States Parties' overall efforts to resolve transfer discrepancies. The resolution rate in respect of transfer discrepancies for ADPA 2017 was 12%, a significant improvement over the 7% rate in 2016. I encourage the States Parties to continue working with the Secretariat and among themselves to resolve the remaining transfer discrepancies.

Secure information exchange

51. Progress continues to be made regarding the use of the Secure Information Exchange (SIX) system for the prompt transmission of information. As at 15 November 2018, 56 States Parties had registered and were actively using SIX. I encourage more States Parties to join the system.
52. A presentation on the SIX system was provided during the training course on fulfilling Article VI obligations for representatives of National Authorities of States Parties, held at OPCW Headquarters in The Hague from 10 to 14 September 2018.
53. The Secretariat has continued to provide training on electronic declarations, delivering in 2018 four courses on this topic: three at OPCW Headquarters and one at the Finnish Institute for Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (VERIFIN) in Helsinki, Finland.
54. As a result of the above efforts, the electronic processing of declarations has continued to improve.
55. The Technical Secretariat is also organising training sessions and presentations on EDNA and the SIX in the margins of this session of the Conference; details are

available in the OPCW Journal. I encourage you to contact the Secretariat should you require guidance or assistance on the electronic submission of declarations, or if you would like to request support and training regarding use of the software.

Tools for the identification of scheduled chemicals

56. In November, the Secretariat released the 2018 version of two OPCW tools for the identification of scheduled chemicals: the Handbook on Chemicals and the Online Scheduled Chemicals Database. These tools have been expanded to include both the scheduled chemicals declared by States Parties to the Technical Secretariat between 2014 and 2017 as well as those scheduled chemicals registered by the Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) during the same time period. Both updated tools are available on the OPCW website.

Industry verification

57. The chemical industry remains a key partner of the OPCW in the implementation of the Convention, and we have continued to build upon our cooperation with industry in the past year. We have held consultations and undertaken joint efforts in areas such as verification and Article VI inspections, capacity building in chemical safety and security, relationships with National Authorities, and education and outreach. I have submitted a report to the Conference entitled “Engaging the Chemical Industry Associations” (C-23/DG.14, dated 13 November 2018) detailing this cooperation.
58. In 2018, the Secretariat was scheduled to carry out 241 Article VI inspections. By the end of last week, 97% of the budgeted inspections were completed. These 233 inspections occurred in 43 States Parties. It is expected that the programme will be fully implemented by the end of the year.
59. Thus far in 2018, the Secretariat has carried out nine Article VI inspections involving sampling and analysis activities. Of these, seven were conducted at Schedule 2 facilities, while the remaining two were held at other chemical production facilities (OCPFs). The Secretariat continues to study the appropriate use of sampling and analysis during Article VI inspections and welcomes the views of States Parties in this regard.
60. The revised methodology for the selection of OCPFs has continued to show expected results in terms of the types of plant sites selected for inspection and their geographic distribution. The results of site selection over the past seven years have been studied by the Industry Cluster to better understand the achievement of our verification goals. The Secretariat welcomes the recommendations of States Parties on how these procedures can be improved.
61. I appreciate States Parties’ efforts to facilitate the conduct of Article VI inspections in an efficient, timely, and economic manner. This includes flexibility in planning and logistics, such as accepting in-country and inter-country sequential inspections, accepting multiple points of entry and points of exit, and providing efficient and safe in-country transportation. In 2018, more States Parties agreed to allow sequential inspections, consisting of two consecutive inspections in one week. This allows for a reduction in inspector time and travel costs. In 2018, sequential inspections have been conducted in over 45% of all Article VI inspections.

62. I further thank States Parties for the good cooperation extended to the Secretariat during on-site inspections. This includes providing comprehensive and focused pre-inspection briefings, providing prompt access to plant sites and records, and efficient preparation of preliminary findings reports on site. I encourage States Parties to work with the Secretariat to continue to identify opportunities for efficiencies and cooperation, in order to maximise the financial resources available for annual Article VI inspections.
63. The Secretariat welcomes inputs by States Parties on improvements in Article VI verification through consultations within the Industry Cluster, meetings of National Authorities, bilateral consultations, and in other forums.
64. In 2018, the work of the Industry Cluster has focused on the following issues: progress on resolving transfer discrepancies; the use and appropriate consideration of biomediated processes within national chemical industries; the performance of the site selection methodologies; the future of Article VI implementation; open industry topics in preparation for the Fourth Review Conference; inspection frequency; and refinements in the conduct of Article VI inspections.
65. In 2018, bilateral consultations were held at the request of several delegations on industry-related topics. In addition to requested capacity-building support, these consultations also allowed States Parties to present their views on a number of industry-related topics, such as the identification of potentially declarable industry sites, the appropriate number of Article VI inspections, the geographic distribution of Article VI inspections, and the topics under consideration by the Industry Cluster. The Secretariat welcomes more such opportunities to make continued progress on these important issues.

