



NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

STATUS OF THE OPCW'S CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL ANTI-TERRORISM EFFORTS

INTRODUCTION

1. As decided by the Executive Council (the Council) in paragraph 12.4 of the report of its Sixtieth Session (EC-60/3, dated 22 April 2010), and consistent with the Council's request contained in paragraph 16 of its decision entitled "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors" (EC-86/DEC.9, dated 13 October 2017), the Director-General hereby submits for the Council's consideration at its 108th Session this annual Note to keep the Council informed about the OPCW's contribution to global anti-terrorism efforts, as well as its efforts in implementing the aforementioned decision.
2. The activities of the Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat) summarised in this Note, covering the period from 5 February 2024 to 4 February 2025, have continued to be based on the approach outlined in the decision by the Council at its Twenty-Seventh Session entitled "The OPCW's Contribution to Global Anti-Terrorist Efforts", namely, that "the full and effective implementation of all provisions of the Convention is in itself a contribution to global anti-terrorist efforts" (paragraph 1 of EC-XXVII/DEC.5, dated 7 December 2001).
3. Furthermore, in paragraph 1 of decision EC-86/DEC.9, the Council underscored the "role of the Organisation within its mandate with respect to preventing and responding to the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors to the object and purpose of the Convention" and, in doing so, provided additional impetus to the Secretariat's activities.
4. Decision EC-86/DEC.9 also recognised the important role of assistance and cooperation in support of capacity building to achieve full and effective national implementation, and in assisting States Parties in investigating and prosecuting non-State actors for crimes related to the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention), or in countering terrorism as it relates to chemical weapons (paragraphs 9 and 11 of EC-86/DEC.9). The Secretariat will continue to examine and implement cooperation and assistance for States Parties in this regard.
5. The Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) remains the primary platform for the States Parties to interact with international experts and to exchange their views on the challenges posed by chemical terrorism, as well as on ways the OPCW can further address this subject through the full and effective implementation of the Convention. In 2024, the Secretariat supported the convening of three OEWG-T meetings.



THE OPCW'S SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM COOPERATION

6. In 2024, the OPCW continued its active participation in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, to which it became a signatory in 2018, and in the Compact's Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection. The OPCW acted as vice-chair of the Working Group alongside the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), under the chairmanship of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).
7. The Secretariat also engaged with external partners, such as the Group of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and UNODA, to collaborate in strengthening States Parties' awareness of their relevant obligations, and to offer practical assistance in the areas in which the Convention and United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) are mutually reinforcing, namely, national legislation, chemical security, and customs and border control. The Secretariat contributed to regional and national workshops aimed at strengthening the implementation of resolution 1540, which had been organised by the above-mentioned stakeholders in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. In its presentations, the Secretariat underscored the relevant obligations under the Convention that correspond with the resolution. At the same time, external partners supported selected OPCW activities. A representative from UNODA was invited to the annual meeting of National Authorities in 2024 and a representative from the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific was invited to a similar regional meeting in Asia.

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

Situation in the Syrian Arab Republic

8. Given the numerous gaps, discrepancies, and inconsistencies uncovered by the Secretariat over the past 11 years, the current political situation in the Syrian Arab Republic presents an opportunity for the Organisation to obtain clarifications on the full extent and scope of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The Secretariat has closely monitored the status of chemical weapons-related sites and consulted with the Syrian caretaker authorities on the need to secure chemical weapons-related locations and materials therein, considering the acute risk of proliferation or diversion of such materials to non-State actors.
9. On 8 February 2025, at the invitation of Syrian caretaker Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani, the Director-General, accompanied by a high-level delegation from the OPCW that included members of the Declaration Assessment Team, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria and, for the first time, the Investigation and Identification Team, visited Damascus to meet both with Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and caretaker Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani. The aim of the visit was to engage with Syrian experts on the Syrian chemical weapons dossier and brief, inter alia, high-ranking members of the Syrian Government and Syrian experts as needed.

10. On 21 February 2025, the Director-General received, through the Embassy of Qatar, a letter from Syrian caretaker Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani, stating that Mr Ibrahim Olabi has been appointed as “the Ministry’s focal point for chemical weapons matters”.
11. The Organisation continued to provide States Parties with information on the activities carried out by the Secretariat in relation to the current situation vis-à-vis the Syrian caretaker authorities and the Syrian Arab Republic’s obligations under the Convention, as well as on the additional financial and human resources needed to carry out any future missions in the Syrian Arab Republic. This includes engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic to address chemical weapons proliferation and prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, as well as assist with capacity building for Syrian authorities to ensure long-term compliance with the Convention.

