



Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons (UNSGM)

**Third Session of the Working Group on the
Strengthening of the BWC
Palais des Nations, Geneva
6 December 2023**

UNSGM Mandate



C

MEASURES TO UPHOLD THE AUTHORITY OF THE 1925
GENEVA PROTOCOL AND TO SUPPORT THE CONCLUSION
OF A CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

The General Assembly,

Recalling the provisions of the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, signed at Geneva on 17 June 1925,³⁹ and other relevant rules of customary international law,

Mandate given by General Assembly resolution **A/42/37 C**: “Measures to uphold the authority of the 1925 Geneva Protocol and to support the conclusion of a chemical weapons convention”

- **O.P. 4** Requests the Secretary-General to **carry out investigations** in response to **reports that may be brought to his attention by any Member State** concerning the possible use of chemical, bacteriological (biological) or toxin weapons that may constitute a violation of the **Geneva Protocol or other relevant rules** of customary international law in order to ascertain the facts of the matter and to **report promptly** the results of any such investigation to all Member States.

➔ Mandate was reaffirmed by **Security Council resolution 620 (1988)**

UNODA's Role



UNODA serves as the custodian of the UNSGM. This role includes:

- **Ensuring the operational readiness** to carry out a mission in response to reports from Member States
- **Maintaining the roster** of nominated experts and laboratories
- **Coordinating on training activities** with partners, including Member States, laboratories and international organizations
- **Conducting outreach** activities
- **Coordinating the UN Internal Task Force (UNITF)** of points of contact within UN departments and agencies that would support a UNSGM mission and training

The UNSGM is:

- A tool at the disposal of the UN Secretary-General in response to report(s) from Member States
 - An impartial, science-based, international mechanism for investigation of alleged use of chemical and biological weapons
 - The only international mechanism to investigate the **alleged use** of biological weapons
- **NOT** a standing investigative body
 - **NOT** a capacity building mechanism
 - **NOT** an early response, containment or preventative mechanism
 - **NOT** linked to the Biological Weapons Convention

UNSGM Guidelines & Procedures

(A/44/561)

- **Cover** the preparation and conduct of a UNSGM investigation, e.g., technical procedures or report writing
- **Detail the roles of:**
 - UN Secretary-General
 - Member States
 - State(s) receiving investigation
 - International organizations
 - Qualified experts
 - Expert consultants
 - Analytical laboratories

Qualified Experts	May be called upon to actively participate in an investigation team to conduct investigations into the alleged use of CBT weapons. May be called upon for training.
Expert Consultants	May be requested to advise and assist in the overall conduct and operation of the UNSGM, from planning, deployment to operation and reporting.
Analytical Laboratories	May be requested to test for the presence of CBT agents . May be called upon for interlaboratory calibration studies.

UNSGM Guidelines & Procedures

Appendices

APPENDIX I	Information to be provided in reporting the possible use of CBT weapons
APPENDIX II	Information to be provided by Member States when proposing experts
APPENDIX III	Equipment and supplies
APPENDIX IV	List of areas of expertise for experts
APPENDIX V	List of diagnostic and analytical laboratory specializations
APPENDIX VI	Information to be provided by Member States when proposing laboratories
APPENDIX VII	Procedures for sample collection, handling, storage, transport, and analysis
APPENDIX VIII	Sampling procedures for biomedical samples Merged with VII
APPENDIX IX	Interviewing of witnesses/victims
APPENDIX A	Pre-mission planning
APPENDIX B	Measures to protect the confidentiality of investigations
APPENDIX C	Report of investigation activities

} Added in 2007

- Originally 9 Appendices (I-IX), now 11
- Reviewed and updated by a group of experts in 2007

626 Qualified Experts

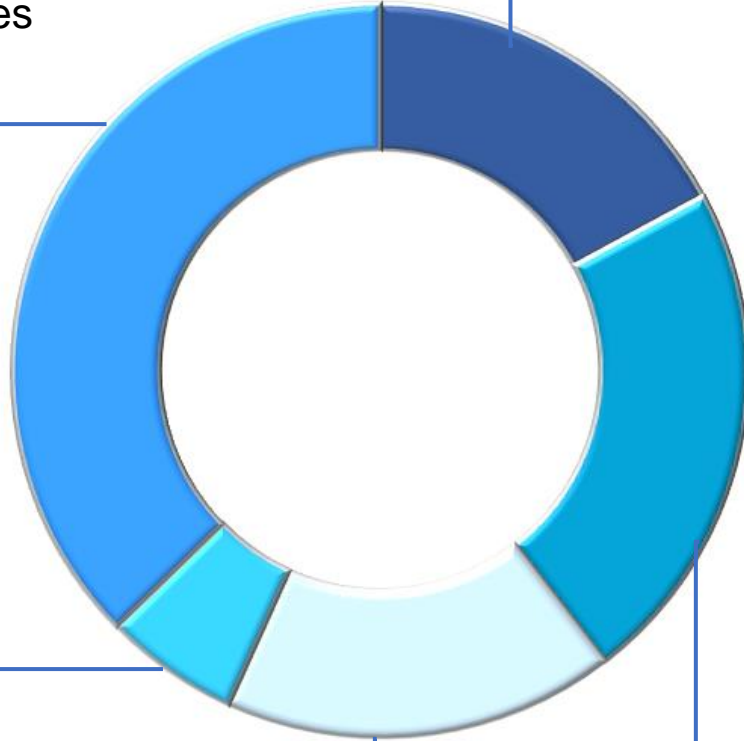
Africa 107 from 8 Member States

Western Europe and others
(233 from 18 Member States)

