

Chemical and Biological News

ARMS CONTROL

Sampling and Analysis Course Held in Poland

Friday, 27 September 2013

The Government of Poland and the OPCW jointly organized a specialized course on Sampling and Analysis in a Highly Contaminated Environment, which was held at the Central School of the State Fire Service in the city of Czestochowa from 23 to 27 September 2013 with 18 participants from 15 States Parties.*

The course relates to Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention and offered extensive theoretical knowledge and training in the use of individual protective equipment, including the use of a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). The participants were familiarised with chemical, biomedical and environmental sampling techniques, which were exercised in different practical sessions.

The course also facilitated exchange of information and experience regarding Article X implementation and provided a forum to discuss potential areas of cooperation among the participating States Parties.

* Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Belarus, Botswana, Czech Republic, Hungary, Jordan, Malaysia, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Tunisia

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/sampling-and-analysis-course-held-in-poland/>

OPCW and IUPAC update educational materials for raising awareness of the multiple uses of chemicals and the Chemical Weapons Convention

Tuesday, 26 November 2013

The OPCW has collaborated on an International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) project to update educational material for raising awareness of the multiple uses of chemicals and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Interactive materials were first produced in 2005-07 under an earlier IUPAC/OPCW project, but these have been substantially updated and revised under the recent project which has been led by Peter Mahaffy from the King's Centre for Visualization in Science in Canada and Alastair Hay from the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom.

The comprehensive set of interactive web materials invites educators, students, policy makers, and the public to explore the beneficial uses, misuses, and abuses of multi-use chemicals. The resources can be used alone or in support of interactive presentations to build understanding about the responsibilities of both scientists and the public to respond to the misuse of chemicals, such as in the production of chemical weapons. The interactive web materials were created by the King's Centre for Visualization in Science, working in cooperation with members of the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board and its Temporary Working Group on Education and Outreach in Science and Technology Relevant to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The educational materials were piloted at a workshop during the 44th World Chemistry Congress in Istanbul in August 2013 and will also be demonstrated during the 15th

Annual Meeting of CWC National Authorities in The Hague in late November 2013.

The project received financial support from IUPAC and from the European Union under its Council Decision of March 2012 in support of the OPCW. Further financial support is now being sought to translate the materials in all official languages of the OPCW.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-and-iupac-update-educational-materials-for-raising-awareness-of-the-multiple-uses-of-chemicals/>

DISARMAMENT

Syria Completes Destruction Activities to Render Inoperable Chemical Weapons Production Facilities and Mixing/Filling Plants

Thursday, 31 October 2013

Director-General salutes returning group of OPCW inspectors to The Hague

The Joint Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons - United Nations Mission confirmed today that the government of the Syrian Arab Republic has completed the functional destruction of critical equipment for all of its declared chemical weapons production facilities and mixing/filling plants, rendering them inoperable.

By doing so, Syria has met the deadline set by the OPCW Executive Council* to “complete as soon as possible and in any case not later than 1 November 2013, the destruction of chemical weapons production and mixing/filling equipment.”

At the same time, OPCW Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü welcomed back to the OPCW headquarters in The Hague a returning group of eight inspectors, who arrived in

Damascus with the Advanced Team on 1 October and have been conducting the verification work on the ground ever since.

“On behalf of the OPCW, I thank you and all of our colleagues from the Joint OPCW-UN Mission who remain in Syria for your outstanding service,” the Director-General said. “I salute the fortitude and courage you’ve all demonstrated in fulfilling the most challenging mission ever undertaken by this Organisation.”

The Joint OPCW-UN Mission has inspected 21 of the 23 sites declared by Syria, and 39 of the 41 facilities located at those sites. The two remaining sites were not visited due to safety and security concerns. But Syria declared those sites as abandoned and that the chemical weapons programme items they contained were moved to other declared sites, which were inspected.

The Joint Mission is now satisfied that it has verified - and seen destroyed - all of Syria's declared critical production and mixing/filling equipment. Given the progress made in the Joint OPCW-UN Mission in meeting the requirements of the first phase of activities, no further inspection activities are currently planned. The next milestone for the mission will be 15 November, by which time the Executive Council must approve a detailed plan of destruction submitted by Syria to eliminate its chemical weapons stockpile.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/syria-completes-destruction-activities-to-render-inoperable-chemical-weapons-production-facilities-a/>

OPCW Completes First Round of Verification Activities in Syria

Monday, 28 October 2013

As of 27 October 2013, inspectors of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical

Weapons in the OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria completed verification activities at 21 of the 23 chemical weapons related sites declared by Syria.

