



Ninety-Ninth Session  
8 – 11 March 2022

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## **NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL**

### **REPORT ON THE OPERATION OF THE ADVISORY BOARD ON EDUCATION AND OUTREACH FROM 2019 TO 2021**

1. Paragraph 4 of the decision of the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) on the establishment of the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO), as adopted by the Conference at its Twentieth Session (C-20/DEC.9, dated 3 December 2015), stipulates that the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) shall review the operation of the ABEO after three years. The Director-General submitted the first report on the operation of the ABEO from 2016 to 2018 (EC-90/DG.10, dated 22 February 2019 and Corr.1, dated 28 February 2019) to the Council at its Ninetieth Session. The Council considered and noted the report and decided to undertake another review of the operation of the ABEO after a further three years, that is in early 2022. Upon completion of the second term of the ABEO, the Director-General submits this report to the Council at its Ninety-Ninth Session with a view to assisting its deliberations in this regard.
2. This Note is based on the three previous annual reports by the Director-General to both the Council and the Conference on the Board’s activities, for 2019 (EC-92/DG.23 C-24/DG.16, dated 24 September 2019), 2020 (EC-95/DG.18 C-25/DG.11, dated 24 September 2020), and 2021 (EC-98/DG.17 C-26/DG.13, dated 16 September 2021).

#### **Appointments to the ABEO**

3. With the second term of office of seven ABEO members expiring at the end of 2021, the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) issued a call for nominations for ABEO membership from 2022 to 2024 (S/1925/2021, dated 18 January 2021), highlighting the areas of expertise particularly relevant to the work of the Board. For the first time, in the interest of promoting gender balance, the Secretariat requested that “should any given State Party wish to put forward two nominations, one of the two nominated candidates be female”. Following the receipt of nominations from States Parties, the Director-General reappointed four members for a second term<sup>1</sup> and appointed eleven new experts to serve on the Board for an initial term of three years, covering the period 2022–2024. As a result of the submission by States Parties of a wide pool of experts, including female nominees, the ABEO has a diverse composition both geographically (with all regional groups represented) and in terms of gender balance.<sup>2</sup> The new composition of the Board from 1 January 2022 was communicated to the Council at its Ninety-Eighth Session (EC-98/DG.31, dated 5 October 2021).

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<sup>1</sup> The remaining ABEO members informed the Secretariat of their unavailability to continue serving on the Board.  
<sup>2</sup> Seven of the fifteen ABEO members are female experts.



**Organisation of the ABEO's work from 2019 to 2021**

4. The ABEO met twice in 2019 for its regular sessions at OPCW Headquarters in The Hague. The ABEO met once in 2020 and twice in 2021, in virtual format owing to the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Board members, either individually or in groups, conducted a set of intersessional activities, including participation in annual and regional meetings of National Authorities and other events, despite the COVID-19 restrictions.
5. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Board re-elected Dr Jean Pascal Zanders of Belgium as its Chairperson and Dr Jo Husbands of the United States of America as its Vice-Chairperson for 2019. The Board elected Dr Husbands as its Chairperson and Dr Adriana Bernacchi of Argentina as its Vice-Chairperson for 2020. Finally, for 2021 the Board elected Dr Johannes-Georg Weinig of Germany as its Chairperson and Mr Shahab Ud Din of Pakistan as its Vice-Chairperson.
6. This Note highlights the most relevant work undertaken by the ABEO and its contributions to education and outreach at the OPCW since 2019. More detailed summaries can be found in the three annual reports by the Director-General referred to in paragraph 2 above, as well as the reports of the ABEO issued after each of its regular sessions.

**Regular sessions of the Board**

7. In accordance with its terms of reference, the ABEO issued a report after each of its sessions during the period under review, as follows: Seventh Session (ABEO-7/1, dated 28 February 2019), Eighth Session (ABEO-8/1, dated 22 August 2019), Ninth Session (ABEO-9/1, dated 11 December 2020), Tenth Session (ABEO-10/1, dated 10 February 2021), and Eleventh Session (ABEO-11/1\*, dated 27 July 2021).
8. All ABEO sessions were supported by the Secretariat in both substantive and administrative terms. The Board Sessions were opened either by the Director-General or a member of the Senior Management. The Director-General addressed the Board at its Seventh, Eighth, and Tenth Sessions, setting out the main areas of work for the Board. The Director-General has regularly highlighted the significance of the future OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) and the opportunities it will offer for capacity building, training, and scientific cooperation, among others. The Director of the International Cooperation and Assistance Division addressed the Board at its Eleventh Session and informed the members of the Division's priorities and how the Board could contribute to capacity building and international cooperation by offering more educational tools for National Authorities. Other branches/units of the Secretariat also participated in the sessions of the Board. At each session of the Board, the Secretary to the ABEO provided regular updates on relevant developments at the OPCW during the intersessional periods. ABEO sessions also featured regular updates from Board members on their intersessional activities. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, ABEO briefings for States Parties were held at OPCW Headquarters. Additionally, updates on the work of the ABEO were provided by representatives of the Board to the Conference at its Twenty-Fourth, Twenty-Fifth, and Twenty-Sixth Sessions.

