

# The Secretary-General's Mechanism

Issue 11, January 2026

Newsletter for Nominated Experts and Analytical Laboratories for the Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons



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Dear Colleagues,

We are very pleased to share the eleventh issue of the UNSGM newsletter, which covers the activities organized in support of the UNSGM for the second half of 2025. The UNSGM team at UNODA worked diligently to maintain the pace of activities in 2025. We are pleased to provide more details on these activities below, as well as an update on staffing for the UNSGM team to ensure the continued high standard of support going forward.

Discussions with partners are also ongoing for activities to be implemented in 2026. As always, UNODA's work in support of the mechanism is dependent on donor contributions. However, the resource constraints currently being experienced by many partners means that funding for 2026 is currently less predictable, potentially diminishing the level of activities to be undertaken in 2026. An overview of planned activities is provided in the final section of this newsletter, and UNODA will share further details in due course, depending on the availability of funds.

UNODA remains deeply very grateful for the generous support of our partners that facilitates this important work. We hope that we can continue such cooperation in the coming year to strengthen the UNSGM.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and please let us know if any feedback.

**Your UNODA team in support of the UNSGM,**

**Chris King**

Chief, Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch

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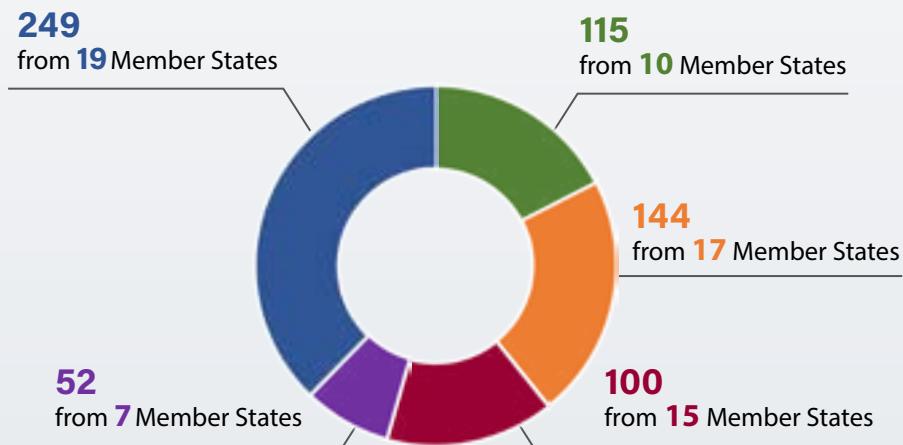
Political Affairs Officer

**Lucia Andaya**

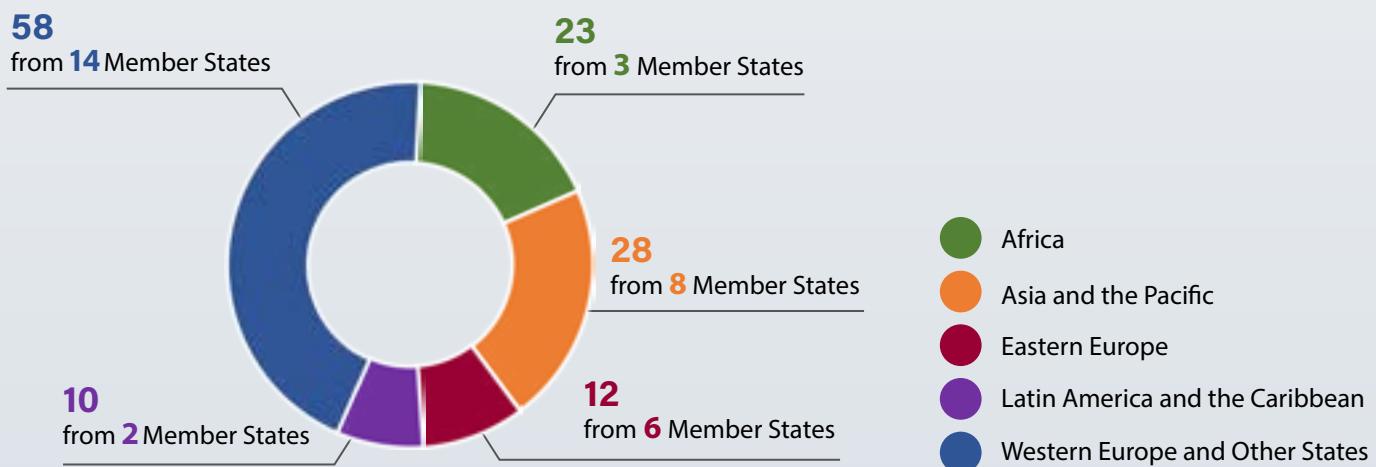
Programme Management Assistant

## Status of the UNSGM roster: Nominations of Qualified Experts, Expert Consultants and Analytical Laboratories (as of December 2025)