The two remaining sites have not been visited due to security reasons. Efforts by the Joint Mission to ensure the conditions necessary for safe access to those sites will continue.

Syria submitted a formal declaration of its chemical weapons programme three days ahead of the 27 October deadline, together with a general plan of destruction, for consideration by the OPCW Executive Council.

The OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria was established to achieve the timely elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme in the safest and most secure manner possible.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-completes-first-round-of-verification-activities-in-syria/>

Syria Submits its Initial Declaration and a General Plan of Destruction of its Chemical Weapons Programme

Sunday, 27 October 2013

On 24 October 2013, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the OPCW its formal initial declaration covering its chemical weapons programme. Syria's submission is in line with the deadline set by the OPCW Executive Council in its decision of 27 September 2013 requiring a complete initial declaration by 27 October 2014. Such declarations provide the basis on which plans are devised for a systematic, total and verified destruction of declared chemical weapons and production facilities.

The document from Syria includes a general plan of destruction for consideration by the OPCW Executive Council.

Under the terms of the Chemical Weapons Convention, new States Parties are also required to submit a declaration covering activities and facilities that are not prohibited under the Convention but can be subjected to routine verification measures as a confidence building measure and to establish the peaceful intent of commercial activities. Syria has also submitted such a declaration.

The first monthly report on the work of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria has been issued to States Parties by the Director-General and forwarded for submission to the Security Council through the UN Secretary-General. It covers the progress made since inspections began in Syria following the deployment of the advance team on 1 October. This work included the priority task of making inoperable chemical weapons production facilities, and mixing and filling plants.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/syria-submits-its-initial-declaration-and-a-general-plan-of-destruction-of-its-chemical-weapons-pro/>

OPCW Concludes Basic Course for National Authorities on Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention

Wednesday, 25 September 2013

The Basic Course was held at the OPCW headquarters in The Hague from 16 to 20 September 2013 with 34 participants representing the National Authorities of 31 States Parties.* The course is a part of the OPCW's continuing efforts aimed at assisting National Authorities to meet their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

The goals of the CWC can only be achieved through its full and effective implementation by all States Parties, which makes it essential

that the personnel of National Authorities have a good understanding of the requirements of the Convention. The Basic Course curriculum covers all aspects of the CWC, including the history of the Convention, an overview of the OPCW, the role of the National Authority, national implementation measures under Article VII, the verification and transfers regimes, and an introduction to EDNA (the Electronic Declarations tool for National Authorities).

Participants were also briefed on the programmes of the International and Cooperation (ICA) Division and the e-learning modules developed by the Technical Secretariat. The course included several practical hands-on exercises, including a series of case studies and exercises on legal aspects of the Convention, inspections, and the preparation of declarations under Article VI. An important highlight of the visit was a visit to the OPCW Laboratory and Equipment Store in Rijswijk where the participants learned about their respective roles and functions.

*Angola, Argentina, Bahamas, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Gambia, Grenada, Honduras, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Lebanon, Malawi, Malaysia, Namibia, Panama, Peru, Saint Lucia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Tuvalu, United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, Zambia.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-concludes-basic-course-for-national-authorities-on-implementation-of-the-chemical-weapons-conve/>

OPCW Director-General Welcomes Agreement on Syrian Chemical Weapons

Saturday, 14 September 2013

The Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

(OPCW), Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, has welcomed the agreement on chemical weapons in Syria that was announced today following talks held in Geneva between the Foreign Minister of Russia, Sergey V. Lavrov, and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry.

The Director-General hopes that these agreements will facilitate the fulfilment of obligations by Syria deriving from the Chemical Weapons Convention, which it has decided to join. Following decisions that are proposed to be taken by the Executive Council of the OPCW, necessary measures will be adopted to implement an accelerated programme to verify the complete destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles, production facilities and other relevant capabilities.

The Director-General envisages that this significant step will be fully supported by States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the wider international community. The CWC represents the sole multilateral mechanism to rid the world of chemical weapons and the OPCW, with over 16 years of experience, possesses the necessary skills and capacities to undertake such missions. OPCW experts are already at work preparing a roadmap that anticipates the various undertakings and missions in Syria. Nine OPCW experts recently participated in the UN investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria.