Latin America and Caribbean
(38 from 6 Member States)

Eastern Europe (108 from 16 Member States)

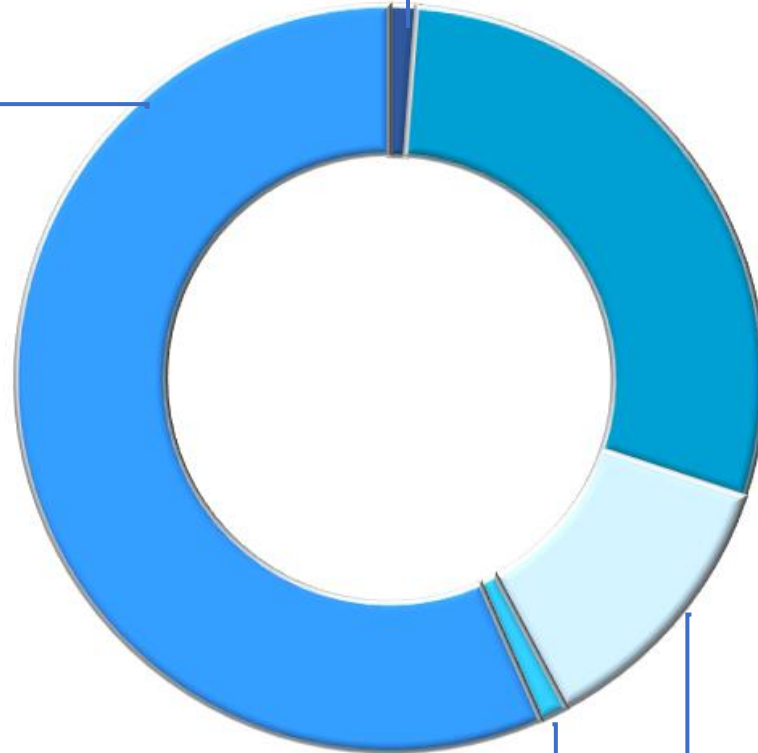
Asia and the Pacific (140 from 15 Member States)



83 Expert Consultants

Africa (1 from 1 Member State)

Western Europe and others
(47 from 10 Member States)



Latin America and Caribbean (1 from 1 Member State)

Eastern Europe (10 from 3 Member States)

Asia and the Pacific (24 from 6 Member States)



93 Analytical Laboratories

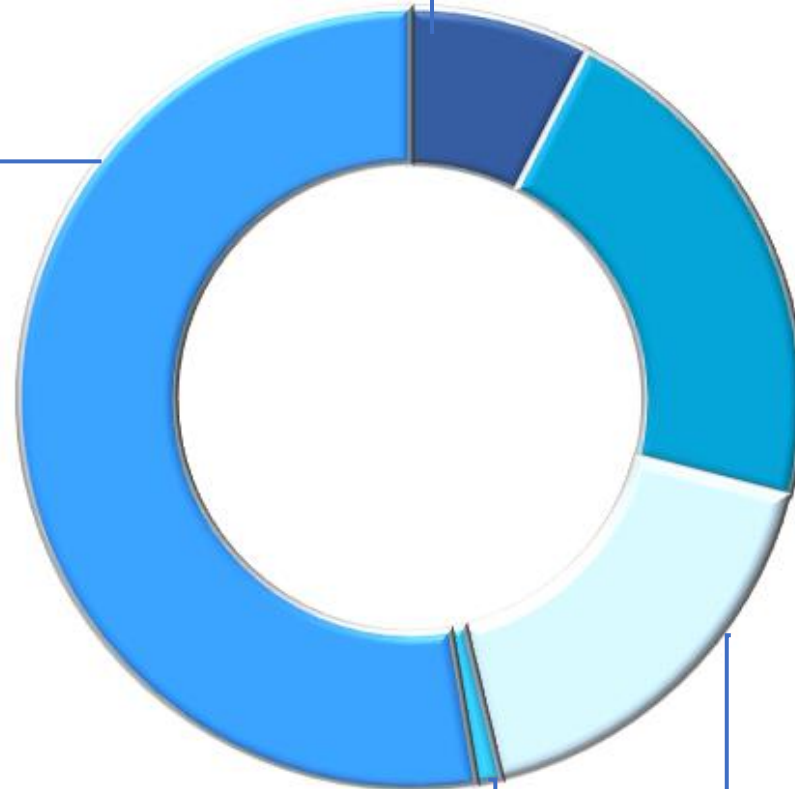
Africa 7 from 3 Member States

Western Europe and others
(49 from 15 Member States)

Latin America and Caribbean (1 from 1 Member State)