Support to the policy-making process

12. The first meeting of the OEWG-T, on 26 February 2024, featured a presentation and discussion on activities undertaken by UNICRI in preventing and countering chemical terrorism, as well as reflections on the table-top exercise held on 20 and 21 November 2023. The second meeting, on 5 July 2024, featured a presentation by a representative of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg on CBWNet research activities on chemical terrorism. The meeting also featured a discussion on the follow-up to the table-top exercise, including a draft action plan presented by the Chairperson. At its third meeting, on 2 October 2024, the OEWG-T received a presentation from the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) concerning its approach to identifying, monitoring, and countering chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosives (CBRNE) threats, notably focusing on its role in tackling chemical threats.

Criminalisation of activities prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention

13. The criminalisation of activities prohibited by the Convention, such as stockpiling, developing, and acquiring a chemical weapon, is a key element in preventing the use of a chemical weapon by a non-State actor. Recognising the potential for both transnational and domestic manifestations of the terrorism threat, penal legislation concerning such activities needs to be in place, and to be effective, in all States Parties.
14. The importance of States Parties’ adoption of effective national legislation to criminalise acts prohibited by the Convention, as required by Article VII, has been highlighted by the OEWG-T discussions, and also prominently reflected in paragraphs 5 and 6 of decision EC-86/DEC.9.
15. Currently, 128 of 193 States Parties have reported having enacted legislation covering all initial measures. However, a significant global legal gap remains, as 36 States Parties have reported having legislation covering only some of the initial measures, while 29 States Parties had either not submitted information on the adoption of national implementing legislation, or had reported that legislation had yet to be adopted.
16. The Secretariat continued to support States Parties that have yet to adopt national implementing legislation covering all initial measures. During the reporting period, the Secretariat reviewed draft legislation submitted by five States Parties: Angola (February);

Timor-Leste (April); Tuvalu (June); Sao Tome and Principe (August); and Seychelles (November). Following these reviews, the Secretariat provided detailed comments to assist States Parties in reviewing their legal frameworks, to ensure alignment with the initial measures required under the Convention, thereby strengthening global non-proliferation efforts.

17. A workshop on advancing national implementation of the Convention was held in Lisbon, Portugal, in February 2024. The workshop brought together members of the National Authorities and legislative experts from Portuguese-speaking States Parties to address challenges in the national implementation of the Convention. Participants explored obstacles to legislative adoption and developed follow-up actions to overcome these barriers.
18. A subregional workshop on advancing Convention implementing legislation in the Pacific was held in Suva, Fiji, in March 2024. This workshop gathered representatives from States Parties in the Pacific and their regional counterparts to exchange experiences, good practices, and challenges in developing national legislation for the implementation of the Convention. Participants benefited from practical advocacy training aimed at promoting the adoption of such legislation at the national level. Furthermore, the event highlighted the importance of robust legislative frameworks in mitigating the threat of chemical terrorism, thereby reinforcing the role of the Convention in global anti-terrorism efforts.
19. A promotional side event with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) took place in Geneva, Switzerland, in March 2024, during the 148th IPU Assembly. The event highlighted the essential role of parliamentarians in promoting global peace and security through the national implementation of the Convention. The event emphasised the importance of comprehensive national legislation, particularly in addressing the threat of chemical terrorism by non-State actors. This event aligned with broader global anti-terrorism efforts and was attended by parliamentarians from multiple countries and representatives from various non-governmental organisations, underscoring the critical link between chemical security and legislative action.
20. The Secretariat organised a national legislative review forum with Sao Tome and Principe in September 2024. Together with the State Party's delegates, the Secretariat reviewed the scope of Sao Tome and Principe's draft implementing legislation on the Convention and provided specific advice to ensure that its legislative frameworks would comply with obligations under the Convention when enacted.
21. The Secretariat participated in several events under the auspices of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), UNODC, and/or UNODA. Secretariat staff presented on national implementation of the Convention and synergies between the Convention and resolution 1540 during a training course for 1540 Committee points of contact in the Asia-Pacific region in Beijing, China, and during a national workshop on the national action plan of Ecuador for the implementation of resolution 1540 in Quito, Ecuador. Both events took place in June and were organised by UNODA.