Situation Centre

66. The OPCW Situation Centre established new capabilities and procedures to maintain a comprehensive common operating picture for senior management. The concept of a standby roster of Secretariat experts was validated during the incident of alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma, the Syrian Arab Republic on 7 April 2018. The Situation Centre was able to quickly notify the Office of the Director-General of the events surrounding the allegation and provide a timely and comprehensive initial team assessment of the open-source information concerning the allegation. Situation Centre staff conducted initial and advanced training in open-source research techniques and participated in Rapid Response and Assistance Mission (RRAM) training exercises by providing personnel and equipment to operate the RRAM command post.

Inspectorate training

67. The Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell of the Inspectorate Division provided or coordinated 42 individual training courses. The courses comprised 1,277 inspector days and 405 instructor days, and included a total of 449 participants. Some of the instructors were directly involved in the Secretariat's capacity-building programmes for States Parties, such as the Associate Programme, the assistance and protection instructors' course, and the regional and national assistance and protection courses for States Parties, held in Argentina, Bangladesh, Belarus, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Tunisia, and Uganda.

68. The Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell planned, facilitated, and executed key mandatory training courses for inspectors, in particular the cornerstone toxic chemical training (TCT), Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments (SSAFE), non-destructive evaluation (NDE), and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) refresher courses.
69. Seven new inspectors from Group Q successfully completed their training programme at the end of 2017 and commenced their duties in January 2018.
70. Five P-3 inspectors were promoted to P-4 inspector (team leaders) during the reporting period. They were provided with an enhanced inspection team leader training course, after which they completed on-the-job training with experienced team leaders. All five promoted inspectors have now fully deployed as inspection team leaders.
71. The first group of eight former inspectors rehired in 2015 completed their tenure by the beginning of September 2018 and left the Organisation, having successfully carried out the tasks they had been assigned. Recruitment processes were undertaken to select suitably qualified and experienced staff to replace them, in accordance with decision C-19/DEC.11 (dated 4 December 2014). A group of six rehired inspectors (mission team leaders) will join the Secretariat at the end of November 2018 and will complete their mandatory refresher training in order to be prepared for deployment on missions by the end of the year.
72. The reporting period saw significant time and effort on training initiatives aimed at maintaining the preparedness of the Secretariat for contingency operations. Some of the main training courses included a RRAM refresher training course and HQ workshop, RRAM field exercises in Romania and Serbia, and inspector contributions to the Balkan Response exercise in Serbia and the Precise Response exercise in Canada. Contingency field training focused on reconnaissance and sampling, negotiation and report-writing skills, investigative skills training with the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI), and training in plume modelling software.
73. Instructors were provided by the Inspectorate to assist in International Cooperation and Assistance Division training activities such as the Associate Programme, the National Authorities Article VI training course, and the Assistance and Protection instructors' course. The latter aimed at enhancing the capacity of States Parties to facilitate their own training courses in the future with the aim of furthering the capability to respond to CBRN¹ threats.
74. The Capacity-Building and Contingency-Planning Cell also continued to provide mandatory inspector refresher courses to keep inspectors abreast of developments in technology, equipment, verification methods, health and safety, and policy, and also provided retraining and updates on the OPCW confidentiality regime and practices.
75. During the reporting period, the United States of America continued to provide the initial and refresher course sessions of Hazardous Waste Operations Emergency

¹ CBRN = chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear.

Response (HAZWOPER), which are mandatory under United States regulations for individuals operating within the United States' chemical weapons destruction facilities.

76. I would like to thank Belgium, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America for their technical and in-kind support provided throughout this year to the inspector training programme.

Enterprise content management

77. The Secretariat has continued with the implementation of its enterprise content management (ECM) system for verification, which aims to enhance the management of information and streamline business processes related to verification activities and other classified information. The first phase which focuses on configuring and customising the system to provide initial document and records management, as well as workflow functionalities and additional functionalities to support the management of information for non-routine missions, is nearing completion. In parallel, activities continued with the preparation of data from legacy systems, as well as organising, cataloguing, and protecting information related to non-routine missions prior to importation into the ECM system.

Countering chemical terrorism

78. This year, the OPCW has stepped up its efforts to address the threat of chemical terrorism. In June, the Secretariat hosted the first OPCW "Conference on Countering Chemical Terrorism". Building on the Executive Council's adoption in 2017 of the decision "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors" (EC-86/DEC.9, dated 13 October 2017), the conference brought together practitioners and experts from around the world to examine the threat posed to international security and to the Convention by chemical terrorism, and consider approaches to preventing and responding to the terrorist use of chemical weapons.²
79. The Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) and its Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors have remained an important component of the OPCW's response to the threat of chemical terrorism. They continue to provide an opportunity for States Parties to interact with international experts and exchange views on challenges posed by terrorism to the implementation of the Convention, and to reflect on proposals formulated by the Secretariat in this regard. I look forward to building on the work accomplished in both groups, and I encourage States Parties to reflect further on the value that these groups can add to our collective approach to preventing and responding to the threat of chemical terrorism, including through enhanced information exchange.