These matters are expected to be discussed by the OPCW Executive Council in the coming week.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-director-general-welcomes-agreement-on-syrian-chemical-weapons/>

Director-General and Executive Council Delegation Visit China to Assess Destruction Activities for Abandoned Chemical Weapons

Thursday, 12 September 2013

The OPCW Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, accompanied a delegation of Executive Council (EC) representatives to the People's Republic of China from 9 to 13 September 2013, where they visited facilities for the excavation, recovery and destruction of abandoned chemical weapons (ACWs) in Haerbaling, Jilin Province.

The purpose of the visit was to assess the status of efforts to eliminate chemical weapons stored at Haerbaling that were abandoned by Japan on Chinese territory in World War II. The visit was the first-ever visit by an EC delegation to China and in accordance with an Executive Council decision in July 2012. The delegation was led by the EC Vice-Chair, Ambassador Miguel Calahorrano Camino of Ecuador, and comprised representatives of each of the five OPCW regional groups and observers from other interested States Parties.

"We want to thank the Governments of China and Japan for having arranged this visit," said Ambassador Calahorrano. "The EC found it most informative in understanding the complexities surrounding the destruction of ACWs abandoned by Japan on the territory of China." He complimented the two States Parties for their co-operation and urged them to continue working closely to ensure that destruction of the ACWs is completed as soon as possible.

As of July 2013 approximately 50,000 ACWs items have been recovered in 19 provinces across China, of which more than 37,000 have been destroyed as verified by the OPCW. This includes items that were destroyed at the Nanjing Mobile Destruction

Facility (MDF) in Jiangsu Province as well as destruction of ACW items at the Shijiazhuang MDF in Hebei Province.

ACW recovery and excavation operations began at Haerbaling in December of 2012 and destruction operations there are expected to begin in 2014. The strategy for destroying Japanese ACWs in China is to employ a fixed facility in Haerbaling, one MDF that can be transported for use in pre-determined locations of northern China, and a second MDF for use in the south of the country.

Under the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention, Japan as the abandoning State Party shall provide all necessary financial and technical resources, as well as experts, facilities and other resources, to destroy the declared ACWs. As the Territorial State Party, China provides appropriate co-operation and infrastructure support with the OPCW providing verification oversight of the destruction operations.

In Beijing the delegation met the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Zhai Jun, and the Principle Officer of the Ministry of National Defence, and attended a dinner at the Japanese Embassy.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/director-general-and-executive-council-delegation-visit-china-to-assess-destruction-activities-for-a/>

OPCW, the European Union, and the Government of Indonesia host a Regional Consequence Management Exercise

Tuesday, 20 August 2013

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the European Union (EU) and the Government of

Indonesia hosted a table-top consequence management exercise for States Parties from the South-East Asian Region*, on 19 and 20 August 2013 in Jakarta Indonesia.

The two-day table-top exercise simulated a large-scale release of toxic chemicals. Thirty eight participants from Indonesia, The Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand took part in the exercise, with two representatives from Myanmar participating as observers. They discussed how to manage a crisis of this nature, formulating plans on how to respond to the incident and to mitigate the impact of the toxic chemicals on communities and facilities.

Supported by disaster management professionals from Australia and New Zealand, the participants explored every aspect of the scenario and drafted response plans based on international best practice.

The consequence management exercise is the initial element of a further project in chemical emergency response to be held for the participating countries in Malaysia later this year.

Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) mandates the Organisation to assist States Parties to develop the necessary capacities to respond to the use or threat of use of chemical weapons and to effectively manage the consequences of the unplanned release of toxic chemicals.

Speaking at the opening of the table-top exercise, the Director General of the Department of Industry of Indonesia, Mr Benny Wachjudi, emphasised the importance of the development of the necessary capacity and expertise by first responders in countries of the region to respond to chemical emergencies. He took the opportunity to thank the OPCW and the European Union for their invaluable contribution to this important initiative.

* Indonesia, The Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar (who were invited as a non State Party)

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-the-european-union-and-the-government-of-indonesia-host-a-regional-consequence-management-exe/>

Workshop on Assistance and Protection and Matters Related to Regional Co-ordination held in Argentina

Tuesday, 22 October 2013

A workshop on assistance and protection for States Parties in the Latin America and Caribbean (GRULAC) region was held from 15 to 17 October 2013 in Buenos Aires for 17 experts from 13 States Parties.* The workshop was co-organised by the OPCW and Argentina's National Authority with financial support from the European Union.