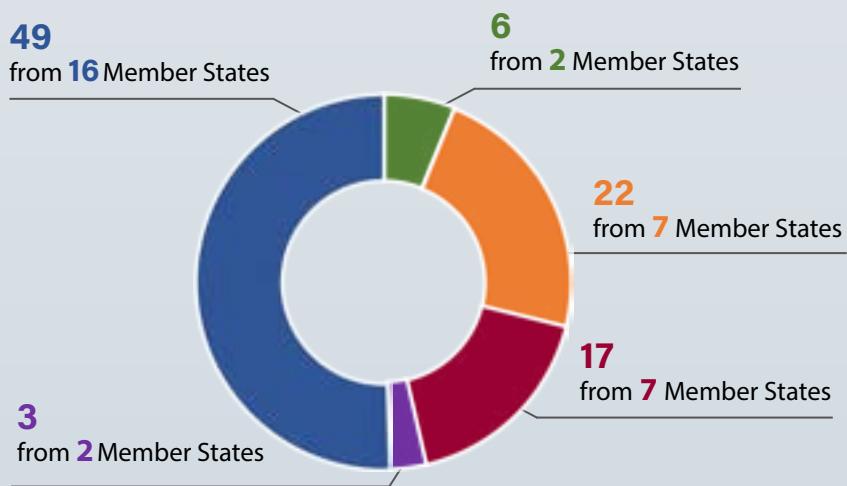
### 660 QUALIFIED EXPERTS



### 131 EXPERT CONSULTANTS



### 97 ANALYTICAL LABORATORIES



# Basic Training Refresher Course

## Summary of the Course

Basic training courses for the UNSGM aim to provide experts nominated by UN Member States to the UNSGM roster with a better understanding of their role in carrying out investigations of alleged use of biological weapons should they be deployed as part of a UNSGM mission. This includes key information about the UNSGM, such as the background, mandate, Guidelines and Procedures, and other elements of the mechanism. Since 2022, UNODA has coordinated with training partners to develop and implement a standardized curriculum for UNSGM Basic Training Courses, given the importance of ensuring that nominated experts receive a common foundation to progress through further training and field exercises.

From 5-11 October, UNODA organized the first-ever Basic Training 'Refresher' course for a select group of qualified experts on the UNSGM roster who have previously completed a UNSGM basic training more than five years ago and/or other relevant activities for the UNSGM. The course was organized in Cha Am, Thailand, which allowed for some of the participating experts to stay on and attend the SSAFE course the following week (see below).

The aim of the Basic Training 'Refresher' course was to provide the participating experts with an opportunity to renew their knowledge and skills regarding their role as qualified experts. It also helped to foster a shared understanding among participating experts of relevant United Nations principles,

guidelines and policies, should they be deployed as part of a UNSGM investigation team.

A training programme for the course was developed by UNODA to complement the curriculum from the standard basic training courses. During the course, representatives from UNODA provided briefings on the UNSGM Guidelines and Procedures, documentation and report writing for the investigation, and support to the mission that may be provided by the United Nations. These modules were supplemented with theoretical and practical sessions on investigative interviews and sampling by training partners from the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). Practical sessions included working through elements of a UNSGM investigation within a scenario, which was developed with the generous support of the National Institute of Communicable Diseases of South Africa (NICD). Additional presentations were also delivered by representatives from INTERPOL's Bioterrorism Prevention Unit, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), and the Portuguese Army (Military Laboratory Unit for Biological and Chemical Defense – UMLDBQ).

In addition to the support provided by training partners, financial support for the workshop was generously provided by the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom.