Interagency cooperation

80. The United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), with its cooperation framework provided by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (UNCTITF), continued to be an important partner for the OPCW. In particular,

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A summary of the conference was published as S/1652/2018 (dated 16 July 2018).

on 20 March 2018 the Director-General signed the UNOCT-sponsored “Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact.” The non-binding compact, made between the Secretary-General and the heads of the CTITF entities, espouses the principles with which these entities can coordinate their operational-level activities and avoid duplication of efforts. Also, the OPCW continued to co-chair, with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UNCTITF Working Group on Preventing and Responding to Weapons of Mass Destruction Attacks. In 2018, the Group advanced its project to enhance interagency interoperability and public communications in the event of a chemical or biological attack. An OPCW-hosted workshop, held on 9 and 10 April 2018 with a number of key agencies, laid the groundwork for the Group’s action plan to address the recommendations from a table-top exercise held in 2017 involving 14 United Nations and international organisations.

81. The OPCW continued to work with other United Nations and international organisations in areas of common interest. For instance, to support the unique needs of individual States Parties, the OPCW supported the initiative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to strengthen Iraq’s national capacity to address the threat of the dual use of chemical materials for terrorist purposes. The OPCW also exchanged with the World Health Organization letters of intent, aimed at establishing more formal arrangements of cooperation in a number of areas. During the period under review, the long-standing cooperation with the United Nations Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 also continued. In particular, the practice of reciprocal participation in each other’s events continued in order to strengthen national legislation, chemical security, and customs.

Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW

82. The Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW (OEWG-FP), under the able leadership of its Co-Chairpersons Ambassador Ms Sabine Nölke of Canada and Ambassador Mr Bruce Koloane of South Africa, concluded its proceedings in the first half of 2018. The report of the OEWG-FP was issued as a working paper (RC-4/WP.1, dated 16 July 2018) and contains a number of holistic, coherent, forward-looking, and action-oriented recommendations to be considered by the Fourth Review Conference, as mandated by paragraph 1 of Executive Council decision EC-82/DEC.2 (dated 14 July 2016). The report was also shared by the Co-Chairpersons with Ambassador I Gusti Agung Wesaka Puja, Chairperson of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Preparation of the Fourth Review Conference to inform the preparatory process for that event.

Advisory boards

Scientific Advisory Board

83. I am pleased to welcome four new members to the SAB. Mr Günter Povoden (of Austria), Dr Andrea Leisewitz (of Chile), Professor Mostafa Ghanei (of the Islamic Republic of Iran), and Mr Wilford Zungkat Jwalshik (of Nigeria) will begin their first terms on the Board in January. The skills and knowledge they will bring to the SAB are impressive, and I look forward to their service.

84. I encourage States Parties to consider my request for voluntary contributions to the SAB trust fund (S/1569/2018, dated 16 January 2018). I wish to thank Australia for its contribution to the SAB trust fund earlier this year.

Advisory Board on Education and Outreach

85. This year, the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO) presented a detailed report on education and outreach theory and practice and how this could inform the OPCW's future education and outreach activities. In order to assist States Parties in their national activities, the Board has since translated some of its recommendations into an easy-to-use brochure. The English version of the brochure was distributed during the annual meeting of National Authorities earlier this month. Translation into all of the other OPCW official languages has since been completed and copies are available at this session of the Conference.
86. The tenure of the ABEO members appointed at the beginning of 2016 will come to an end at the end of 2018. The Technical Secretariat has therefore asked for nominations for ABEO membership from 2019 onward. Of the 15 Board members, seven will be serving a second consecutive term and eight will be newly appointed to serve on the ABEO for a three-year period. This will guarantee both continuity in the Board's work as well as an influx of new perspectives and ideas.

OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store

87. The designated laboratory network remains strong, with 22 laboratories from 18 Member States having met the requisite criteria to become or retain their OPCW designated status for the analysis of environmental samples. The Forty-Fourth Proficiency Test for the analysis of environmental samples is currently ongoing.
88. The Secretariat conducted the Third Biomedical Proficiency Test from April to August 2018. The test was concluded successfully, and the Secretariat now has a network of 17 designated laboratories from 13 Member States available for the off-site analysis of biomedical samples.
89. In December 2018, the OPCW Laboratory will conduct the third exercise on the analysis of biologically derived toxins. These exercises will further enhance our partner laboratories' capabilities in this area and help us to arrive at commonly accepted analysis and reporting criteria.
90. In 2018, seven of our partner laboratories analysed 157 samples in support of ongoing missions in the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. I wish to thank the staff of these laboratories for their assistance and highly professional work.
91. I encourage all States Parties that host designated laboratories and do not yet have active technical agreements in place to assist their laboratories in arranging such agreements with the Secretariat.
92. In October 2017, the Executive Council adopted the decision "Lists of New Validated Data of Non-Scheduled Chemicals for Approval by the Executive Council for Inclusion in the OPCW Central Analytical Database" (EC-86/DEC.10, dated

13 October 2017) to include data for non-scheduled chemicals relevant to the Convention in the OPCW Central Analytical Database (OCAD). The 2018 issue of the OCAD now includes a significant number of such chemicals. I would like to thank the respective inspected State Parties for their positive attitude towards the new selection process for optional chemicals.

