

Concept Note

OPCW-IFS Joint Workshop on Toxic chemicals in the environment: from understanding pollution and its impact to removal and verification techniques

25 and 26 November 2020

Online via MS Teams

Background and Objectives

The OPCW Technical Secretariat and International Foundation for Science (IFS) will hold a joint OPCW-IFS workshop titled “Toxic chemicals in the environment: from understanding pollution and its impact to removal and verification techniques” on 25 and 26 November 2020. The Workshop is being organised as part of the programme of work under Article XI of the Chemical Weapons Convention, particularly in the framework of the Programme for Support of Research Projects.

Since 1998, the OPCW has been providing support to a number of research projects through a long-term cooperation agreement with the IFS. Within this same framework, the OPCW and IFS have also been organising joint regional workshops to summarise the success of the funded research and to advance knowledge transfer and cooperation in specific fields of chemistry. The last joint workshop, on Chemistry for Safety, Security and Environmental Protection focusing on the GRULAC region, was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 11-12 December 2017.

It was proposed that the 2020 workshop would have a global focus and continue to highlight the developments of the OPCW-IFS cooperation in the field of environmental protection while also dedicating attention to the analysis of chemicals; these topics are interconnected and feature prominently among the OPCW directly funded and OPCW-IFS co-funded research projects.

Environmental protection has been a focus of attention for scientists, policy makers, the private sector and the general public over many decades. It is a pillar of sustainability and is directly referred to by multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, such as 6, 13 14 and 15. The topic is broad and is on the ongoing agenda of many international organisations, including the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, and others.

Numerous international treaties, such as the Stockholm, Basel, Minamata and Rotterdam conventions aim at protecting the environment, especially from the adverse effects of man-made chemical substances. Protecting human health and the environment is one of the priorities identified by the Chemical Weapons Convention (see Article IV, paragraph 10; Article V, paragraph 11; and

Article VII, paragraph 3) and a core element in the Hague Ethical guidelines: “Achievements in the field of chemistry should be used to benefit humankind and protect the environment”. In this regard, the scope of the OPCW’s activities in the field, including that of its Research Projects Programme, is focused on environmental pollution by toxic chemicals, especially those toxic to humans.

The environmental topics, such as the insight in the pollution by toxic chemicals and its impact, development of efficient detoxification and detection methodologies have always been among priority topics of the Research Projects Support Programme and other OPCW programmes to support scientific research, such as the Fellowship Programme and Equipment Exchange Programme.

The main objectives of the Workshop are to:

- highlight success achieved by former grantees and their groups;
- share experiences and exchange views of the grantees’ participation in the related programmes in the OPCW and IFS;
- explore ways to improve the related programmes efficiency and impact, maintaining the focus and relevance to the OPCW and IFS objectives; and
- update researchers on the current opportunities available at the OPCW and IFS to support researchers and science.

Overall, this opportunity will help OPCW and IFS to evaluate and improve their programme efficiency while researchers will be able to share with work and experience and receive additional useful guidance in seeking funding for their research.

Furthermore, the joint workshop will serve as the launch event for an OPCW publication on “Toxic chemicals in the environment: from understanding pollution and its impact to removal and verification techniques” which includes a collection of selected papers by lead researchers of OPCW directly-funded and OPCW-IFS jointly funded projects.

Participants and admission

The Workshop will host a maximum of 25 participants, including former OPCW and OPCW-IFS grantees, external experts serving on the project selection bodies of the OPCW and IFS, and OPCW Technical Secretariat and IFS staff members.

There is no open call application procedure for the Workshop. The OPCW Technical Secretariat and IFS will select participants based on their qualifications and experience who will be notified directly by the Secretariat.

The Workshop will be conducted in English and no translation services will be provided. Participants should therefore have a command of this language.

Provisional Programme

November 25, 2020

Time in CET

09:00-09:20	Opening remarks
09:20-10:40	Overview of the last 10 years of jointly funded research, 4 presentations
10:40-10:55	Q&A and discussion
10:55-11:05	Coffee break
11:05-12:25	Overview of the last 10 years of jointly funded research (cntd.), 4 presentations
12:25-12:40	Q&A and discussion

November 26, 2020

09:30-09:40	Publication launch, introduction
09:40-10:40	Publication launch (cntd.), 3 presentations
10:40-10:50	Q&A and discussion
10:50-11:00	Coffee break
11:00-11:40	Publication launch (cntd.), 2 presentations
11:40-12:00	Q&A and discussion
12:00-12:40	Presentations from the OPCW and IFS on related programmes to support research
12:40-13:30	Discussion and closing

Further information on the programme and a practical information sheet on the use of the MS Teams will be provided to participants in due course.

Additional information on the event may be obtained from:

- Mr Sergey Zinoviev, OPCW Senior Programme Officer (szinoviev@opcw.org)
- Ms Ah-Young Lee, OPCW Associate Programme Officer (ah-young.lee@opcw.org)
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