

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR THOMAS SCHIEB, PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE OF GERMANY TO THE OPCW at the 107th EC Session**

**Under agenda item 10 “Emerging Technologies”**

(The Hague, 8 – 11 October 2024)

Mr Chairperson,

Germany welcomes the inclusion of a regular agenda item on emerging technologies into the agenda of the Executive Council. We are witnessing rapid developments in a range of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, synthetic molecular design techniques, the increasing convergence between chemistry and biology or the manifold advances in manufacturing technology. These technologies will allow huge progress in areas such as the development of new drugs and have huge beneficial potential for humankind. There is, however, a risk that the dual use character of these technologies might be misused. This potential threat is of huge significance for the global ban on chemical weapons.

We need a sober, science-based evaluation of these developments, and we need an open discussion on how to mitigate the threat of misuse. In the programmatic speech Director General Arias held on 28 June in Berlin at our conference on “Artificial Intelligence and Weapons of Mass Destruction”, he stated “the situation today is quite different from when States Parties designed the Chemical Weapons Convention more than 30 years ago. The implementation of the Convention must be adapted to address the spectacular scientific and technological developments”.

As the Executive Council is designed to be the authority to “promote the effective implementation” of the Convention, it makes good sense to foresee a regular exchange among us on these questions.

Please do not misunderstand me: This is not about limiting innovation. Neither is it about artificially limiting the spread of innovative technology to all those who would benefit from its peaceful use. It is about putting new technology into the service of strengthening the global ban on chemical weapons, and mitigating the risks of misuse. To do this, we need a broad and inclusive debate with all States Parties.

We are in comparatively good position. We have a highly competent body, the Scientific Advisory Board, to screen the consequences of technological developments for the Convention. The last report delivered by the SAB to the July session of this Council shows the depth and range of issues covered. Let me just name a few which are directly relevant to our subject: New methods in chemical forensics, machine learning for rapid detection of novel chemical weapons, innovative materials for detoxification, automation and minimization of labs, and last but not least a reflection on the impact of AI. We commend the SAB and the important work done under its previous chair Günter Povoden of Austria and wish the new chair Imee Su Martinez of the Philippines good success at her task.

We believe we as States Parties should not only note the SAB reports, but have an opportunity to comment and discuss them. We consider this to be part and parcel of the functions of the Executive Council as defined in Art. VIII paras 31 and 35. This should be done without prejudice to the responsibilities of the Director-General as stipulated in Art. VIII para 45. While the Director-General has a responsibility for drawing operative conclusions from the SAB's recommendations for the work of the TS, States Parties also must live up to their joint responsibility for the effective implementation of the Convention. They should discuss challenges to the effective implementation raised by the SAB, note and evaluate the SAB's scientific advice, and, where necessary, develop appropriate guidance through the decision-making bodies of the Organisation.

I would like to commend Director General Arias for his forward-looking work. He has realized the challenges of new technologies for the Convention at an early stage, and has started a process in the Organisation to analyse possible risks as well as opportunities stemming from applications of AI. We are looking forward to the upcoming conference in Rabat, Morocco, which should allow us to dive deeper in the analysis, develop guidance on how to further structure the process and lay the ground for a programme of action. Building on the exchanges at the June 28 Berlin Conference, Germany will continue to make an active contribution to this discussion. We invite all States Parties to join in this debate, which is about making the Convention fit for the future.

I kindly request that this statement be considered an official-series document of the 107th Session of the Executive Council and made available on Catalyst and the OPCW's public website.