The workshop addressed the needs and capacities of States Parties in the region for delivering assistance through the OPCW as mandated in Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Participants discussed ways and means to enhance regional coordination, with a view to achieving timely and effective emergency responses to chemical attacks and to incidents involving toxic industrial chemicals.

The workshop also served as a platform for exchanging information and experience regarding emergency response mechanisms in the participating countries.

* Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Uruguay.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/workshop-on-assistance-and-protection-and-matters-related-to-regional-co-ordination-held-in-argentin/>

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<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/sampling-and-analysis-course-held-in-poland/>

Myanmar Prepares to Ratify Chemical, Biological Weapons Treaties

2013-12-11

AFP

Myanmar is making preparations to ratify the international treaties banning the use,

production, and stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons, a spokesman for President Thein Sein said Wednesday.

The spokesman, deputy information minister Ye Htut, told RFA's Myanmar Service that ratification documents were being prepared for parliament's approval.

Myanmar signed the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1993 and the Biological Weapons

Convention (BWC) in 1972 but is among a few signatory countries which have not ratified the key treaties.

The head of the world's chemical watchdog said Wednesday that Myanmar was among three of six countries not covered by the CWC which are close to joining the agreement.

Speaking in Oslo the day after the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) formally 12/18/13 Myanmar Prepares to Ratify Chemical, Biological Weapons Treaties received the Nobel Peace Prize, director general Ahmet Uzumcu said Myanmar together with Angola and South Sudan "are very close" to joining the pact, Agence France-Presse reported.

The Chemical Weapons Convention-which outlaws the production, stockpiling, and use of chemical weapons -entered into force in 1997 and has 190 member countries including Syria, the latest nation to join in October this year.

Ye Htut said the Myanmar government was also holding discussions with the OPCW on measures it should take after the ratification process, including staff training prospects.

Myanmar has come under pressure to ratify the international treaties to underline its seriousness about reforms.

Looming questions

Despite political and economic reforms enacted since Myanmar's military junta gave up power more than two years ago, experts say there are still looming questions about possible chemical weapons stockpiles and allegations that the military used chemical weapons against ethnic rebel groups. Reformist President Thein Sein's government has denied the claims. "Chemical weapons pose a grievous rights threat to mankind, so why is Myanmar one of the hold-out nations in the world that has still not ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention?" Human Rights Watch's deputy Asia director Phil Robertson asked in a statement in October.

By not ratifying the treaty, Myanmar has not agreed to submit itself to international inspections or refrain from steps that would violate the convention.

In February, a technical assistance team from the OPCW visited the Myanmar capital Naypyidaw and met with lawmakers to discuss implementation of the treaty.

Myanmar's government asserts the country has no chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons programs.

But ethnic armed rebel groups including the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) have accused the Myanmar military of using chemical weapons as recently as last year in their long-running war in the country's borderlands.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the U.S. government voiced suspicions of a possible chemical weapons program under the military junta in Myanmar, naming China and North Korea as possible suppliers. Since then the U.S. has been less vocal in its concern about the issue.

According to global security nonprofit organization the Nuclear Threat Initiative, there is currently "no evidence" to suggest Myanmar has a chemical weapons program.

In September, Myanmar signed with the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), an additional protocol on nuclear disarmament that gives weapons inspectors wider access to facilities that could be used to develop nuclear technology. 12/18/13 Myanmar Prepares to Ratify Chemical, Biological Weapons Treaties

The signing came ten months after Thein Sein pledged to abide by the U.N.'s arms embargo on North Korea and to allow the IAEA full access to Myanmar weapons sites.

Reported by Khin Maung Soe for RFA's Myanmar Service. Translated by Khin Maung Soe.

Written in English by Parameswaran Ponnudurai.

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/weapons-12112013192030.html>

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Joint Statement from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations (UN)

Wednesday, 16 October 2013

The OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria has been established today. This follows close consultations between the Director-General of the OPCW and the Secretary-General of the United Nations. It also conforms with the provisions of the decision taken by the

OPCW Executive Council on 27 September 2013 which was followed by the adoption by the UN Security Council of its resolution 2118 (2013).

The Joint Mission has been established in order to achieve the timely elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme in the safest and most secure manner possible. It will continue the work undertaken by the OPCW and the UN in Syria since the beginning of this month.