22. Secretariat staff also delivered virtual presentations at workshops organised by UNODA on the following topics: synergies between the Convention and resolution 1540 (for Mongolia in January); strengthening export and border controls in compliance with resolution 1540 (for Botswana in May); risks related to CBRN materials (for Malawi in June); promoting national awareness of resolution 1540 (for Indonesia in July); and synergies between the Convention and resolution 1540 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (in November), during a training course for 1540 Committee points of contact in the Africa region.
23. Furthermore, Secretariat staff delivered virtual presentations at the following events: a regional workshop on international nuclear safeguards legislation in Fiji, organised by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory of the United States of America, sharing best practices on Convention-implementing legislation (in September); a CBRN criminalisation workshop in the Republic of Moldova, organised by UNICRI on the role of Convention implementing legislation (in November); and a round-table event entitled “Responsible Chemical Management and Preventing the Proliferation of Chemical Weapons” in Botswana, organised by the Stimson Center, on OPCW capacity-building support for Convention implementation (in December).
24. Noting that decision EC-86/DEC.9 encouraged States Parties “to examine their national laws to ensure that there are appropriate offences which could be used to prosecute indirect perpetrators of Convention-related crimes at the domestic level”, and also requested them “to consider whether additional mutual legal assistance arrangements would be useful in ensuring the accountability of non-State actors” (paragraphs 7 and 8), the Secretariat continued to stand ready to provide assistance and advice in this regard.

Measures to prevent the hostile use of toxic chemicals by non-State actors

25. The enhancement of global chemical security in all stages of the chemical life cycle, for instance, throughout the stages of research and development, manufacture, transport in the supply chain, storage, and disposal of toxic chemical waste, continued to serve as a useful framework for considering the OPCW’s further contribution to global efforts to prevent chemical terrorism.
26. Furthermore, decision EC-86/DEC.9, which underscored the “obligation of each State Party under paragraph 2 of Article VI of the Convention to ‘adopt the necessary measures to ensure that toxic chemicals and their precursors are only developed, produced, otherwise acquired, retained, transferred, or used’ for purposes not prohibited under the Convention” (paragraph 4), is not limited to the physical aspects of security throughout the chemical life cycle, but includes the overall management of this life cycle. This management may exist in a national chemical security programme and may include measures such as regulations, policy, and national risk assessments, as deemed necessary by each State Party.
27. The Secretariat continued to advance its global and regional capacity-building activities under the OPCW Chemical Safety and Security Management Programme. In 2024, 33 capacity-building training courses and events under Article XI of the Convention were held, benefiting 913 participants.

28. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of decision EC-86/DEC.9, which requested the Secretariat “to enhance its capacity-building programmes that facilitate the sharing of chemical safety and security best practices among States Parties”, in 2024 the Secretariat organised a series of courses on chemical safety and security, as described below. The courses focused, inter alia, on raising awareness of scheduled chemicals and supply chain safety and security strategies to prevent the misuse of dual-use and highly toxic chemicals.
29. The Secretariat organised four regional seminars on chemical safety and security management: in Lusaka, Zambia, from 19 to 21 March 2024 for the Africa region; in San José, Costa Rica, from 23 to 25 April 2024 for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC); online on 15 October 2024 for the Asia region; and online on 12 December 2024 for the Eastern Europe region. These annual seminars are designed to address the increasing needs for specific safety and security training regarding rapidly expanding and increasingly complex chemical industries, and the growing number of dual/multiple-use chemicals and technologies. Promoting a chemical safety and security culture helps to prevent the misuse of dangerous substances, thereby aiding global anti-terrorism efforts by reducing the risk of chemical attacks.
30. The Secretariat continued its efforts to help bolster States Parties’ capacity in chemical security management and counterterrorism. In this context, the Secretariat brought together international experts to develop indicative guidelines on the topic of “Know Your Customer: Due Diligence on Chemical Products” from 27 February to 1 March 2024 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The workshop was the third in a series within the framework of the Chemical Safety and Security Tools Development Programme, under which guidelines on chemical safety and security management for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and on the safe and secure transport of hazardous chemicals by road have been developed. The indicative guidelines on “Know Your Customer: Due Diligence on Chemical Products”, the third topic in the programme series—provide an important toolkit for chemical distributors and industry to ensure that certain substances, such as toxic chemicals or precursors to explosives or drugs, are not sold for illicit purposes by having distributors and industry exercise due diligence in understanding their clients. The guidelines target States Parties with limited resources and/or SMEs.
31. From 22 to 24 October 2024, the Secretariat, in cooperation with Morocco, organised the first-ever “Global Conference on the Role of Artificial Intelligence in Advancing the Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention” in Rabat, Morocco. The Global Conference aimed to explore the transformative role of artificial intelligence (AI) within the framework of the Convention. In doing so, leading AI specialists, scientists, industry experts, and policymakers discussed and shared knowledge about the impact of AI on chemistry and its industrial applications, while exploring both potential opportunities and the risks the technology may pose to humanity, including the perspectives of chemical safety and security, counterterrorism, and disarmament. The Global Conference fostered a deeper understanding of AI’s implications for international security and informed policy frameworks aligned with peaceful and ethical AI applications in the chemical sciences.