## Feedback from Participants

*"The course was well thought out. Everything presented was relevant to our role in a UNSGM investigation."*

*"Well run – great overview – lots of information covered."*

*"The level of detail and the time dedicated to each topic was right on par."*

*"Another fantastic course which achieved all that it set out to do."*



# Training Course on Safe and Secure Approaches to Field Environments (SSAFE)

## Summary of the Course

From 12-18 October, UNODA and UNDSS organized the fifth training course on 'Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments' (SSAFE) for qualified experts on the UNSGM roster. A group of 12 experts from 12 countries joined this course in Cha Am, Thailand.

UNODA opened the course with a refresher on the context and potential field activities during a UNSGM investigation. The participating experts then received lessons from UNDSS on the UN Security Management System (UNSMS), guidelines for working in field environments, communication and technology, vehicles and movement, and captivity and detention. Participants also received training on medical elements of working in the field, with theoretical lessons, demonstrations, and practical exercises on individual first aid and managing injuries in field environments. After completing the SSAFE modules, the experts took part in a half-day field exercise that simulated various situations covered during the course that may be encountered in the field. To conclude the course, UNODA led participants in an interactive discussion on how

the skills covered in the course could be applied in a potential UNSGM investigation.

SSAFE courses are designed to strengthen participants' understanding of the UNSMS and to build their practical capacity to anticipate, mitigate, and respond to safety and security risks in complex operational environments. The curriculum, based on UNDSS and UN System Staff College (UNSSC) standard modules, is delivered by certified SSAFE instructors. By the end of the course, participants received certifications in both SSAFE and Individual First Aid (IFAK), following relevant assessments.

In addition, the course enhanced participants' personal security awareness, cultural sensitivity, and operational preparedness, providing them with a common framework of UN security principles, policies, and procedures – essential for experts who may be deployed as part of a UNSGM investigation.

In addition to the support provided by UNDSS, financial support for the workshop was generously provided by the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom.





### Feedback from Participants

*"This was an amazing opportunity to gain practical knowledge about the basic safe and security measurements and considerations during a UNSGM mission."*

*"Excellent."*

*"Very high level of practical training."*

*"Great course and aspects, and team."*

## Training Course on Biological Crime Scene Management

### Summary of the Course

From 3-7 November, UNODA organized a training course on biological crime scene management in cooperation with INTERPOL's Bioterrorism Prevention Unit and the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) National Microbiology Laboratory. This was the third course on the topic organized with INTERPOL and PHAC for UNSGM experts, and the second time the course was hosted at the United Nations Global Service Centre – Conference and Learning Centre (UNGSC-CLC) in Brindisi, Italy. A group of 15 qualified experts on the UNSGM roster from

15 Member States, representing all UN regional groupings, participated in this year's course.

As with past iterations of the course, the objective was to provide participating experts with a better understanding of sampling and evidence management in the context of a possible UNSGM investigation. To begin, UNODA provided participants with a refresher on the mandate and procedures for a potential UNSGM investigation – the context for which experts would



be asked to apply the skills covered throughout the rest of the course. Then, representatives from INTERPOL provided instructions to the participants on crime scene operations in an environment that is potentially biologically contaminated. This included a procedure for putting on and taking off personal protective equipment, considerations to access a contaminated scene, initial scene assessment, briefing and sampling strategy, as well as evidence packaging and crime scene documentation.

Representatives from the Public Health Agency of Canada complemented these sections with training components on environmental sampling, field testing, laboratory analysis, and evidence transportation. A representative from the UNDSS also provided participants with a refresher on field communications systems that may be used during UNSGM operations, including radio procedures and reporting protocols. The course concluded with a one-day field exercise, in which participants were asked to conduct sampling and evidence management operations in two scenarios with scenes potentially contaminated with biological material.

This advanced skill training course provided the experts with more in-depth understanding of bringing together different elements of a potential UNSGM investigation, including working

in a potentially contaminated environment, as well as collecting and managing evidence.

In addition to the support described above, financial support for the workshop was generously provided by the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom.

### Feedback from Participants

*"Well balanced and useful."*

*"The theoretical and practical sessions were very well done."*

*"These training methods are perfect for maintaining the knowledge acquired in previous courses."*

*"Well done, lots of information packed in to one week but not overwhelming."*

# Training Course on Sampling and Transport of Toxic and Infectious Substances

## Summary of the Course

From 17-21 November 2025, UNODA, in cooperation with the German Federal Foreign Office, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)'s National Microbiology Laboratory, organized a training course on sampling and transport of toxic and infectious substances in Berlin, Germany. A group of 15 qualified experts nominated by Member States to the UNSGM roster from 14 countries joined the course.