93. This year, the OPCW Laboratory provided 115 person-days of training to participants from 17 State Parties. Additional training days were provided to staff members of the Secretariat.

Privileges and immunities

94. In a welcome development, the number of privileges and immunities agreements continues to increase. In 2018, three States Parties—namely, Bahrain, Paraguay, and Romania—completed the necessary steps for the entry into force of their respective privileges and immunities agreements with the OPCW. I invite States Parties that have not yet concluded a privileges and immunities agreement to enter into negotiations with the Secretariat. In addition, the entry into force of such agreements is a matter of importance and I encourage all those States Parties that have already signed such an agreement to undertake the ratification process.

International cooperation and assistance

95. The Secretariat, through its International Cooperation and Assistance Programme, continued to provide assistance in support of States Parties' efforts to effectively implement the Convention. This assistance encompassed the key areas of national implementation of the Convention (Article VII); assistance and protection to reduce vulnerabilities to chemical threats (Article X); and the advancement of the peaceful uses of chemistry (Article XI).
96. The Secretariat has continued to implement a results-oriented approach in its capacity-building programmes. In this respect, a project on monitoring and evaluation was launched in 2018 with assistance from external experts. In addition, an impact assessment of capacity-building programmes in the fields of national implementation and chemical safety and security was also conducted. I encourage States Parties that have yet to participate in this process to do so. Such efforts will enable the Secretariat to measure progress and align programmes with the needs of States Parties.

Article VII: Implementation support

97. Support continued in 2018 for efforts to sustain the capacity of States Parties for the effective national implementation of the Convention and the functioning of the National Authorities, focusing on national implementing legislation, measures for the transfers regime under the Convention, and general capacity building to further enhance the capacities of the National Authorities and other stakeholders.
98. To date, 155 States Parties have adopted national implementing legislation. Of these, 122 have legislation covering all initial measures and 33 have legislation covering some initial measures. Thirty-eight States Parties have yet to adopt national legislation. More details can be found in the concurrent annual reports on the status of

implementation of Article VII (EC-89/DG.7 C-23/DG.6; EC-89/DG.8 C-23/DG.7; EC-89/DG.9 C-23/DG.8, all dated 24 August 2018).

99. The Technical Secretariat continues to provide legislative assistance in support of States Parties' efforts to develop and adopt implementing legislation. Internship programmes for legal drafters and national authority representatives were held from 6 to 10 August and from 29 October to 2 November 2018 to support representatives from Chad, Eswatini, Guinea, the State of Palestine, Timor-Leste, and Zimbabwe. The representatives of these States Parties developed their initial draft implementing legislation and action plans to take the adoption process forward.
100. Three national legal and awareness-raising workshops were held in Windhoek (for Namibia), Bandar Seri Begawan (for Brunei Darussalam), and at the OPCW Headquarters (for Iraq).
101. From 12 to 14 September 2018, the Influential Visitors Programme was held for Chile at the OPCW Headquarters to aid that State Party in the process of adopting implementing legislation. The programme included briefings from the Secretariat and a visit to the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store. Upon the conclusion of the visit, the delegation, composed of members of Parliament and the Ministry of National Defence of Chile, developed an action plan outlining the activities required for swift adoption of the implementing bill.
102. The Technical Secretariat implemented a pilot workshop on the role of implementing legislation in addressing the threats arising from non-State actors, from 16 to 18 October 2018 in Abuja, Nigeria. The event provided a forum to enhance participant's understanding on how national implementing legislation can contribute to addressing threats arising from non-State actors, including chemical terrorism.
103. A training course to assist States Parties in effectively fulfilling the declarations and inspections obligations under Article VI of the Convention was held in The Hague from 10 to 14 September 2018. The course was open for participation by the chemical industry and other stakeholders.
104. The Fifth Annual Meeting of Representatives of the Chemical Industry and National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention was held in Doha, Qatar, from 2 to 4 October 2018, with the support of a voluntary contribution from that State Party. Over 60 participants from 26 States Parties around the world gathered to discuss efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Article VI verification and other themes, and produced specific recommendations for consideration.
105. The Secretariat offered a subregional training-of-trainers course for representatives of customs training institutions on technical aspects of the Convention transfers regime in Algiers, Algeria from 11 to 14 September. Representatives of 15 States Parties, who had participated in the previous courses organised in 2016 and 2017, also met in The Hague in September to share their experiences, progress, and achievements on the introduction of Convention modules into national curricula.
106. A general training course on the Convention was held at the OPCW Headquarters in The Hague from 9 to 13 April 2018, engaging the participation of representatives of National Authorities as well as relevant stakeholders from all geographical regions.

