



OPENING STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE NINETY-FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

1. I warmly welcome all delegations to the Ninety-First Session of the Executive Council. It gives me great pleasure to welcome in particular the new Chairperson of the Council, Ambassador Andrea Perugini, Permanent Representative of Italy to the OPCW. I am confident that, with his experience and diplomatic skills, the work of the Council will be fruitful and productive.
2. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Jana Reinišová, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic. She led the Council ably, providing effective guidance at crucial moments.
3. In terms of the range of activities carried out during the intersessional period, let me begin this statement with destruction-related activities. Overall, 97.08% of declared chemical weapons had been verified as destroyed as at 30 June 2019.
4. In the United States of America, construction of the main plant at the Blue Grass Chemical Agent-Destruction Pilot Plant site is complete. In April, the Secretariat conducted the final engineering review of the Static Detonation Chamber.
5. From 6 to 11 April 2019, members of the Council, State Party representatives and Secretariat staff members visited the Pueblo facility, pursuant to decision C-16/DEC.11 (dated 1 December 2011). A report by the Chairperson of the Executive Council, EC-91/2, was published on 14 June 2019.
6. This facility is now operational. The first detonation took place on 7 June 2019.
7. China and Japan have continued to make progress on the excavation, recovery, and destruction of abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) at various sites in China. As at 31 May 2019, around 76,300 items of ACWs had been recovered, of which approximately 53,500 ACWs have been verified by the Secretariat as having been destroyed.
8. At the Haerbaling site, the Secretariat carried out follow-up inspections of destruction operations and verified the destruction of 15,010 ACW items. A further estimated 330,000 ACW items are awaiting recovery and destruction.



9. In April, the Secretariat conducted an initial visit to the Harbin mobile destruction facility. Destruction operations began on 7 May 2019. In September, members of the Council, State Party representatives and Secretariat staff members will visit the Haerbaling site. I had the opportunity to visit it two years ago, in my previous capacity. Activities at this site illustrate the importance of a very good cooperation between States Parties in the interest of the implementation of the goals of the Convention.
10. The clean-up of the former chemical weapons site in Ruwagha, Libya, continues. The Secretariat, in collaboration with the Libyan National Authority, is overseeing a project to rinse, treat, and destroy Category 2 chemical material tanks and 350 metric tonnes of highly acidic effluent. I thank Cyprus, Finland, New Zealand, Spain, Tunisia, and the European Union, for their generous support to this project.
11. Turning to our work in relation to the Syrian Arab Republic, the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) has continued its work with regard to allegations of the use of chemical weapons on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretariat has also provided a response to the questions submitted in writing by the Syrian Arab Republic and the Russian Federation regarding the final Douma report through the Note entitled "Update on the OCPW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (S/1755/2019, dated 21 May 2019).
12. The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) has also continued working to clarify gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies arising from Syria's initial declaration of chemical weapons and subsequent submissions. In this regard, two rounds of consultations between the Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic have taken place during the reporting period.
13. The twentieth round of consultations took place in The Hague from 18 to 21 March 2019, during which outstanding issues were discussed and a plan of action was developed.
14. The DAT subsequently deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic between 10 and 17 April 2019 for the twenty-first round of consultations. It held a number of technical meetings with the Syrian National Authority. It conducted one interview, and also conducted field visits to five sites, where it collected a total of 33 samples for analysis by OPCW designated laboratories.
15. A report of the DAT's work and findings has been made available to the Council (EC-91/HP/DG.2, dated 1 July 2019), as well as an unclassified summary (EC-91/DG.23, dated 5 July 2019).
16. In line with Executive Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, adopted on 11 November 2016, the Secretariat conducted the third and fourth rounds of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC). The results of analysis of samples taken during these inspections were completed and shared with the Syrian Arab Republic. According to the analysis of two designated laboratories, a chemical detected in one of the samples taken at Barzah during the third round of inspections could be the primary hydrolysis product of a Schedule 1 chemical. During the fourth round of inspections, there were no indications of any activities that were inconsistent with the obligations of the

Syrian Arab Republic. The results of the third and fourth rounds of inspections will be reported to the Council at this session in the document entitled “Status of Implementation of Executive Council Decision EC-83/DEC.5 (dated 11 November 2016)” (EC-91/DG.17, dated 26 June 2019).