Ms. Sigrid Kaag has been appointed as the Special Coordinator for the OPCW-UN Joint Mission to eliminate the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The OPCW and the UN have established separate but complementary Trust Funds which have been launched today at the Headquarters of the respective organizations.

The establishment of the Joint Mission, the appointment of the Special Coordinator and the arrangements related to the Trust Funds are based on the recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General, with the advice and support of the OPCW Director General, in accordance with the letter by the Secretary-General to the Presidency of the Security Council dated 7 October 2013.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/joint-statement-from-the-organisation-for-the-prohibition-of-chemical-weapons-opcw-and-the-united/>

Syria's Accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention Enters into Force

Monday, 14 October 2013

Today, on 14 October 2013, the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force for the Syrian Arab Republic, making it the

190th State Party to the treaty. Syria deposited its instrument of accession with the United Nations Secretary-General on 14 September.

At its 74th session, held from 8 to 11 October 2013, the OPCW Executive Council noted the accession of the Syrian Arab Republic and urgently called upon all States not Party to the Convention to join without delay or precondition.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/syrias-accession-to-the-chemical-weapons-convention-enters-into-force/>

Statement by the OPCW Director-General on the 2013 Nobel Prize for Peace

Friday, 11 October 2013

The decision by the Nobel Committee to bestow this year's Peace Prize on the OPCW is a great honour for our Organisation.

We are a small organisation which for over 16 years, and away from the glare of international publicity, has shouldered an onerous but noble task - to act as the guardian of the global ban on chemical weapons that took effect in 1997.

That year, a hundred-year effort was crowned with success as the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force.

Our organization was tasked to verify the elimination of chemical weapons from the world and to encourage all nations to adhere to this hard-earned norm.

We have since then worked with quiet determination to rid the world of these heinous weapons - weapons which have been used to horrific effect throughout the twentieth century, and, sadly, in our own time too.

Events in Syria have been a tragic reminder that there remains much work yet to be done. Our hearts go out to the Syrian people who were recently victims of the horror of chemical weapons.

Today we are engaged in work which is meant to ensure that this atrocity is not repeated.

Never in the history of our organisation have we been called on to verify a destruction program within such short timeframes - and in an ongoing conflict.

We are conscious of the enormous trust that the international community has bestowed on us.

Working to realize the vision of a world free of chemical weapons, we rely on the expertise, professionalism and dedication of our staff - qualities that have been forged through a solid record of achievement.

This would clearly not be possible without the steadfast support and commitment of our States Parties.

The recognition that the Peace Prize brings will spur us to untiring effort, even stronger commitment and greater dedication.

I truly hope that this award, and the OPCW's ongoing mission together with the United Nations in Syria, will help broader efforts to achieve peace in that country and end the suffering of its people.

I take this opportunity to commend all those who have contributed to making the ban on chemical weapons an enduring and universal norm.

I look forward to accepting this award in humility and in recognition of the professionalism of our staff, both past and

present, and the strong support we have received from our States Parties.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-receives-2013-nobel-prize-for-peace/>

OPCW Provides Somalia Assistance to Begin CWC Implementation

Friday, 13 September 2013

The OPCW organised a special 2-day induction programme on 12 and 13 September 2013 for a group of senior government representatives from the Federal Republic of Somalia to assist country's implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

The delegation was headed by H.E. Ambassador Yusuf Mohamed Ismail Bari-Bari, Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations in Geneva, together with Mr Mohamed Sheik Hassan Hamud, Member of the National Security Advisory Team, and Mr Mohamed Ali Jama, Senior Security Advisor to the Prime Minister.

Somalia acceded to the CWC on 29 May of this year and the treaty came into force 30 days later on 28 June, thereby making Somalia the CWC's 189th State Party. This is the first time that officials from Somalia visited the OPCW and attended a programme as representatives of a State Party.

The Deputy Director-General, Mrs Grace Asirwatham, welcomed the delegation on behalf of the Director-General and expressed the readiness of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to assist by all means Somalia's implementation efforts. Thanking the Secretariat for organising the induction programme, the Somali delegation sought the cooperation and assistance of the OPCW

in order to enhance the necessary capacity of Somalia to implement the CWC.