32. A workshop on general aspects of chemical safety and security in laboratories was organised for global participants in Milan, Italy, from 8 to 11 October 2024, addressing practical aspects of the management of chemical laboratory infrastructure. The workshop focused on best practices and knowledge about hazardous chemicals and related risk assessments, personal protective equipment, emergency management, environmental impacts, and sustainability.
33. Aspects of chemical safety and security management were also addressed during a seminar on chemical safety and security management for Asian Member States from 28 to 30 May 2024 in Doha, Qatar, and at the Seoul workshop on the peaceful development and use of chemistry for Asian Member States from 12 to 14 November 2024, in Seoul, the Republic of Korea. The two events, organised in cooperation with and funding from Qatar and the Republic of Korea, respectively, promoted the peaceful uses of chemistry and the application of various tools in chemical safety and security to improve safety and security practices in chemical industry in the Asia region. The events also facilitated in-depth discussions about chemical security and chemical management regulatory regimes.
34. A regional workshop on best practices in the development of a legislative and regulatory framework for chemical security was held in Pretoria, South Africa, in April 2024. This workshop allowed participating States Parties to share experiences in developing chemical security legislation, focusing on the roles of regulatory authorities, government agencies, and key stakeholders, including the chemical industry and distributors. It also facilitated the exchange of best practices for assessing risks and identifying gaps in existing legal frameworks, helping to guide the review and enhancement of chemical security legislation. Furthermore, the workshop underscored the importance of a robust legislative framework in countering the threat of chemical terrorism, contributing to broader anti-terrorism efforts.
35. A meeting of select experts in chemical security was held in October 2024 at the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre), to lay the groundwork for a compendium of best practices to guide the development of national legislative and regulatory frameworks on chemical security. The compendium will aim at enhancing national frameworks for chemical security, which are critical in safeguarding against chemical threats and supporting global anti-terrorism initiatives.
36. Two workshops on best practices to resolve transfer discrepancies were held in 2024, namely in Seoul, the Republic of Korea, in April, bringing together relevant States Parties from East and South-East Asia, and in Madrid, Spain, in October, gathering relevant States Parties from the Western European and Others Group, as well as selected trading partners from Eastern Europe. The workshops provided a platform for technical experts and peers, including representatives from the World Customs Organization (WCO), to exchange views, experiences, challenges, and best practices related to identifying and resolving transfer discrepancies. The workshops aimed at improving the accuracy and transparency of the trade and transfer in scheduled chemicals, which are critical aspects to ensuring the non-proliferation of chemical weapons.
37. A subregional workshop on preventing illicit transfers of toxic chemicals took place in The Hague in March 2024. The workshop aimed at enhancing the capabilities of customs and law enforcement officials from South and South-East Asian States Parties

in preventing and mitigating the illicit transfer of toxic chemicals. The workshop featured scenario-based table-top exercises as well as practical demonstrations of relevant laboratory activities and detection equipment.

38. A peer-to-peer training of customs training institutions was held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in May 2024. The training, co-organised with the WCO, aimed to strengthen the capacity of customs administrations in French-speaking African States Parties to enforce the Convention's transfers regime for scheduled chemicals. The event fostered regional cooperation and knowledge sharing among customs institutions towards the prevention of chemical terrorism.
39. A training of trainers course for customs training institutions took place in Santiago, Chile, in August 2024. This course provided customs training institutions in GRULAC States Parties with the tools and methodologies for integrating Convention-related content into their national customs training. The event focused on enhancing national capacities to prevent the misuse of toxic chemicals, addressing the threat of chemical terrorism.
40. A subregional conference on enforcing effective customs control of the trade in toxic chemicals in the Pacific region was held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, in September 2024. The conference aimed to strengthen the awareness and capacity of customs administrations in Pacific island States Parties to control the trade in scheduled chemicals, a critical component in preventing chemical terrorism. The event featured discussions on relevant challenges and best practices, with the participation of UNODA, UNODC, WCO, and the Oceania Customs Organisation.
41. A workshop for customs training institutions on implementing the Convention was conducted in Luanda, Angola, in December 2024. The workshop, intended for Portuguese-speaking countries, focused on the role of Customs in regulating the import and export of scheduled chemicals and introduced innovative training methodologies. This event served to underline the importance of effective customs control in combating chemical terrorism.
42. Further details on activities carried out specifically under the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Africa Programme) are provided in paragraphs 60 to 78 below.