17. The Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) is now fully operational. A preliminary list of incidents for investigation has been established, and contact with Member States and with international, regional, and local actors is being sought. The IIT aims to collect all available information necessary for the fulfilment of its mandate. An overview of the IIT’s current and forecasted work is provided at this session of the Council in a Note entitled “Work of the Investigation and Identification Team Established by Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018)” (EC-91/S/3, dated 28 June 2019).
18. The team’s composition reflects due regard for geographical and gender balance. Personnel in, and supporting, the IIT come from all regional groups and the team is composed of 50% men and 50% women.
19. The Secretariat continues to seek substantive engagement with representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic on all issues through the agreed Structured Dialogue. Within this framework, the Secretariat proposed an agenda and list of participants for a second round of high-level consultations to take place in Damascus from 8 to 10 May 2019. In order to advance the work of the consultations, it was proposed that the Coordinator of the IIT be included. In response, through a note verbale, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterated its position that it does not recognise the decision that underpins the IIT’s work, namely, the decision entitled “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018), adopted by the Conference of the States Parties at its Fourth Special Session. The note verbale stated that, consequently, the Syrian Arab Republic would not issue a visa to the Coordinator of the IIT to visit Damascus.
20. On 9 May 2019, I sent a letter to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr Faisal Mekdad, inviting the Syrian Arab Republic to reconsider its position. I also communicated my decision to postpone the second round of consultations under the Structured Dialogue, and invited a delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic to The Hague for further consultations. Through a letter dated 13 June 2019, Deputy Minister Mekdad reiterated Syria’s position. I look forward to his response to my invitation for a delegation of the Syrian National Authority to come to The Hague.
21. Collection and analysis of all pertinent information, together with access to relevant sites and individuals, remains a primary objective of the IIT. It also affords all protagonists the opportunity to present data and information relevant from their own perspectives. The Team has a mandate to fulfil, which it will. I request all concerned States Parties to provide their full cooperation to the IIT. As the IIT was created following the adoption of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 by the Conference at its Fourth Special Session, it is the obligation of the Secretariat to continue implementing all aspects of that decision in the most professional and neutral way.

22. Approximately EUR 1.3 million in voluntary contributions is needed to support the IIT in 2019. To date, approximately EUR 1.2 million has been contributed or pledged. An additional EUR 100,000 is required this year. I thank Australia, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union for their contributions.
23. The Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the OPCW's activities in Syria, including the work of the FFM, DAT, and IIT, and the biannual inspections of the SSRC. Today, total contributions to this fund stand at EUR 21.1 million.
24. I thank Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Monaco, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union for their generous support.
25. On 28 May, a comprehensive briefing was given to States Parties on all aspects of our work in Syria. At this briefing, I addressed the issue of the unauthorised disclosure of an internal document relating to the FFM report on the use of a toxic chemical in Douma on 7 April 2018, entitled "Report of the Fact-Finding Mission Regarding the Incident of Alleged Use of Toxic Chemicals as a Weapon in Douma, Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 April 2018" (S/1731/2019, dated 1 March 2019). It is in the nature of any thorough inquiry for individuals in a team to possibly express subjective views. The overall conclusions of the inquiry, however, are based on the preponderance of objective facts. The Secretariat has, as it always does, considered and appropriately taken into account the content of the unauthorised disclosure. This does not have any bearing on the findings of the Douma report. Additionally, when elements were deemed to point at possible attribution, which is outside the mandate of the FFM with regard to the formulation of its findings, they were handed over to the IIT.
26. Since an internal working document was disclosed outside the Technical Secretariat, the Office of Confidentiality and Security has been collecting, preserving, and analysing information in order to understand how this document was disclosed. I have informed the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Chairperson of the Executive Council that I have authorised a full confidentiality investigation. In order to protect the integrity of the investigation and the due process rights of anyone involved, and in accordance with normal practice in respect of ongoing investigations, no further information about the investigation is available at this time.
27. Turning to inspection-related activities, as in previous years, 241 Article VI inspections are planned to take place in 2019. Of these, 11 are planned at Schedule 1 facilities, 42 at Schedule 2 plant sites, 19 at Schedule 3 plant sites and 169, at other chemical production facilities.
28. As at the end of June 2019, 139 Article VI inspections had been carried out. I am confident that our programme will once again be fully implemented this year. A cross-divisional Technical Secretariat team has begun a broad review of the Article VI verification process in order to optimise our activities. We need to maintain the

relevance of the Secretariat activities related to the chemical industry. Progress in this work and any resulting recommendations will be reported to the Industry Cluster.