9. At the Seventh Session of the ABEO, the Director-General highlighted the need to raise awareness of the OPCW's mission among wider audiences, and requested the ABEO to continue focusing on developing practical education and outreach tools and materials to facilitate and enhance the engagement activities of both States Parties and the Secretariat. ABEO member Prof. Alastair Hay produced a jigsaw exercise based on active learning theory and practice to encourage discussion on the principles of The Hague Ethical Guidelines, along with tips and instructions to run the exercise.<sup>3</sup>
10. At the Eighth Session, Board members focused on active learning approaches and how to embed them in the Secretariat's outreach and capacity-building work, including its e-learning offering. The Director-General expressed his support for the Board's initiative on e-learning and noted the Organisation's need to strengthen its education and outreach capacity online. Prof. Dr Rocael Hernández Rizzardini conducted a one-day training course on e-learning for Secretariat staff.
11. The ABEO Temporary Working Group (TWG) on e-Learning was established by the Director-General in September 2020, in consultation with the ABEO, with a mandate of one year. Board member Prof. Hernández Rizzardini of Guatemala was appointed by the ABEO Chairperson to preside over the work of the TWG, comprising 10 experts in e-learning and blended learning methodologies from around the world, including five Board members. Several experts of the TWG met on various occasions with Secretariat staff. During the reporting period the TWG met twice in virtual format<sup>4</sup> and submitted its final report to the ABEO in July 2021. The Secretariat is currently considering which recommendations by the TWG it can implement and how.
12. At the Ninth Session, Board members decided to enhance the ABEO's collaboration with the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). Accordingly, the Board appointed two of its members as focal points to attend SAB meetings, subject to available funding once in-person meetings would resume. In addition, the liaison between the two Boards continued to be facilitated through the Secretaries to the ABEO and to the SAB.
13. During the Tenth Session, the Board adopted its Strategic Plan (Annex 2 to ABEO-10/1). The Strategic Plan sets the priorities of work for the Board and aligns them with OPCW priorities, taking into account the different target audiences. In the Strategic Plan, the ABEO agreed to focus on enhancing e-learning opportunities, to foster the impact of capacity building, and to continue to work on raising awareness in chemical safety and security.
14. At the Eleventh Session, Board members started the review of the final report prepared by the TWG on e-Learning. This review was finalised via correspondence and led to the endorsement of the final report of the TWG by the ABEO.<sup>5</sup> At its Eleventh Session the Board also endorsed a proposal on the creation of an ABEO "Alumni network" open to former ABEO members who could continue to volunteer their expertise and knowledge to the Secretariat at no cost.

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<sup>3</sup> See under "Teaching materials" at <https://www.opcw.org/hague-ethical-guidelines>.

<sup>4</sup> The ABEO TWG held its first meeting on 10 and 12 November 2020 and its second meeting on 28 April 2021, both in virtual format as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

<sup>5</sup> See Annex to EC-98/DG.17 C-26/DG.13.

### Intersessional activities

15. During the reporting period, and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, ABEO members conducted multiple activities related to education and raising awareness about the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) and the OPCW, either individually or as a group. These activities were undertaken both within and outside the OPCW organisational framework.
16. A breakout session on education and outreach was held in November 2019 during the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of National Authorities, using an active learning process. The ABEO also produced a short flier listing available education and outreach resources and ABEO activities, which was made available during the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference in 2019. The Board further participated in a side event at the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference, during which Prof. Alastair Hay gave a presentation entitled: “Pedagogical approaches for science diplomacy education and training”, which introduced examples of interactive learning activities through a role play and jigsaw exercise.
17. A short animated video entitled “*Did you know?*”, aimed at raising awareness of the OPCW among future generations, was projected during the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Conference.<sup>6</sup> The video, created by Dr Craig Cormick, has subsequently been translated into all official OPCW languages thanks to funding from the European Union.<sup>7</sup> In 2021 further materials were translated into all official OPCW languages and made available to States Parties, including “The Hague Ethical Guidelines Jigsaw Exercise”, created by Prof. Alastair Hay, and the “Supplemental Paper on Current Theory and Practice in Education and Outreach (E&O)”, prepared by Board members.<sup>8</sup>
18. Dr Cormick pre-recorded a video on education and outreach activities and the role of the ABEO for the Twenty-Second Annual Meeting of National Authorities, held virtually from 23 to 25 November 2020.
19. Dr Johannes-Georg Weinig and Prof. Alastair Hay prepared a presentation entitled “How CWC implementation can foster scientific and economic development triggered by education and outreach activities” for the Nineteenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities in Africa, held online from 15 to 17 June 2021. ABEO members informed National Authorities of their availability to contribute at workshops and to make other inputs at National Authorities’ virtual events.