The programme included elements on rights and obligations of States Parties under the Convention, initial implementation measures for a new State Party, international cooperation and assistance functions of the Technical Secretariat, verification-related national requirements, and the overall institutional setup and operations of the OPCW. The delegation also paid a visit to the OPCW Laboratory.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-provides-somalia-assistance-to-begin-cwc-implementation/>

Regional Course on Chemical Emergency Response Held in Brazil

Monday, 02 September 2013

The Government of the Republic of Brazil and the OPCW jointly organised the Regional Assistance Course on Chemical Emergency Response for Lusophone Countries in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 26 to 30 August 2013. Fourteen participants from five States Parties* were trained and three observers from Angola were sponsored by the OPCW.

The course was related to assistance and protection against chemical weapons under Article X of the Chemical Weapons Convention and offered training in the use of protective equipment, and in monitoring, detection, and decontamination techniques which are used in response to attacks with chemical warfare agents. Participants also acquired knowledge of chemical-emergency responses through field exercises. Selected participants were from national emergency-response agencies involved in dealing with chemical-related incidents with a solid background in the chemistry associated with assistance and protection against chemical weapons.

The course also facilitated the exchange of information and experience regarding the implementation of Article X of the Convention and provided a forum to discuss future cooperation among participating Member States.

*Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé e Príncipe.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/regional-course-on-chemical-emergency-response-held-in-brazil/>

Director-General Visits Sweden, Meets Prime Minister

Saturday, 14 December 2013

During a two-day visit to Sweden that concluded today, Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü had separate meetings with the Prime Minister, Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt, and with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Carl Bildt.

The Director-General provided the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister with an update on the work of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria, including the detailed plan for the removal and destruction of Syrian chemicals.

In a joint press conference with Mr Bildt, the Director-General expressed his “high appreciation for the contribution by the Swedish authorities to disarmament efforts, including to the OPCW.” Mr Bildt noted that the OPCW's Nobel Peace Prize this year was a “well deserved award.”

During his visit, the Director-General also met with Mr Per Westerberg, Speaker of the Swedish Parliament, and participated in a panel discussion on chemical disarmament, with Foreign Minister Bildt and Dr Paul Walker of Green Cross International. He commended Sweden's support for efforts to

broaden the reach of the Chemical Weapons Convention through engagement with science, industry, and NGOs.

The Director-General completed his visit today after delivering a lecture at Gothenburg University, “Making Chemical Disarmament a Reality.”

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/director-general-visits-sweden-meets-prime-minister/>

OPCW Director-General holds Official Meetings with Norwegian Ministers and Parliamentarians

Wednesday, 11 December 2013

Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü this morning met in Oslo with the Norwegian Prime Minister, Ms Erna Solberg, and with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Borge Brende. He updated them on the work of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria and discussed options for Norway's involvement in efforts to eliminate the Syrian chemicals weapons programme.

“This challenging undertaking requires solid international cooperation and strong collective commitment in order to be conducted safely and as swiftly as possible. I am grateful to Norway for its strong support to the OPCW-UN Mission in Syria, through a voluntary contribution to the Trust Fund for Destruction and through an offer for maritime assistance”, stated Ambassador Üzümcü.

He noted that the detailed Plan for the destruction of Syrian chemicals out of Syria will be presented next week.

The Director-General also held official meetings with Mr Olemic Thommessen, President of the Storting (Norwegian Parliament), and with Ms Anniken Huitfeldt,

Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, as well as with other members of the Committee.

In these meetings, the Director-General stressed that Norway's sustained collaboration in furthering the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention, including in supporting a stronger involvement of NGOs, demonstrated a “remarkable awareness of the significance of the Convention and of the necessity to broaden its scope and its reach”.

“I am looking forward to the continued cooperation with the Norwegian authorities” concluded Ahmet Üzümcü.

The Director-General received yesterday the Nobel Peace Prize 2013 on behalf of the OPCW.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-director-general-holds-official-meetings-with-norwegian-ministers-and-parliamentarians/>

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The programme included elements on rights and obligations of States Parties under the Convention, initial implementation measures for a new State Party, international cooperation and assistance functions of the Technical Secretariat, verification-related national requirements, and the overall institutional setup and operations of the OPCW. The delegation also paid a visit to the OPCW Laboratory.

<http://www.opcw.org/news/article/opcw-provides-somalia-assistance-to-begin-cwc-implementation/>

North Korea uses prisoners for chemical weapons tests: U.S. report

The report adds that North Korea had reportedly provided chemical weapons or technology for chemical weapons to Egypt, Iran, Libya and Syria since the 1990s.

by Julian Ryall, The Daily Telegraph October 15, 2013

North Korea is using political prisoners held in its extensive gulag network as subjects for

chemical weapons tests, according to a report in the U.S.