Ensuring an effective response to the hostile use of toxic chemicals

43. Enhancing global capacity to respond to the hostile use of a toxic chemical has continued to be a priority area for the OPCW. The Secretariat's efforts were aimed at supporting national and regional response capacities, enhancing the OPCW's own capacity to respond and provide assistance, and improving the collective response of the United Nations and other international organisations.
44. In acknowledging decision EC-86/DEC.9, which noted in its final preambular paragraph "the need to continue to enhance the Secretariat's capacity and readiness, in response to alleged incidents of chemical weapons use, to provide technical assistance, to deploy emergency measures of assistance under Article X of the Convention at the request of a State Party, and to enhance the Secretariat's readiness to conduct investigations of alleged use under Article IX and Article X of the Convention and Part XI of the Verification Annex to the Convention", the activities below are highlighted.

45. In line with the report of the Council at its Eighty-Sixth Session (EC-86/11, dated 13 October 2017) and its decision EC-86/DEC.9, as well as the decision of the Conference of the States Parties at its Twenty-Eighth Session on “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use and the Threat of Future Use” (C-28/DEC.12, dated 30 November 2023), the Secretariat worked to further enhance States Parties’ capacities in 2023. Towards this end, and to support States Parties in building capacity to investigate incidents involving chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals, the Secretariat (through the Assistance and Protection Branch) conducted a basic course for French-speaking Member States in Africa, in Jacqueville, Côte d’Ivoire, from 4 to 8 November 2024. The course provided practical training on the fundamentals of chemical warfare agents and their effects, protective equipment and its limitations, detection and decontamination equipment and procedures, and basic sampling procedures. This hands-on approach provided participating first responders with the confidence and capability to deal with potential chemical emergencies.
46. The Secretariat continued to provide support to States Parties in the development of their national programmes for protective purposes, pursuant to paragraph 4 of Article X of the Convention. The Online Self-Assessment Tool (OSAT) continued to support the development of robust national protection plans at the subregional and national level, through risk-based needs assessment and a better targeting of areas for capacity-development assistance. During the reporting period, the Assistance and Protection Branch engaged with the Member States of RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe and Member States of the East African Community by conducting capacity-building workshops on the use of OSAT.
47. Within the scope of assistance under Article X of the Convention, the Secretariat continued to train relevant staff to assist requesting States Parties in the identification of munitions, explosive devices, remnants of war, or improvised devices suspected of containing chemical warfare agents or toxic chemicals that could be used by non-State actors. In 2024, the Secretariat worked to enhance this capacity by maintaining advanced certification in non-destructive evaluation equipment for inspectors and support staff, and by including in the Secretariat’s specialised programme training on improvised explosive devices that could be used by non-State actors to disseminate chemical weapons agents.
48. The Secretariat offered in-person, online, and hybrid activities to States Parties throughout the course of the year, focusing on improving and strengthening relevant capacity-building programmes. Overall in 2024, in partnership with States Parties and partner training centres, 42 assistance and protection-related activities were conducted, benefiting 1,006 participants in the various training courses aimed at supporting Article X implementation.
49. Further information specific to the Africa Programme is detailed in paragraphs 60 to 78 below.

Enhancing laboratory capacity at the OPCW and in States Parties

50. The capability to safely analyse a wide range of chemicals and types of samples, both within the Secretariat itself and within each State Party, is of fundamental importance to the full and effective implementation of the Convention. Such capability can take a number of practical forms, ranging from the detection of chemicals in the field with hand-held

equipment, such as by customs agencies, to the analysis of samples in a laboratory to identify chemicals used in an attack or to determine the likely provenance of a chemical weapons agent. Forward-looking research and development is also key to making practical advancements, such as in medical countermeasures. Addressing the need to develop, nurture, and enhance this capability in a sustainable way remains a priority for the Organisation, including in the context of the non-State actor threat.

