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UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS (UNODA): IMPLEMENTING THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MECHANISM ON ALLEGED USE INVESTIGATIONS FOR BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS

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The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2006. Preventing and responding to attacks using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) were identified amongst the key areas of activities covered by the strategy.

The Secretary-General's mechanism to carry out prompt investigations in response to allegations brought to his attention concerning the possible use of chemical and bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons was developed in the late 1980s. Triggered by a request from any Member State, the Secretary-General is authorised to launch an investigation, including dispatching a fact-finding team to the site of the alleged incident(s), and to report to all UN Member States. This is to ascertain in an objective and scientific manner facts of alleged violations of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which bans the use of chemical and biological weapons.

Member States encouraged the Secretary-General in September 2006 to update the roster of experts and laboratories, as well as the technical guidelines and procedures, available to him for the timely and efficient investigation of alleged use. The roster of experts and laboratories and the guidelines and procedures constitute the key elements of the special mechanism available to the Secretary-General for investigation of reports by Member States of alleged use of chemical, biological and toxin weapons.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs has been working with Member States since March 2007 to update the roster of experts and laboratories and the technical appendices of the guidelines and procedures so that they are in line with the rapid developments that have occurred in the biological area since the 1980s and also to take into account the fact that an Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has since been established.

Currently, the roster of experts and laboratories has been updated and includes experts and laboratories from more than 40 countries. The Office for Disarmament Affairs provides cooperation to Member States which hosted or plan to host specialised training courses for the experts from the roster.



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