The allegations have been made in the most recent report on Pyongyang's chemical weapons capabilities by 38 North, the respected website operated by the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and are based on testimony from both prisoners and former guards who managed to defect.

One defector who served as a security official at Detention Camp 22 described tests in which healthy prisoners were placed inside glass chambers and technicians monitored the effects as gas was pumped into the chambers.

"Normally, a family sticks together and individual prisoners stand separately around the corners," Kwon Kyok, a pseudonym, said in a documentary cited by the report. Scientists observe the entire process from above, through the glass.

"I watched a whole family being tested on suffocating gas and dying in the gas chamber: parents, one son and a daughter," he said.

The parents were vomiting and dying, but until the very last moment they tried to save the kids by doing mouth-to-mouth breathing.

"For the first time it hit me that even prisoners are capable of powerful human affection."

A former member of the North Korean military recounted his involvement in similar experiments on an island off the west coast of the Korean Peninsula. It has parallels with a report issued by a human rights group in Seoul in June that claimed the North was carrying out chemical and biological weapons experiments on disabled children on an island off South Hamgyong Province.

The report said the claims of political prisoners being used as test subjects for chemical weapons were “extremely difficult to confirm”.

However, it added: “Taken as a whole, and within the context of what is currently known about the treatment of political prisoners, such reports suggest a long-standing policy of low-level lethal testing of chemical agents on unwilling human subjects.”

The study suggested that North Korea was able to manufacture 4,500 tons of chemical agents a year, but had the capacity to increase that up to 12,000 tons a year in the event of war.

The chemicals the regime was producing included hydrogen cyanide, phosgene, sarin, tabun, chlorine and a number of agents from the mustard gas family.

The report added that North Korea had reportedly provided chemical weapons or technology for chemical weapons to Egypt, Iran, Libya and Syria since the 1990s.

[http://www.vancouversun.com/business/fp/yourmoney/North+Korea+uses+prisoners+chemical+ weapons+tests+report/9035115/story.html](http://www.vancouversun.com/business/fp/yourmoney/North+Korea+uses+prisoners+chemical+weapons+tests+report/9035115/story.html)

Why Syria’s chemical deadline won’t be met;

By Gordon Lubold

Busting deadline: Why Syria’s chemical weapons deadline may never be met. FP’s Colum Lynch and Yochi Dreazen:

The Obama administration and its allies are struggling to find a safe place to store Syria’s chemical weapons after they’ve been shipped out of the country, raising new questions about when the U.S. military will actually begin destroying the deadly munitions.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has set an ambitious Dec. 31 deadline for Syria to hand over the deadliest of its chemical armaments, which are supposed to be packed into roughly 150 shipping containers, driven to the Syrian port city of Latakia, loaded onto Norwegian and Danish cargo ships and then transported to a location outside of Syria. Once there, they will be transferred to an American vessel called the Cape Ray for destruction. Senior American defense officials stressed Thursday that the Cape Ray itself won’t dock at Latakia and that no U.S. personnel would set foot in Syria.

http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/12/05/its_never_going_to_happen_why_syrias_chemical_deadline_may_not_be_met#sthash.B6oRGWbh.BDNMMgy1.dpbs

Biological Weapons Convention Meeting Concludes In Geneva

16 December 2013

States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) have concluded the 2013 Meeting of States Parties which was held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 9 to 13 December. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Judit Körömi, Special Representative of the Foreign Minister for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation of Hungary, with the support of two Vice-Chairs, Ambassador Urs Schmid of Switzerland and Ambassador Mazlan Muhammad of Malaysia. The meeting brought together nearly 500 participants from 105 countries, including over 200 experts from government agencies and international organizations such as Interpol, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). A range of non-governmental organizations and academic experts also attended the meeting.

Closing the meeting on 13 December, the Chairman expressed her satisfaction with the way the meeting had run during the week: “We had interactive and lively discussions, in a constructive and cooperative manner. Delegations demonstrated both their interest in the topics and their respect for each other, while pursuing common understanding on practical measures to strengthen the operation of the Convention.”

The Meeting developed and consolidated the work of the Meeting of Experts (12-16 August 2013), and reached common understandings on:

- International cooperation and assistance – how States Parties can work together to build relevant capacity;
- Ways and means to strengthen national implementation of the convention – how States Parties work domestically to prevent disease being used as a weapon;
- Review of developments in the field of science and technology relevant to the BWC – how States Parties keep up with the rapid pace of advances in the life sciences and their implications for the Convention;
- Enabling fuller participation in the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) – how States Parties can better exchange information to increase transparency and build confidence in compliance.