51. From 19 to 22 November 2024, the Secretariat, with a voluntary contribution from Germany and an in-kind support from China, organised a course for analytical chemists from laboratories supporting customs services at the OPCW ChemTech Centre. The course provided the participants with experience and practical knowledge in analysing chemicals related to the Convention, thereby enhancing their customs authorities' capacity to detect suspicious shipments of dual-use chemicals that could potentially be used in chemical terrorism attacks.
52. The OPCW Laboratory Twinning Initiative is aimed at assisting laboratories in States Parties with economies that are either developing or in transition to improve their performance in the OPCW proficiency tests, which must be successfully completed in order to become an OPCW designated laboratory. Assisting laboratories offered their resources, with support from the Secretariat, to implement a series of training and mentorship visits, aiming at enhancing the capacity of assisted laboratories in the analysis of environmental and biomedical samples. In 2024, further progress was made in the development of a twinning project between the Bundeswehr Research Institute for Protective Technologies and CBRN Protection of Germany and the National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology of the National Gendarmerie of Algeria, as well as between the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) and Protechnik Laboratories of South Africa. In this context, a series of training courses took place and, as a result, the Algerian laboratory made significant progress in OPCW proficiency tests and became an OPCW designated laboratory in 2024. Additionally, in 2024, a new twinning project was initiated between the Forensic Science Center of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory of the United States of America and the National Laboratory of Scientific and Technical Police of Morocco.
53. In 2024, the Secretariat continued to implement the project "Assessing and Enhancing Capacity of Analytical Laboratories from African and GRULAC Member States" through a voluntary contribution from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, aimed at laboratories from the Africa and GRULAC regions that are seeking OPCW designation. In September 2024, the project entered its fifth phase, further advancing capacity building for laboratories from Africa (one from Kenya and one from Nigeria) and from GRULAC (one from Brazil and one from Chile), with the support from two OPCW designated laboratories in Finland and Spain.
54. Additionally within the area of analysis of Convention-related chemicals, the Secretariat in 2024 supported two visits under the OPCW Fellowship Programme, 22 research projects under the Programme for Support of Research Projects, and the participation of 143 experts (115 online and 28 face to face) in 11 international events under the Conference Support Programme.
55. Further information specific to the Africa Programme is detailed in paragraphs 60 to 78 below.

The role of the Scientific Advisory Board

56. Through its work in assessing and reporting on developments in scientific and technological fields that are relevant to the Convention, the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) has an important role to play in ensuring that the Secretariat and States Parties are better placed to mitigate the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors. The SAB endeavours to stay abreast of emerging technologies and developments that may be attractive to non-State actors. In May 2024, the Board held its Thirty-Eighth Session, in which briefings were given by OPCW staff and external experts on topics relating to non-State actors.
57. In his response to the report of the Thirty-Seventh Session of the SAB (EC-104/DG.22, dated 27 September 2023), the Director-General announced his intention to establish a temporary working group (TWG) on chemical forensics, the objective of which would be to review the science and technology relevant to chemical forensics and to identify remaining gaps and challenges such that the OPCW can make best use of the information chemical forensics can yield moving forward. This TWG began its work in January 2024, and as at the cut-off date of this report had held four meetings.
58. In his response to the report of the Thirty-Eighth Session of the SAB (EC-106/DG.19, dated 4 July 2024), the Director-General announced his intention to establish, upon a recommendation from the Board, a TWG on AI. This additional TWG began its mandate in January 2025.

The OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology and the network of designated laboratories

59. The ChemTech Centre provides expanded and enhanced analytical, operational, and capacity-building capabilities to assist States Parties to better prepare for and respond to use and threats of use of chemical weapons by non-State actors. While many of the activities at the ChemTech Centre continue or enhance existing activities, the facility also allows for additional programmes to strengthen the Secretariat's ability to fulfil its mandate more effectively. These relate to the enhancement of the OPCW Laboratory's capabilities, inspectors' routine and non-routine readiness and training, international cooperation and assistance, knowledge management, and scientific collaboration.
60. The OPCW network of partner laboratories that are available for off-site analysis of samples has increased significantly since 2023; there are currently 30 laboratories from 25 States Parties (that is, an increase of four laboratories) that have met the requisite criteria to be OPCW designated laboratories for the analysis of environmental samples.
61. In 2024, the Secretariat conducted the Ninth Official OPCW Biomedical Proficiency Test. The samples for this test were prepared at the ChemTech Centre, in close collaboration with scientists from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in the United States of America. The OPCW network of partner laboratories currently consists of 18 laboratories from 14 States Parties that have met the requisite criteria to be OPCW designated laboratories for the analysis of biomedical samples.

62. In 2024, the OPCW Laboratory organised the First Trial OPCW Biotoxins Proficiency Test for the analysis of biologically derived toxins, following the recommendations of the SAB (SAB-37/1, dated 1 September 2023) and its TWG on the Analysis of Biotoxins (Annex 2 to SAB-37/1). This trial proficiency test, with 28 participating laboratories, further enhanced the OPCW partner laboratories' capabilities in this area and helped determine commonly accepted analysis and reporting criteria.
63. The OPCW Laboratory continued to monitor scientific progress and developments in the field of chemical forensics and is actively pursuing the transfer of methods among the network of laboratories for in-depth evaluation. Such methods will enlarge the toolkit available to the designated laboratories for the analysis of samples and the determination of chemical signatures.