The course, which consisted of two separate modules, aimed to provide experts with a better understanding of guidelines and practices for sampling and transport of toxic and infectious substances in the context of a possible UNSGM investigation. The first module of the course was an International Air Transport Association (IATA) training on requirements for transporting toxic and infectious materials. The training was carried out by a certified IATA trainer and included a written exam. Participants who passed this exam received an IATA certificate, which is valid for two years.

The second module focused on sampling within the context of a UNSGM investigation. In this module, a very brief overview of the relevant portions of the UNSGM Guidelines and

Procedures by a representative from UNODA was followed by representatives from PHAC providing instruction and training activities on sampling tools and techniques. It concluded with a short tabletop exercise on biological sampling and a group activity on entry and sample planning, in which participants were asked to apply the knowledge acquired during the rest of the course.

Financial support for the workshop was generously provided by the Government of Canada.

## Feedback from Participants

*"The training was well executed with knowledgeable experts that were very patient with all of the students."*

*"The collaboration with RKI and PHAC greatly enriched the learning experience."*

*"Very useful and well organized."*



## Update on Activities

### UNODA Activities (July-December 2025)

- › **Call-Out Exercise:** In September 2025, UNODA conducted the annual call-out exercise to test the responsiveness and availability of the experts and laboratories on the roster. Member States can request from UNODA the results of their experts and laboratories, in order to inform any updates to their nominations for the UNSGM roster.
- › **Briefing to Member States:** In October 2025, UNODA provided another briefing on the UNSGM for all UN Member States at UN Headquarters in New York.
- › **Note Verbale for Nominations:** In November 2025, UNODA sent the annual request to all UN Member States (via Note Verbale to the Missions in New York) for new or updated nominations of experts and laboratories to the UNSGM roster. In the request, UNODA has highlighted areas of expertise that would be particularly welcome when considering experts for the roster. The Note Verbale, in all six UN languages, can also be found on the [UNSGM website page](#). \*Note: there is no deadline for response; Member States can submit updated nominations at any time.



### Partner Activities (July-December 2025)

- › **Workshop on Mapping Needs for UNSGM Information Management:** In September 2025, the Verification, Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC), organized a workshop in New York, in coordination with UNODA and with support from the U.S. Department of State, for a select group of experts and members of the UN Internal Task Force. The workshop built on discussions from the previous workshop in April and concluded with a short tabletop exercise on the different types of information and data that may be collected during a UNSGM investigation and the related requirements for collection, storage, management, and archiving.
- › **UNSGM Designated Laboratories Workshop:** In September 2025, Spiez Laboratory in Switzerland hosted the tenth UNSGM Designated Laboratories Workshop. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs provided a video message to acknowledge the contributions of this workshop series over the last decade, and the UNSGM team provided an overview of the UNSGM and updates on recent activities, stressing the need for continued voluntary funding to maintain the accelerated pace of activities. The workshop report is available online.

- **RKI/US Workshop (Lab Expectations):** In September 2025, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) organized a Workshop on Expectations between Laboratories and the UNSGM mission, in cooperation with the US State Department. The workshop discussed interactions that would take place between the UN / SGM mission and the rostered laboratories that are chosen for the mission, and developed a Handbook and a draft template for technical arrangements between a laboratory and the UN.
- **WOAH Global Conference:** In October 2025, the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) hosted the 2025 Global Conference on Biological Threat Reduction. This conference was aimed at galvanising advocacy efforts to manage the rising risk of biological threats from across the world. It brought speakers from various fields – health-security, emerging technologies, and biothreat reduction policies in both the public and private sectors – to focus on the latest strategies, challenges and innovations in combating biological threats.
- **Latin American Conference on the UNSGM:** In November 2025, the Center for Non-Proliferation Studies, in cooperation with the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom, organized a workshop in Santiago, Chile to raise awareness about the mechanism. UNODA shared information on how Member States in the region can contribute to efforts to strengthen the UNSGM.
- **Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction:** In November 2025, in Vancouver, Canada, UNODA provided an update on UNSGM activities and submitted a proposal for further support to strengthen the mechanism.
- **BWC Training:** In November 2025, BWC-ISU, in close collaboration with the German Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology, organized a 10-day Training course in Microbial Genomics and Bioforensics. The specialized training course also included a module on UNSGM to generate interest among participants about the UNSGM which could lead to the nomination of more qualified experts and laboratories on the roster.
- **UNICRI Meetings:** UNODA provided short virtual presentations on the UNSGM to the CBRN Criminalisation Workshops for the Western Balkans region and for the United Arab Emirates, both held in November 2025, organized by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).
- **ASEAN CBRN Experts Meeting:** In December 2025, UNODA participated in the 7th Annual Meeting of the Network of ASEAN Chemical, Biological, and Radiological (CBR) Defence Experts in Kuala Lumpur. UNODA provided a short presentation on the UNSGM.
- **Workshop on Preparing for Biological Weapons Investigations in Non-Permissive Environments:** In December 2025, the Stimson Center, with support from the U.S. State Department, organized a workshop in Vienna, Austria to identify additional measures and training needs to prepare for a UNSGM mission in a “nonpermissive” environment. The UNSGM team provided a presentation on efforts in recent years to address related challenges for a UNSGM mission, as well as the resources available for such efforts.