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.opcw.org/resources/education-and-outreach/other-resources>.

<sup>7</sup> See “Council Decision (CFSP) 2019/538 of 1 April 2019 in support of activities of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the framework of the implementation of the EU Strategy against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction”. Project 5B – Translation and dissemination of education and outreach tools and materials.

<sup>8</sup> “The Hague Ethical Guidelines Jigsaw Exercise” translated resource has been uploaded on the landing page of each respective OPCW official language: Arabic (<https://www.opcw.org/ar/mwjwihat-lahay-alakhlagyt>); Chinese (<https://www.opcw.org/zh-hans/hai-yalunlizhunze>); French (<https://www.opcw.org/fr/les-principes-directeurs-ethiques-de-la-haye>); Russian (<https://www.opcw.org/ru/gaagskie-eticheskie-principy>); and Spanish (<https://www.opcw.org/es/directrices-eticas-de-la-haya>). The translated resource on the “Role of education and outreach in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons” has been uploaded on the OPCW webpage in the section “Other Resources” under “How People Learn” (<https://www.opcw.org/resources/education-and-outreach/other-resources>).

20. Dr Adriana Bernacchi prepared a video and parallel presentations (both in English and Spanish) for the Twenty-Second Regional Meeting of National Authorities in Latin America and the Caribbean, held online from 8 to 10 June 2021. She delivered a presentation entitled “Strengthening the Education and Outreach efforts in the academic and industrial sectors aiming at a deeper implementation of the CWC”. She also provided, among others, information for National Authorities about the educational materials and tools easily accessible on the OPCW website and about the possibility to request tailored advice from the ABEO.
21. An intersessional meeting was held online on 17 June 2021 in order to exchange experiences in e-learning, with a presentation by Dr Jean Pascal Zanders on “Experiences with virtual education and outreach strategies and methodologies”. The aim was to draw useful conclusions applicable to the OPCW’s work, focused mainly on the importance of using interactive materials and exercises and the evaluation of acquired knowledge.
22. In July 2021, Prof. Hay gave a presentation on The Hague Ethical Guidelines before the Transport and Security Committee of the International Chemical Trade Association (ICTA),<sup>9</sup> explaining how the Guidelines had been prepared and outlining their key elements. Further to a recommendation from the Committee, the ICTA Board decided to endorse the Guidelines on 22 September 2021.
23. Mr Shahab Ud Din prepared a pre-recorded video on “Best practices in advocacy and outreach to the chemical industry to raise awareness of the Convention at the national level” for the Eighth Annual Meeting of Representatives of Chemical Industry and National Authorities of States Parties, held online in October 2021.
24. Dr Weinig delivered a presentation on “ABEO activities, tools and educational resources” at the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of National Authorities, held online on 26 November 2021. Moreover, in 2021 Dr Weinig generated support for the new OPCW ChemTech Centre from the German Chemical Society, as well as the European Chemical Society, the Royal Society of Chemistry, and the Royal Netherlands Chemical Society.
25. Dr Bernacchi facilitated the participation of eight chemistry students from the Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires and two postgraduates from the Nonproliferation for Global Security Foundation (NPSGlobal) in the virtual OPCW visit on 21 May 2021.
26. Prof. Hay continues to participate in a team producing a handbook for the OPCW on the long-term effects of exposure to chemical weapons.

#### **Assessment and future work of the ABEO**

27. The operation of the ABEO during its second term has proved successful in enriching the education and outreach activities of the Secretariat, particularly in regard to the provision of expert advice to improve the e-learning offering of the OPCW. Furthermore, within the framework of different events and conferences worldwide the

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<sup>9</sup> The OPCW and ICTA established a formal relationship in 2020 to broaden the dialogue with chemical traders and distributors regarding the implementation of the Convention.

ABEO has contributed to raising awareness about the OPCW and its mission. The role of the Board remains key to strengthening the Organisation's education and outreach activities.

28. The adoption of the Strategic Plan by the Board in 2021 was an important milestone, as it aligns Board priorities with OPCW goals and identifies key target audiences and diverse strategies to reach them more effectively.
29. Looking ahead, the Director-General:
  - (a) requests the ABEO to continue focusing on active learning approaches, technology-enabled learning, and the development of education and outreach tools and materials;
  - (b) encourages the ABEO to engage in reflection on which education and outreach activities relevant to the OPCW's mission can be hosted at the ChemTech Centre, once it becomes operational;
  - (c) asks that Board members continue to make themselves available to support, upon request, the Secretariat and States Parties in capacity-development activities and events, and to engage in suitable awareness-raising opportunities as part of their intersessional work; and
  - (d) suggests that the Council may wish to consider undertaking another review of the operation of the ABEO in 2025.

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