The course was attended by 72 participants from 54 States Parties, including representatives of National Authorities and relevant national stakeholders. The programme focused on States Parties' obligations in ensuring that the Convention is wholly put into effect at the national level, from having appropriate national implementing legislation to developing a strong network among relevant stakeholders, and on learning about declarations and the verification regime, as well as the OPCW's role in countering terrorism and its future priorities. The course included a visit to the OPCW Equipment Store.

107. Three mentorship and partnership programmes were implemented in 2018: between Panama and Brazil, between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Nigeria, and between Togo and Morocco.
108. Two subregional stakeholder forums on advancing national Convention implementation and regional cooperation were organised (as pilot programmes) in April in Thailand for Southeast Asia and in October in Albania for the western Balkan States. The forums produced a set of concrete recommendations, which continue to be followed up on by each of the participating States.
109. Four regional meetings of National Authorities were held between May and July in the Czech Republic (for Eastern Europe), Bhutan (for Asia), Morocco (for Africa) and Guatemala (for Latin American and the Caribbean). The meetings discussed the topics related to trade in chemicals, the role of customs in enforcing the Convention transfers regime for scheduled chemicals, and the concept of a national implementation framework as a tool for national implementation.
110. The Twentieth Annual Meeting of National Authorities was held in the first week of November 2018 in The Hague. The meeting continued to serve as a global platform to strengthen cooperation among the National Authorities and between the authorities and the OPCW. This year's annual meeting was focused specifically on the efficiency and effectiveness of the OPCW's capacity-building programmes and activities.

Article X: Assistance and protection against the use or threat of use of chemical weapons

111. The Secretariat, through its various programmes under Article X, continues to support the States Parties in their efforts to build up their capacities to prepare for and respond to incidents involving chemical warfare agents or toxic industrial chemicals.
112. Modest increases have been registered this year in the contributions by States Parties to the Voluntary Fund for Assistance and to unilateral offers under paragraph 7 of Article X. I thank the States Parties who have contributed and encourage all States Parties to support the Fund in order to further improve the efficiency of the Convention's assistance and protection regime.
113. As at 31 October 2018, 54 States Parties had submitted information about their national protection programmes against the use of chemical weapons. I would like to reiterate the importance of this transparency measure for the security regime established by the Convention and strongly encourage States Parties to review the status of fulfilment of their obligations under Article X.

114. The Secretariat's databank of information regarding means of protection against chemical weapons is currently undergoing a modernisation and upgrade; this process is scheduled for completion in 2019.
115. In 2018, the Secretariat organised and conducted international and regional assistance and protection training courses and capacity-building activities under Article X, jointly with the Governments of Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Brazil, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kenya, Malaysia, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Poland, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, the Sudan, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, and Zambia. I am grateful to all States Parties that hosted events and/or provided in-kind contributions to support this work. In addition to the regular budget, voluntary contributions to further support Article X programming were provided by the Czech Republic, Qatar, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union.
116. An international "Symposium on Medical Treatment of Chemical Warfare Victims" was convened at the OPCW Headquarters on 28 and 29 June. The Symposium provided a forum for identifying priorities for victim assistance projects and future scientific research. Participants agreed on a declaration with recommendations on how the Technical Secretariat and the International Support Network for Victims of Chemical Weapons could most positively provide support for victims of chemical weapons. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage States Parties to make further contributions to the Trust Fund for Victims of Chemical Weapons, which will facilitate the realisation of activities in this area.
117. The Secretariat continued to provide training tailored for police first responders with an advanced training course for the Latin American and Caribbean region for the second time. Other specialised training courses were held in the field of laboratory skills, pre-hospital medical care, medical treatment of chemical casualties, and sampling and analysis.
118. Furthermore, the Secretariat successfully continued to run its Instructor Development and Exchange Programme. This Programme involves the international exchange of expertise and the fostering of best practices that will enhance response capacity by States Parties, both individually and regionally, and will continue to improve the state of readiness of the Organisation necessary to respond to a request for assistance.
119. In support of instructor development, the seventh international training course for instructors provided advanced training to a new international team of instructors at the OPCW Headquarters. Similar training-of-trainers courses were also conducted in collaboration with Belarus, the Czech Republic, Peru, and South Africa.
120. Steady progress continued to be made with regard to activities aimed at fostering national and regional capacity to respond to chemical incidents involving chemical warfare agents, in line with the fourth phase of the Africa Programme. Programme activities focused on States Parties from the East African Community (EAC) where operational training is now being delivered by trained local instructors from EAC Member States. The Secretariat has also engaged with the Economic Community of

West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the North Africa and Sahel Region (NAS) in order to further the implementation of Article X.

121. Table-top exercises were held in Croatia, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, and Zambia, which allowed participants to test their organisational processes and consider the modalities of regional and international support in a scenario involving a major chemical incident.
122. The Eighteenth Annual Workshop to Coordinate Assistance and Protection under Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention was held in the City of Marrakesh, Morocco from 29 to 31 October.

Article XI: Economic and technological development

123. In the area of International Cooperation, the Secretariat continued its efforts to deliver on the three strategic programme areas under Article XI of the Convention, namely: integrated chemicals management, enhancing laboratories capabilities, and chemical knowledge promotion and exchange.