Eastern Europe (16 from 7 Member States)

Asia and the Pacific (20 from 6 Member States)



Nomination process

- Only **Member States** can nominate experts and analytical laboratories to the roster and do so by **official communication (Note Verbale)**
- UNODA sends a **Note Verbale** to all UN Member States each year to **request nominations** for the UNSGM roster (next: December 2023)
- Member States can submit new nominations or update their nominations **anytime**
- UNODA maintains the roster (confidential)
- Once nominated, UNODA requests **standard forms** for qualified experts and laboratories to collect more information
- To test responses and make sure the roster is up-to-date, UNODA conducts annual **call-out exercises** (last: November 2023)

Training Programme

Objectives

The operating environment for a UNSGM mission is likely to be:

- **Time-sensitive**
- **Multi-faceted (various expertise needed)**
- **A diverse team whose members are not familiar with each other**
- **Politically complex**
- **Potentially hazardous**

Member States nominate experts, why train?

- To ensure the operability of the UNSGM, especially the **timely, efficient and accurate conduct** of a UNSGM investigation into the reports of use of CBT weapons
- Convey **additional capabilities and skills**, e.g., (joint) interviews, establishing and maintaining chain-of custody
- **Report** writing and the difference from scientific papers
- **Team-building**

Training Programme

Phases

A three-phased training approach for **experts** was implemented to:

- **Create a more systematic approach**
- **Broaden the base of trained experts**
- **Increase engagement by Member States that provide trainings**

Phase One: Basic training course

- All nominated experts should participate in a two-week basic training to understand the mandate, roles and responsibilities

Phase Two: Core Skills Training

- Specialized skills training in various areas (~1 week)

Phase Three: Capstone

- Advance scenario that fuses skills training and professional experience into a table-top or field exercise

Past Training Activities offered by Member States, Partner Organizations & UNODA

2009 -2019

Around 160 experts trained, incl. 40 basic training

5 Basic training courses

1 Field exercise (Functional Subunit Approach)

7 Leadership courses

2 Skill training courses (evidence management and hazardous environment awareness)

3 Workshops/table-top exercises

Member State/ Organization	Type	Dates
UNODA	Expert consultant workshop (virtual)	3-4 November 2020
Germany	Table-top exercise (virtual)	9-13 November 2020
Germany	Table-top exercise (virtual)	24 August – 1 September 2021
Germany	Hazardous environment awareness training refresher	16-19 November 2021
South Africa	Basic Course	20 June – 1 July 2022
Germany	Capstone (Field Exercise)	19-28 September 2022
INTERPOL & Canada	Biological Crime Scene Management Training	27 February – 3 March 2023
South Africa	Basic Course	26 June – 7 July 2023
Germany/Canada/IATA	Sampling and transport of infectious substances	19-23 September 2023
France	Basic Course	25 September – 6 October 2023
UNDSS/Thailand	SSAFE Course	26 November – 2 December

Around 120 experts trained, including 57 basic training

Interlaboratory Calibration Studies

- Offered and funded by Member States
- Coordinated with UNODA
- Results must be shared with UNODA

Member State/ Organization	Exercise*	Dates	Status
Denmark and Sweden/ Technical University of Denmark (DTU) and Swedish Defense Research Agency (FOI)	Dry lab analysis of genomic sequence data from bacteria	2016-2018	Completed
Germany/Robert Koch Institute (RKI)	RefBio Project (viruses, bacteria and toxins)	2017-2024	Ongoing
Germany/RKI, Denmark/DTU and Sweden/FOI	Dry lab analysis of genomic sequence data from viruses	2021-2022	Ongoing
China/State Key Laboratory for Infectious Disease Prevention and Control (SKLID)	Disease X exercise (virus)	2022	Completed
Harbin Veterinary Research Institute	Future Pandemic Virus	2023/2024	Registration

Examples for other UNODA Activities

- Annual onboarding webinars for all newly nominated experts
- Annual call-out exercises for all experts and laboratory focal points
- Bi-annual newsletter (editions 1-6 available)
- Annual (virtual) roundtable events for all rostered experts
- Workshop for Expert Consultants and Laboratory Focal Points (May 2023)
- Outreach events:
 - ASEAN (2022)
 - African Member States (2023)

Staffing and Resources

Staffing

- P5 Senior Political Affairs Officer, team lead
- P4 Political Affairs Officer (part-time, regular budget)
- P3 Political Affairs Officer
- Programme Management Assistant

Resources

All UNSGM-related activities are extra-budgetary

Current grants

- Government of Canada
- European Union
- Government of Spain

In kind support

Hosting of training and outreach events, draft documents

Canada, China, Germany, France, South Africa, United States of America

For any questions, you can contact us at: UNSGM@un.org

Additional information

- **Website:** <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/secretary-general-mechanism/>
- **UNSGM newsletters:** Issue 1 (February 2021), Issue 2 (July 2021), Issue 3 (January 2022), Issue 4 (July 2022), Issue 5 (February 2023), Issue 6 (September 2023)
- **Fact sheet** <https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/SGM-Fact-Sheet-Jan2023.pdf>

The UNODA team in support of the UNSGM:

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