On cooperation and assistance, States Parties reached a broad range of new understandings, including on:

- The value of developing and facilitating twinning programmes and other means of international exchange in education and training for capacity building and sharing of advanced expertise and for improving global capacity for disease detection and control;
- The importance of promoting interagency coordination and multi-sectoral cooperation to prepare for, detect, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks;
- The importance of coordination with relevant international and regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

The Chair highlighted some key points that were discussed by delegations: “To address the challenges and obstacles to developing international cooperation and assistance, states should pursue a long-term, sustainable and systematic approach. It is also important that requesting countries provide a thorough explanation of their needs and define in specific terms the type of support that could best address those needs.”

On developments in science and technology, States Parties reviewed a broad range of developments, identified and discussed those with potential benefits for the Convention and others with potential for uses contrary to the provisions of the BWC. Australia, for example, highlighted the challenges that the world is facing: “it is incumbent on us now to engage critically, creatively and practically with the key challenges confronting the BWC: the realities of rapid scientific and technological developments and the increasing globalization of the biotechnology sector. To address these challenges, we need to forge a new cooperative approach whereby we share our expertise and knowledge, strengthen our approaches to national implementation, and build confidence across regions and blocs, while

harnessing the many benefits for humanity that these science et technology developments bring.”

Concepts such as the responsible conduct of science were discussed, as an overarching theme to be promoted in States’ efforts on education and awareness-raising about risks and benefits of life sciences and biotechnology. There was a shared recognition of the valuable contribution of associated stakeholders in science, academia and industry to the work of States Parties and the importance of continuing to encourage them to participate in the intersessional programme.

On strengthening national implementation, States Parties demonstrated a willingness to find ways to improve how they work domestically. Delegations shared the view that, while they should take into account differences in national circumstances and legal and constitutional processes, there were many common responsibilities in the area of national implementation. The Islamic Republic of Iran, speaking on behalf of the Group of the Non Aligned Movement and Other States, for example, highlighted that “There are diverse national situations for each of the States Parties but their commitments and obligations under the Convention are the same.” The Group also noted that it is important that States Parties continue “...to learn from each other by sharing national experiences in the implementation of the Convention, and to collectively think about ways and means to enhance national implementation, including through regional and sub-regional cooperation”.

On the Confidence-building measures, States Parties discussed how to increase participation in the annual exchanges of information and identified common understandings, including:

- The value of regional seminars and workshops to promote awareness of annual exchange of information and to provide an opportunity for States to report on their difficulties and needs for assistance.
- The importance of States Parties actively encouraging those not participating to do so and to share information on the specific reasons on why they do not participate; and
- The possibility of making the annual reports available in more UN languages.

The meeting also considered progress towards universalization of the Convention, and welcomed the four new States Parties that joined the BWC in 2013 – Cameroon, Nauru, Guyana and Malawi – bringing the total number of States Parties to 170. The Chairman urged states that are not party to join the Convention, highlighting the role of the BWC as one of the main pillar of the international community's efforts against weapons of mass destruction. Ms. Körömi also encouraged the States Parties to promote the Convention and to provide assistance to states that are trying to join the BWC.

The BWC intersessional programme will continue in 2014. The Meeting of Experts will be held in Geneva from 4 to 8 August 2014 and the Meeting of States Parties from 1 to 5 December 2014. Ambassador Urs Schmid of Switzerland was elected as Chairman of the 2014 meetings, with Ambassador Mazlan Muhammad of Malaysia and Ms. Judit Körömi, Special Representative of the Foreign Minister of Hungary for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation, appointed as Vice-chairs.

The Meeting of States Parties is part of a four-year intersessional programme mandated by the 2011 Seventh Review

Conference of the BWC aimed at strengthening the implementation of the Convention and improving its effectiveness as a practical barrier against the development or use of biological weapons. The BWC prohibits the development, production and stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons. More formally referred to as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, the treaty opened for signature in 1972 and entered into force in 1975. It currently has 170 States Parties, with a further 10 States having signed but not yet ratified.

[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/6885FBD958CCE765C1257C430034FBA?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B9C2E/(httpNewsByYear_en)/6885FBD958CCE765C1257C430034FBA?OpenDocument)