



## **UNSGM Designated Laboratories**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop in Spiez, Switzerland**

**22 – 24 June 2016**

The Guidelines to the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons (UNSGM IAU CBW) indicate that UN Member States may designate analytical laboratories<sup>1</sup> for the analysis of samples in support of an investigation. Designated laboratories would be asked to analyse samples for the presence of chemical or biological agents and report their findings to the Secretary-General<sup>2</sup>.

Switzerland<sup>3</sup> is organising a series of expert workshops. These workshops will discuss the necessary steps to establish a functional laboratory network for investigations of alleged use of biological weapons conducted under the UNSGM. The first workshop took place in November 2015 and discussed the tasks of designated laboratories in an investigation of alleged use of biological weapons and how these could be fulfilled<sup>4</sup>. The second workshop will be held from 22 – 24 June 2016 in Spiez, Switzerland and focuses on the following topics: unambiguous identification, mandate for analysis and reporting criteria.

#### **Workshop Objective**

The second workshop for UNSGM designated laboratories intends to clarify the following questions:

- What would be considered an unambiguous identification by an off-site analysis laboratory in the context of a UNSGM fact-finding mission?
- What would a mandate look like and how can it be fulfilled by an off-site analysis laboratory?
- What would be contained in a report from an off-site analysis laboratory in order to meet full scientific and political acceptance?

#### **Background and Rationale**

During the investigation under the UNSGM in 2013 to verify allegations of chemical weapons' use in Syria, UN-Inspectors collected a large number of samples, which were handed over to the

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<sup>1</sup> Guidelines and Procedures for the timely and efficient investigation of reports for the possible use of chemical and bacteriological (biological) or toxin weapons, 'Guidelines and Procedures (1989)'; paragraph 37

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*; paragraph 76

<sup>3</sup> SPIEZ LABORATORY, Federal Office for Civil Protection, Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports; International Relations Defence, Swiss Armed Forces, Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sports; Division for Security Policy, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

<sup>4</sup> UNSGM Designated Laboratories Workshop Report, Spiez, Switzerland, 9-11 November 2015

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the Hague. The OPCW forwarded the samples for off-site analysis to laboratories that are part of its designated laboratory network. OPCW designated laboratories maintain an internationally accepted accreditation and undergo stringent quality testing on an annual basis in order to maintain their designation.

In the absence of institutional resources in the biological field, any UNSGM investigation of alleged use of biological weapons has to rely on the UNSGM roster of designated laboratories. These expert laboratories around the world are expected to have the capability to identify infectious microorganisms and toxins for various types of samples. But how far may applied diagnostic methods and techniques as well as domestic quality systems and reporting criteria satisfy the expectations of the international community in case of an investigation of alleged use of biological weapons? This will be the focus of discussion in this workshop series.

### **Workshop Format**

The UNSGM Designated Laboratories workshops are intended for experts from laboratories, policy making and other relevant government offices. Participants will be asked to address the questions posed under 'workshop objective' above. Speakers will be invited to introduce certain topics, followed by discussions including break-out sessions. A summary report of the workshop will be prepared by the organisers.

The venue for the workshop is the Hotel Eden in Spiez, Switzerland. It offers modern conference facilities together with a scenic view of the lake of Thun and the Bernese alps. Accommodation as well as meals will be at the Hotel Eden which creates opportunities for fruitful conversations in a relaxed atmosphere.

### **Program**

The workshop will start on Wednesday evening, 22 June 2016 with a Welcome Reception, Dinner and workshop briefing, and end at lunchtime on Friday, 24 June 2016. Participants are expected to attend the workshop in full. The workshop language is English, no translation will be provided. An optional tour of SPIEZ LABORATORY will be offered on Friday afternoon.

### **Administration**

Workshop participation is by invitation. Seats are limited, therefore we need to know if you can participate or intend to participate by **15 April 2016**. Participants are invited for the Welcome Reception, two dinners and for all lunches and refreshments during breaks.

The registration form, plus information about the venue are enclosed in this package. We recommend accommodation at the Hotel Eden in Spiez. A reduced rate has been negotiated for all attendees who book their rooms before **15 April 2016**. Once your workshop registration has been received a confirmation E-mail will be sent out. Participants requiring a visa to travel to Switzerland may obtain an official visa letter – please contact: [lisa.brueggemann@babs.admin.ch](mailto:lisa.brueggemann@babs.admin.ch)