Efforts by the OPCW to enhance chemical security and counterterrorism efforts as part of the Programme to Strengthen Cooperation with Africa on the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2024

64. Africa continues to face particular challenges from terrorist threats and attacks in several countries. The potential use of chemicals by non-State actors, including terrorist and violent extremist groups, to perpetrate terrorist attacks remains a serious threat. In 2024, the Secretariat continued to devote special attention to Africa through the sixth phase of the Africa Programme (2023–2025), with a view to responding to African States Parties' needs and priorities in areas of chemical safety and security as well as development through peaceful applications of chemistry. In terms of preventing and responding to chemical terrorism in Africa, the sixth phase of the Programme continued to follow an integrated approach aimed at enhancing chemical security on the continent. This approach is multidimensional and focuses on developing the capacities of African States Parties in the areas listed below.

Advancing national implementation of the Convention in Africa

65. The Secretariat continued in 2024 to facilitate the enactment of national Convention implementing legislation in Africa and develop the capacity of African States Parties to implement the Convention fully and effectively.
66. In terms of advancing national implementation of the Convention, during the period under review the Secretariat intensified its efforts to assist Portuguese-speaking African Member States to develop and enhance their national legislation. The workshop organised by the Secretariat (Lisbon, Portugal, 27 to 29 February 2024) for these Member States on advancing national Convention implementation constituted a key forum allowing in-depth knowledge sharing and collaboration. In addition, in 2024 the Secretariat put special emphasis on assisting several individual African Member States, namely, Angola, Kenya, Sao Tome and Principe, and Seychelles.
67. Advocacy for the enactment and reinforcement of national implementing legislation also continued to be part of the Secretariat's efforts. In this connection, the side event organised in Geneva on 26 March 2024 by the Secretariat and the IPU on the margins of the 148th IPU Assembly (see paragraph 15 above) raised awareness among participating parliamentarians from African States Parties—including Kenya, Zambia, and Zimbabwe—on the importance of the Convention and its contribution to global peace and security.

68. Special efforts were also dedicated to promoting direct support and exchange between African States Parties, including through the holding of forums for the exchange of experiences, best practices and lessons learned, and to forging solid relationships through the Mentorship/Partnership Programme for National Authorities, in the spirit of South-South cooperation.
69. In this connection, following the successful conduct in 2023 of Mentorship/Partnership Programmes between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (mentor) and Zambia (mentee), and between Brazil (mentor) and Mozambique (mentee), a new Programme was launched in 2024 between India (mentor) and Kenya (mentee). Productive working visit exchanges were conducted in this context during the year (to Kenya in June and to India in September), with the Secretariat's facilitation. In parallel, the Secretariat continued to promote other offers to provide mentorship under this Programme, made by Algeria and Morocco.
70. In relation to the national implementation framework (NIF), considerable progress was achieved by Mauritania, Togo, and Zambia in terms of designing their plans. The NIF is a process comprising a number of steps which lead to a Convention national implementation action plan. Furthermore, the Secretariat facilitated the active participation and contribution of African States Parties in regular annual OPCW meetings in 2024, notably, the Twenty-Second Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Africa, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from 11 to 13 June; the Eleventh Annual Meeting of Representatives of the Chemical Industry and National Authorities of States Parties to the Convention, held in Doha, Qatar, from 15 to 17 October; and the Twenty-Sixth Annual Meeting of National Authorities, held in The Hague from 20 to 22 November. Also, in the context of the regular consultations and exchanges between the OPCW and States Parties in the Africa region, the Secretariat convened productive information and coordination meetings with the Steering Committee of the Africa Programme on 21 June and 18 November 2024, as well as a meeting with the African delegations based outside The Hague on 13 November 2024 in Brussels, Belgium.

Control of cross-border transfers of toxic chemicals

71. During the reporting period, the Secretariat's capacity-building support in the area of control of cross-border transfers of toxic chemicals focused on three aspects: enhancing the capacity of African customs administrations to enforce the Convention's transfers regime for scheduled chemicals; promoting enhanced regional cooperation among African customs administrations, as well as between customs administrations and National Authorities; and building the capacities of laboratories supporting customs services to detect, identify, and analyse chemicals related to the Convention.
72. Within this context, the Secretariat organised, in collaboration with the WCO, from 21 to 23 May 2024, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, a peer-to-peer training course for African customs institutions from French-speaking African Member States. The course was the second component of a special capacity-building project funded through a voluntary contribution from Canada within the framework of the Africa Programme. Additionally, the Secretariat organised, in Luanda, Angola, from 3 to 5 December 2024, a workshop for African customs training institutions and departments on implementing the Convention.