Integrated chemicals management

124. In the area of integrated chemicals management, the Secretariat organised 14 events hosted by 12 States Parties (Argentina, Cambodia, Chile, Ethiopia, Germany, the Netherlands, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Viet Nam), benefitting more than 260 participants.
125. The Secretariat, the Government of Germany, and the University of Wuppertal jointly held two parallel training courses on loss prevention and safety promotion in the chemical process industries for Member States of the OPCW in the Africa region, the Asia region, and the Latin America and Caribbean region, from 24 to 28 September 2018. A total of 24 participants from 24 countries successfully completed these courses. I thank the Government of Germany for its support for this initiative.
126. The Technical Secretariat organised two workshops on needs assessment and best practices in chemical safety and security management during the reporting period. One event was organised for the Asia region in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam from 10 to 12 April 2018, and the second event was organised for the Latin America and Caribbean region in Santiago, Chile from 3 to 5 July 2018.
127. The Secretariat organised the third edition of a review and evaluation workshop of the “Components of an Agreed Framework for the Full Implementation of Article XI” (C-16/DEC.10, dated 1 December 2011) at the OPCW Headquarters on 2 May 2018. The workshop offered a forum for the OPCW Member States’ representatives to share needs, experiences, lessons learned, and best practices related to the implementation of Article XI, in order to promote knowledge exchange and the development of relevant capacity-building programmes for States Parties in promoting the peaceful uses of chemistry.

128. The Secretariat organised the second edition of the Executive Programme on Integrated Chemicals Management held in London, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, from 24 to 27 September 2018. The Programme provided a platform for executives and leaders to discuss how to bring together the aspects of policy, industrial management, and science and engineering with the objective of ensuring the safe, secure, and sustainable management of chemicals throughout their life cycle.
129. The Secretariat launched the nineteenth edition of the Associate Programme, which was attended by 31 participants from 31 Member States. The alumni of the Associate Programme continued to provide strong support for national implementation of the Convention in their home countries. The OPCW is also benefiting directly from the expertise of those alumni, 21 of whom have joined the Technical Secretariat as professional staff members. Furthermore, four alumni were appointed to serve on the ABEO and the SAB.

Enhancing laboratory capabilities

130. In the area of enhancing laboratory capabilities, the Secretariat organised 11 courses hosted by six States Parties (Finland, India, the Netherlands, Spain, South Africa, and Tunisia), benefitting more than 70 participants. Five courses were held at the OPCW Laboratory. Under the Equipment Exchange Programme, the Secretariat facilitated the donation of a liquid chromatography mass spectrometer from Sweden to Laos. In addition, the Secretariat facilitated the transfer of fume hoods from the OPCW Laboratory to Senegal and the Gambia.
131. An analytical chemistry course under the Africa Programme was organised from 7 to 18 May 2018 at the Protechnik Laboratory in Pretoria, South Africa. The course enabled the participants to gain a sound working knowledge of gas-chromatography (GC) and gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) analysis principles and procedures.
132. The Secretariat organised a course from 28 May to 1 June 2018 at the OPCW Laboratory for analytical chemists from laboratories supporting customs services. This was the second time that this course was organised at the OPCW Laboratory.
133. The Secretariat also organised a basic analytical chemistry course for women chemists at the OPCW Laboratory from 26 to 28 June 2018. This third edition of the course provided a platform for participants to discuss various aspects regarding the identification of scheduled chemicals.
134. Nine analytical chemistry courses were held in Finland, India, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Spain. These courses were attended by nearly 100 participants.
135. To build capacities in laboratories seeking to receive OPCW designated status, the Secretariat conducted three laboratory training courses at the OPCW Laboratory. These courses were aimed at expanding the global network of partner laboratories that can perform the analysis of samples under the OPCW's verification regime. The first training programme was conducted from 12 to 16 March, with the participation of six laboratory specialists from Iraq. The second course was held from 3 to 7 November for participants from Algeria. The third course was held for five

participants from five African Member States, namely Algeria, Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Uganda, from 29 October to 2 November 2018.