29. As we near completion of the destruction of declared chemical weapons, the OPCW is sharpening its focus on preventing their re-emergence. In this context, it is essential to ensure that skills, knowledge, and expertise remain at a high level in the Secretariat. Only a very well-trained workforce will deliver the high-quality service that States Parties expect and deserve, as they joined the Convention.
30. Taking the necessary measures to ensure that toxic chemicals are only used for non-prohibited purposes is an essential part of preventing re-emergence and compliance with Article VI of the Convention. At yesterday's meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism, an official of the European Commission briefed States Parties on the European Union's approach to chemicals of concern in terms of security. States Parties can learn from each other in this area, as the Council recognised in its decision on addressing the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors (EC-86/DEC.9, dated 13 October 2017). The Secretariat will look to take further steps, as part of its capacity-building programmes, to share best practices in this area.
31. Achieving our long-term goal of preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons will depend on retaining and developing our technical capabilities, a difficult challenge with the high-pace progress observed in science and technology. The ChemTech Centre project to upgrade our existing OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store is central to this effort.
32. The Note entitled "Progress in the Project to Upgrade the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store to a Centre for Chemistry and Technology" (S/1769/2019, dated 9 July 2019) outlines the significant progress made on this initiative since the initiation of the project. It details the project scope, cost, and schedule, as well as its many expected benefits. The current cost estimate for the project is EUR 33.5 million. The completion of construction of the ChemTech Centre is now planned for the latter part of 2022.
33. Contributions totalling EUR 28.3 million have been pledged or received to support this project. I wish to thank the Government of the Netherlands, our Host Country, which has pledged the funding needed to acquire the land for the Centre. I wish to express my gratitude to the governments of Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Estonia, France, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union for their generous support.
34. To carry out the project according to schedule, the remaining EUR 5.2 million in funding will be needed within the next 12 months. This project will create tangible benefits for all States Parties, and will enable the development of further international cooperation and assistance-related activities. I therefore renew my appeal to all States Parties to support it. A briefing on the status of the project will take place tomorrow.
35. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) met for its Twenty-Eighth Session from 10 to 14 June. I would like to thank Saudi Arabia for its voluntary contribution to support the SAB's science communication activities and our Science for Diplomats

initiative. I encourage you all to attend today's Science for Diplomats event in the Ooms room.

36. During the intersessional period, the Secretariat has delivered 36 courses, seminars, and workshops to the benefit of more than 800 experts nominated by States Parties. This capacity-building support is provided in the areas of national implementation, assistance and protection, and fostering the peaceful uses of chemistry. The Secretariat also continued to address the needs of African States Parties within the framework of the fourth phase of the Africa Programme, which will come to a close at the end of the current calendar year.
37. I would like to express my appreciation to all States Parties that support and contribute to our international cooperation and assistance activities.
38. Civil society has made long-standing contributions to the goals of the Convention and remains an important partner for the OPCW. The application process for representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to the next regular session of the Conference of the States Parties is now open. I am confident that States Parties will ensure swift decisions to enable participation by eligible NGOs.
39. Since assuming office, one of my priorities has been to achieve gender parity in the Organisation's senior management level. In particular, efforts were made to reach out to women with high-level profiles around the world. Three companies were used to better target our recruitment actions in this regard.
40. As a result, we received more applications from very good female candidates.
41. Today, I am very pleased to report that new appointments to these positions have increased the representation of women in the top management structure from 10% to 50%, while achieving geographical balance. Furthermore, on the subject of gender balance, I would like to stress that, since July last year, representation of women in the professional category has increased from 21% to 27%.
42. With regard to geographical balance across the Secretariat, I would like to seize this opportunity to urge States Parties to strengthen their efforts to identify qualified candidates to apply for positions in the Secretariat.
43. On 5 July, I presented the draft Programme and Budget for 2020 to States Parties. This proposed programme of work is designed to allow the Organisation to continue to respond in a cost-efficient and results-oriented way to the many challenges ahead. Consultations with States Parties on the draft Programme and Budget will be held on 15 July, followed by a series of detailed consultations in September.
44. As I did last year with the revised draft Programme and Budget for 2019, I urge States Parties to consider further allowing the Secretariat to evolve into a zero real growth environment. Indeed, taking into account the impact of inflation for the period from 2009 to 2018, the budget of the OPCW has decreased by 20%. These costs go into our functioning and support and therefore decrease the capacity of the Secretariat to perform activities for States Parties.

45. Finally, I wish to point out that as at 30 June, the collection level for 2019 assessed contributions was 53.7%, compared to 58.1% on the same date last year. As a result, cash inflows are considerably lower than forecasted. If this situation continues, the Working Capital Fund may have to be utilised already in the third quarter. I therefore urge all States Parties that have not yet paid their outstanding assessed contributions to do so at the earliest and in full.

Mr Chairperson,

46. As we move into the second half of the year, our horizon of activities appears intense and challenging. This is in keeping with recent trends, where our work has constantly evolved in response to unprecedented risks that the Convention has encountered. New expectations have been generated. Yet, what remains unchanged is the need to protect and uphold the norm against chemical weapons. When facing issues of such consequence, it is natural to expect divergences in approach. What is important, however, is to not lose sight of the imperative of progress. The Convention and the OPCW remain an example of unprecedented collective benefit. Our best efforts in making the Convention an abiding success are not behind us, but ahead of us.
47. Let us move forward in a spirit of cooperation and the well-known instinct of States Parties to find the common ground that has been, and—I am confident—that remains, our best asset.
48. My report to the Council at its Ninety-First Session is detailed. The full text of my statement will be circulated to delegations as an official document of this session.
49. Thank you for your attention.

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