

# **Annual UNSG Report on Measures to Prevent Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction**

OPCW contribution to the 2025 edition, covering 2024.

In advancing its goal of achieving a world free of chemical weapons and the threat of their use, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) undertakes a range of activities that contribute to preventing terrorists from acquiring chemical weapons.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat (The Secretariat) verifies the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles declared by States Parties. This ensures that the weapons have been irreversibly destroyed and cannot be used. The Secretariat also conducts regular on-site verification activities at military and industrial facilities around the world, ensuring compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). In addition, the Secretariat monitors trade flows in scheduled chemicals. These verification activities ensure that scheduled chemicals are used exclusively for purposes not prohibited under the Convention and are not diverted for illicit uses by anyone. Taken together, every year the implementation of the Secretariat's verification mandates contributes to preventing the acquisition and use of chemical weapons, including by terrorists.

In 2024, the Secretariat continued its work in the Syrian Arab Republic toward the complete elimination of that country's chemical weapons programme. In February 2024, the Secretariat released a report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) confirming that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) used sulfur mustard in a 2015 attack in Marea in Syria. Following the fall of the Assad government on 8 December 2024, the Director-General and the Secretariat actively engaged the new Syrian caretaker authorities regarding the urgent need to secure chemical weapons-related sites and materials, given the acute risk of proliferation or diversion of such materials to non-State actors. The Organisation will continue its work in Syria and assist the new authorities in meeting their obligations under the Convention, including preventing the acquisition by terrorists of chemical weapons.

Throughout 2024, the Secretariat participated actively in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, serving as Vice-Chair of the Working Group on Emerging Threats and Critical Infrastructure Protection (ETCIP). It engaged closely with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Group of Experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), to raise awareness among States Parties of their obligations and provide practical assistance in areas such as national legislation, chemical security, and border controls. For example, the Secretariat contributed to regional and national workshops in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting synergies between the CWC and UN Security Council Resolution 1540.

The Organisation's Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism (OEWG-T) continued to be the main forum for States Parties to discuss challenges related to chemical terrorism and share best practices. The OEWG-T convened three times in 2024. These meetings provided opportunities for the OPCW to engage with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) on its counter-chemical terrorism efforts, the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg on CBWNet's research activities on chemical terrorism, and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) on its approach to

identifying, monitoring, and countering CBRNE threats, with a particular focus on chemical threats.

With respect to International Cooperation and Assistance, the Organisation continued to provide OPCW Member States with technical assistance and capacity building support to enhance States Parties' protection and response capacities against illicit access and use of chemicals for terrorist activities. These include advancing the national implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention; control of cross-border transfers of toxic chemicals; advancing the chemical safety and security environment, standards, and practices; enhancing preparedness and response capabilities against chemical incidents and attacks; strengthening and developing chemical laboratory competencies, and promoting knowledge exchange on peaceful chemistry. Within the framework of the OPCW Programme for Africa capacity building support was provided to States Parties from Africa.

Some of the aforementioned activities also contributed to the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) and General Assembly Resolution 79/43, which include: conference on enforcing effective customs control of the trade in toxic chemicals in the Pacific region; workshop on preventing illicit transfers of toxic chemicals for Member States in South and Southeast Asia; workshop on best practices in the development of a legislative and regulatory framework on chemical security for the Africa region; a basic course on investigation of incidents involving chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals for French-speaking OPCW States Parties in Africa; regional and global seminars and workshops on chemical safety and security; and analytical chemistry courses for customs laboratories. The Secretariat also continued to develop a portfolio of chemical safety and security guidelines aimed at preventing the sale of toxic and hazardous chemicals to malicious actors, such as terrorists. The Secretariat further conceptualised programmes to build the capacities of States Parties to understand both the opportunities and risks that AI poses to the implementation of the Convention, with a focus on countering chemical terrorism.

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