Chemical knowledge promotion and exchange

136. In the area of chemical knowledge promotion and exchange, the Secretariat has continued to provide support for scientists to participate in scientific events related to the peaceful uses of chemistry. Ten events were supported by the Secretariat under the Conference Support Programme. Under the Fellowship Programme, nine fellows were sponsored. Under the Programme for the Support of Research Projects, the Technical Secretariat continued extending its support to small-scale research projects in Member States in order to promote the development of scientific and technical knowledge in chemistry for industrial, agricultural, research, medical, pharmaceutical, and other peaceful purposes relevant to the Convention. The Secretariat also continued supporting 21 research projects that are funded by the OPCW.
137. The Secretariat organised the third edition of the Forum on the Peaceful Uses of Chemistry, which focused on the OPCW's contribution to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This event was the first to link the OPCW's capacity-building programmes to the SDGs
138. The Secretariat continued to promote the raising of awareness of the role of women in chemistry. In this context, the Technical Secretariat organised the OPCW's Third Symposium on Women in Chemistry on 25 and 26 June 2018 in Ottawa, Canada, followed by a three-day basic analytical chemistry course for women chemists at the OPCW Laboratory. The symposium was attended by representatives from government, the scientific community, chemical industry, academia, and civil society. I would like to thank the Government of Canada for its support for this event.
139. The regional meetings of National Authorities were attended by representatives of relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of Article VI. The discussion focused on the issues related to the trade in chemicals as well as the role of customs in enforcing the Convention transfers regime for scheduled chemicals. National Authorities, customs administrations, chemical industry associations, and representatives of regional and international organisations shared their views on how to strengthen their cooperation and how to improve control over the cross-border movement of chemicals at the regional level. National Authorities also discussed the National Implementation Framework developed by the Secretariat, which provides guidance on the national implementation process.
140. A subregional stakeholders' forum on advancing national implementation and regional cooperation in Southeast Asia was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 24 to 26 April 2018. Over 40 participants representing multisectoral stakeholders from 11 Asian States Parties participated. The forum participants produced a set of concrete recommendations that will be implemented by participating States Parties.
141. The subregional forum for western Balkan States was attended by representatives from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The event was attended by 30 experts from National Authorities, customs authorities, national defence and security, as well state agencies in charge of chemical safety and security matters. Topics of particular interest during

the forum included cross-border cooperation in controlling the transfer of toxic chemicals, safety and security measures in chemical facilities to minimise risks of chemical emergencies, and protocols in response to chemical incidents.

External relations and universality

142. On 16 July 2018, the State of Palestine submitted its initial declaration within 30 days of its accession, as required by the Convention. Achieving full universality remains a priority for the OPCW and a report on our activities in this area (EC-89/DG.12 C-23/DG.9, dated 3 September 2018) was made available to States Parties prior to this session.
143. The Secretariat launched a new modern public website that serves as the centre of the OPCW's digital diplomacy strategy. The new website is compliant with today's industry and regulatory standards and best practices and improves access to information.
144. The Technical Secretariat's digital communications capacity continues to measurably increase. Traffic to the website increased by 21.3% as compared to 2017, with over 720,000 visitors to the website in 2018.
145. The OPCW had received nearly 82,000 media citations as at 1 November 2018, which is a 309% increase from the 20,000 citations received by the same point in 2017.
146. The OPCW's investment in social media (for example, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn) has resulted in an increase in our social media following by more than 68% in the last year. Strategic outreach campaigns were crafted with the aim of providing educational information about the work of the OPCW as well as broadening the spectrum of potential candidates for career opportunities within the Organisation.
147. On 23 September 2018, the OPCW participated in another successful edition of the annual International Open Day organised by the City of The Hague, attracting over 1,000 visitors and reaching over 305,000 people through social media (a 121% increase over the 2017 figures). The OPCW was further able to spread its message to nearly 6,000 people during the European Union Open Doors Day held in Brussels, Belgium, on 5 May 2018.
148. The ninth edition of the T.M.C. Asser Institute's annual Summer Programme, organised in cooperation with the OPCW, took place from 1 to 5 October 2018. Twenty-one early- to mid-career professionals benefitted from the programme, increasing their knowledge of the diplomatic, legal, and technical aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. States Parties are encouraged to send new members of delegations, or other professionals who could benefit from this training, to the tenth edition, which will take place in the autumn of 2019.
149. A record number of 89 civil society organisations represented by some 240 individuals applied to attend the Twenty-Third Session of the Conference and the Fourth Review Conference, of which 75 were approved to participate. The growing number of applications testifies to an increased and sustained interest in civil society participation in OPCW meetings.

150. To facilitate participation by NGOs from developing and transitioning economies in OPCW activities, 32% of the approved NGOs are able to send a representative to attend the gathering thanks to support from the European Union funds provided to the OPCW for this purpose.

Cybersecurity

151. As I noted in my statement at the Eighty-Ninth Session of the Executive Council (EC-89/DG.31, dated 9 October 2018), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands briefed me on 4 October 2018 about an attempted cyberattack targeting the OPCW, which was disrupted by Dutch authorities in April of this year. I extend, once again, my gratitude to the Government of the Netherlands for its efforts to protect the Organisation in accordance with its obligations as Host Country, as well as to the States Parties which have provided support to the Secretariat's efforts to improve security.
152. Any loss in the confidentiality, availability, or integrity of information of States Parties or the Secretariat as a result of a successful cyberattack would have serious impacts on the Organisation. We therefore must take this threat extremely seriously and devote the resources necessary to manage the situation quickly and effectively. A special capital investment fund for cybersecurity, business continuity, and physical security infrastructure (EC-89/DG.32, dated 12 October 2018) has been proposed as part of the 2019 budget. This special fund represents an initial investment in what will be a long-term effort to provide the level of security and resiliency necessary to safeguard the OPCW.

