

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

Draft OPCW contribution to the 2026 edition, covering 2025.

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 chemical 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 and contributes to reducing the risk of diversion of precursor 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.

Comprehensive training programs are provided to personnel, equipping them to handle all types of missions, including planned verification activities, and contingency operations such as Technical Assistance Visits, Challenge Inspections and Investigations of Alleged Use of toxic chemicals as weapons (including those from Non-State Actors). The Secretariat's operational readiness is bolstered by the capabilities of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre), serving as an important centre for monitoring the potential threats that emerging technologies may pose to the purpose of the CWC.

In 2025, the Secretariat continued its work in the Syrian Arab Republic toward the complete elimination of that country's chemical weapons programme. 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 with both Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and caretaker Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani. The President and the Foreign Minister expressed their strong commitment to cooperate with the OPCW in resolving all outstanding issues relating to the chemical weapons dossier. During the visit, the Director-General and his delegation also engaged with Syrian experts and briefed, *inter alia*, high-ranking members of the Syrian Government, as needed. Following the visit by the Director-General, the Secretariat conducted numerous deployments to Syria, to visit undeclared sites of interest and collect information, including through taking samples and interviewing officials of the former regime and other persons of interest. As the work of the Secretariat evolved, a continuous presence was also established in the country.

Given the numerous gaps, discrepancies, and inconsistencies in the Syrian declaration uncovered by the Secretariat over the past 11 years, the fall of the Assad regime presented new grounds for the Organisation to obtain clarifications on the full extent and scope of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Considering the acute risk of proliferation or diversion of chemical weapons or related materials to non-State actors, the Secretariat continuously assigned high importance to identifying priority sites and related threats, in close consultation

with Syrian authorities. Given this risk, and the challenges presented by the ongoing security situation in Syria, on 8 October 2025 the Executive Council adopted a decision allowing Syria to proceed with expedited destruction of any discovered chemical weapons in situations where challenging and/or hazardous circumstances prevent the secure storage or handling of such weapons, provided that certain criteria are met, including, inter alia, a verification processes in line with applicable requirements, the necessity of assigning the highest priority to ensuring safety of people and to protecting the environment, and the necessity of preserving evidence related to the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic

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 included engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic to address chemical weapons proliferation and prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, as well as assistance with capacity building for Syrian authorities to ensure long-term compliance with the Convention.

Throughout 2025, 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 2025, where the OPCW engaged with engaged with the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence (CoE) initiative on its chemical security efforts, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism on the Office's work to combat terrorist use of chemical weapons, and a research expert on uncrewed aerial vehicles and chemical terrorism, respectively.

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' capacities to prevent or detect illicit access to scheduled chemicals and use of such chemicals for terrorist activities, as well as capacities to respond to relevant incidents. Areas of assistance included: advancing the adoption of national implementing legislation for the Chemical Weapons Convention; strengthening control of cross-border transfers of toxic chemicals; advancing the chemical safety and security environment, standards, legislation 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 across the above-mentioned areas.

Some of the aforementioned activities also contributed to the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004). These activities included:

- Training courses on Preventing Illicit Transfers of Chemicals for States Parties in Africa and from the Pacific region, respectively;
- A workshop on Strengthening Chemical Security Legislation and its Enforcement for States Parties in Central Asia;
- A Training of Trainers course for customs on the transfers regime of the CWC for States Parties in the Caribbean region; an advanced course on investigation of incidents involving chemical warfare agents and toxic industrial chemicals for French-speaking States Parties in Africa;
- Regional and international assistance and protection trainings for first responders, including specialised courses on sampling and live agent training;
- 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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