73. Further, with a voluntary contribution from Germany and in-kind support from China, the Secretariat organised, from 19 to 22 November 2024 at the ChemTech Centre, a course for analytical chemists from laboratories supporting customs services. The course benefited 13 participants from as many Member States, including four in Africa.

Advancing chemical safety and security culture, standards, and practices in Africa

74. In 2024, the Secretariat continued to focus on further developing the awareness, knowledge, and capabilities of African States Parties in the areas of chemical safety and security management. Key events organised during the reporting period included a seminar on the Convention and chemical and security management for the Africa region, organised in Lusaka, Zambia, from 19 to 21 March.
75. In addition, the Secretariat in 2024 continued to provide support to African States Parties in relation to the development of a legislative and regulatory framework on chemical security. Within this context, the Secretariat, in collaboration with INTERPOL, the WCO, and representatives from the chemical industry, successfully delivered in Pretoria, South Africa, from 10 to 12 April, a workshop on best practices for chemical security legislation for the Africa region.
76. Further, the Secretariat continued to consult with African experts within the framework of developing global indicative guidelines on safety and security. Within this context, at the invitation of the Secretariat, African experts contributed to the workshop for developing indicative guidelines on the topic “Know Your Customer: Due Diligence on Chemical Products” (Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 27 February to 1 March 2024). In addition, four experts from four African Member States participated in the launching event for the Indicative Guidelines for Safe and Secure Transport of Hazardous Chemicals by Road, organised online on 16 October.
77. Separately, African participants in 2024 continued to benefit from other capacity-building courses on chemical safety and security offered to global audiences. These included the twenty-fifth edition of the Associate Programme (in the Netherlands and elsewhere, from 29 July to 26 September), and the Wuppertal Course on Explosion Protection and Safety Management in the Chemical Process Industries for Member States (online, from 30 August to 7 October).

Enhancing protection and response capabilities against chemical incidents and attacks

78. In 2024, the Secretariat supported the attendance of 247 participants from 34 African States Parties in a series of training courses aimed at developing capacities in areas of assistance and protection. Topics covered in these courses, organised in collaboration with international partners, included detection and handling procedures in incidents involving toxic chemicals; decontamination of chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals; sampling and analysis in a highly contaminated environment; improving hospital preparedness for large-scale chemical emergencies; and investigation by law enforcement agencies of chemical incidents and attacks. Several of these events were offered specifically to African subregions, in collaboration with regional economic communities.

Strengthening and developing chemical laboratory competencies and infrastructure

79. In the period under review, the Secretariat arranged for the participation of 83 African chemists from 22 African States Parties in regional and global analytical skills development courses. Specialised OPCW proficiency test training continued to be provided to two laboratories from Kenya and Nigeria under a project funded by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Further, under the OPCW Laboratory Twinning Initiative, in addition to the ongoing twinning projects—between laboratories in the Netherlands and South Africa and laboratories in Algeria and Germany—a new laboratory twinning project was initiated between laboratories in Morocco and the United States of America.
80. Separately, the Secretariat launched a new training course on the maintenance of laboratory equipment for Member States in the Africa region. The first edition was jointly organised from 9 to 13 December in cooperation with the Wrocław University of Science and Technology in Poland and was funded through voluntary contributions from Germany and the European Union.
81. Under the Equipment Exchange Programme, in May 2024 the Secretariat facilitated the transfer of a second batch of laboratory devices and spare parts from Germany to the United Republic of Tanzania as part of the ongoing project to develop the laboratory of Mwenge Catholic University. Ten experts from the Tanzanian laboratory were trained in August by the German donor institution on use of the donated equipment.
82. A major achievement in the area of laboratory capacity building in 2024 was the acquisition in April by the National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology of the National Gendarmerie of Algeria (INCC/GN) of OPCW designated status for the analysis of authentic environmental samples. The Bundeswehr Research Institute for Protective Technologies and CBRN Protection of Germany and the Finnish Institute for the Verification of the Chemical Weapons Convention (VERIFIN), through established OPCW capacity-building support programmes, have been key partners in this achievement. Following the designation of the INCC/GN, Africa, for the first time since 2006, has an OPCW designated laboratory. This achievement is in line with a key objective of the sixth phase of the Africa Programme, and OPCW designated laboratories are once again present on every continent of the world.
83. It is noteworthy that, over the past few years, INCC/GN has also been playing a vital role in promoting capacity building by supporting key OPCW capacity-building initiatives under the Africa Programme, including sampling courses and the “CHEMEX Africa” exercise held in Algeria. In November 2024, in recognition of its significant contribution to OPCW priority areas, INCC/GN, together with the Indian Chemical Council, was awarded the 2024 OPCW-The Hague Award.