Administrative and financial matters

153. The Secretariat is implementing a number of initiatives to attract, retain, and develop female leaders at all levels of the Organisation. Following the recommendation of the Executive Council (EC-89/DEC.4, dated 11 October 2018), the Secretariat has submitted amendments to the OPCW Staff Regulations to incorporate considerations of gender balance (C-23/DEC/CRP.1, dated 18 October 2018) for the Conference's consideration. In this context, I am also pleased to note that I have joined the International Gender Champions leadership network that brings together heads of international organisations with a view to making gender equality a reality.
154. The Secretariat has continued to take steps to implement the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) Programme, with the first JPOs expected to commence appointment with the Secretariat in the final quarter of 2018. As in previous statements, I take this opportunity to encourage States Parties interested in participating in the Programme to review the compendium of vacancies that will be issued in due course and to contact the relevant unit in the Human Resources Branch of the Secretariat.
155. The Secretariat has continued to follow the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) to record financial transactions and produce financial statements and, as part of the 2017 Financial Statements, a Report of the Director-General was added, summarising key movements in the financial year and including graphical representations. The 2017 Financial Statements were audited and certified by the External Auditor of the OPCW and received unqualified opinions. In doing so, the External Auditor has confirmed that the Financial Statements are compliant with

IPSAS and reveal no material weaknesses. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the National Audit Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for its co-operation and professionalism during the audit process and throughout the year.

156. As reflected in the Secretariat's monthly financial reporting, there still remain unpaid outstanding assessed contributions for 2017 and 2018. As at 16 November 2018, the collection level for 2018 assessed contributions stood at 84.6%, compared to 97.2% on the same date last year, while the collection level for 2017 assessed contributions stood at 97.2% on 16 November 2018. In view of the substantial risks presented by the Organisation's present cash situation, States Parties are urged to pay their assessed contributions on time and in full, in line with the requirements of the Convention and the Financial Regulations and Rules of the Organisation. States Parties in arrears that have lost their voting rights are encouraged to consider entering into multi-year payment plans to settle their outstanding unpaid assessed contributions.
157. The Organisation has incurred significant costs in undertaking inspections under Articles IV and V of the Convention. Although such costs have been invoiced to States Parties, as at 16 November 2018 invoices in the sum of EUR 5.2 million remained unpaid. I urge payment of these invoices at the earliest and in full.
158. Unpaid assessed contributions and unreimbursed Article IV and V verification costs continue to create financial challenges. Although the Secretariat continues to take measures to manage the pressures that arise from unpaid contributions and unreimbursed Article IV and V verification costs, it is possible the Organisation may need to utilise the Working Capital Fund to address operational needs by the end of the year into early next year.
159. A draft decision (C-23/DEC/CRP.3, dated 8 November 2018) concerns the suspension, on an exceptional basis, of the application of Financial Rule 11.1.02 in respect of the timeline for submission of the 2018 financial statements to the External Auditor, in order to allow the Secretariat additional time to prepare the 2018 financial statements in light of the planned go-live of the new enterprise resource planning system at the end of 2018.
160. In Note EC-89/DG.25 (dated 26 September 2018), I informed States Parties that the financial resources available to the Special Fund for Special Missions have been fully disbursed or obligated and that the balance of the fund is now nil. A draft decision to extend the fund is now before the Conference (C-23/DEC/CRP.5, dated 8 November 2018).
161. Turning to knowledge management, a cross-divisional team undertook a number of activities in 2018 aimed at promoting a knowledge-sharing culture. We are progressing towards the inclusion of knowledge management practices in our operational activities, within the context of the overall goal of an effective strategic knowledge management framework. Taking into account the unique nature of information handled within the Verification Division, we have identified knowledge at risk and initiated projects to ensure the OPCW remains the premier global repository of knowledge and expertise for the implementation of the Convention.

Office of Internal Oversight

162. The Office of Internal Oversight (OIO) has revised its Charter to incorporate the recommendations of the External Auditor, the Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters, and the Secretariat's Office of the Legal Adviser. The revised Charter substantially updates the previous Charter, issued in 2011, and defines the purpose, scope, authority, and responsibilities of the OIO. The new Charter is now presented to the Conference for consideration and approval as outlined in the Note to the Council (EC-89/DG.26, dated 28 September 2018).
163. The Secretariat has continued to improve the Quality Management System through close cooperation between the OPCW Laboratory and the OIO. In July, a new Secretariat Quality Manual was developed, and forms the basis for the establishment of the Secretariat's revised Quality Management System.
164. Similar to previous years, the OIO has carried out internal audits of activities related to accreditation of the OPCW Laboratory by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), including in respect of the management of environmental and biomedical proficiency tests.
165. Furthermore, the OIO continued to certify the OCAD as well GC-MS inspection equipment.
166. I have continued to closely monitor the status of the implementation of all recommendations contained in OIO reports, which have contributed significantly to adding value to the Organisation by enhancing compliance with existing OPCW rules and regulations, strengthening internal controls, and improving the allocation of resources and the effectiveness of programmes and policies.