## Upcoming Activities

*The dates for events and registration details will be confirmed and circulated in due course. For any questions regarding upcoming events listed, please feel free to reach out to UNODA and the Office will put you in touch with the relevant organizer(s).*

## Training Activities

- **Basic Training and Skill Training:** UNODA has received tentative offers from partners for additional basic training and skill training courses in 2026. Priority courses include, *inter alia*, basic training for qualified experts and skill training on decontamination, investigative interviewing, SSAFE, sampling and transport of toxic and infectious substance, and biological crime scene management. Courses will be confirmed depending on available funding and additional details announced in due course.

## Outreach

- **Regional Outreach Workshops:** In 2026, UNODA plans to organize in-person regional outreach workshops in regions currently underrepresented on the UNSGM roster, including Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia-Pacific.
- The UNSGM team will also continue to participate in relevant conferences and workshops to raise awareness about the UNSGM.

## Laboratory Exercises

- **RefBio Workshop:** The next workshop to discuss experiences, best practices and results from the EQAEs carried out in 2025 under the RefBio project is scheduled for 6-7 May 2026 in Berlin, Germany. \*Note: UNODA has

limited funds to sponsor participation in this workshop for laboratory representatives from underrepresented regions. Application details will be shared in due course.

- **RefBio EQAEs:** The next round of EQAEs organized under the RefBio Project at the Robert Koch Institute is currently being prepared, with the shipment of samples planned in June 2026 for the biological toxins EQAE and November 2026 for the bacterial and viral EQAEs.

### Other Activities

- **Virtual Round-table Discussion:** In early 2026 (dates TBC), UNODA will host another virtual round-table discussion for all nominated qualified experts, expert consultants, and focal points for nominated laboratories on the UNSGM roster.
- **UN ITF Coordination Meeting:** In early 2026 (dates TBC), UNODA will host another coordination meeting for members of the UN Internal Task Force (ITF).

➤ **Onboarding Sessions:** In the first half of 2026, UNODA will again organize the annual virtual onboarding sessions for all newly nominated experts and laboratories. Dates for the sessions will be circulated in due course.

➤ **UNSGM Designated Laboratories Workshop:** From 9-11 September 2026, Spiez Laboratory in Switzerland will host the eleventh UNSGM Designated Laboratories Workshop. \*Note: UNODA has limited funds to sponsor participation in this workshop for laboratory representatives from underrepresented regions. Application details will be shared in due course.

- **Briefing to Member States:** In October 2026 (date TBC), UNODA will provide another briefing on the UNSGM for all UN Member States at UN Headquarters in New York.
- **Note Verbale for Nominations:** In late 2026, UNODA will send an updated request to all UN Member States (via Note Verbale to the Missions in New York) for new or updated nominations of experts and laboratories to the UNSGM roster.

## Staffing Update

- Ms. Einas Mohammed has joined the UNSGM team as a Senior Political Affairs Officer, based in New York. She previously served as UNODA's Regional Coordinator for Africa on UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) from 2021 to 2025. Prior to joining UNODA, Einas worked as a researcher at the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), where she co-authored studies on implementing UN arms embargoes, preventing diversion in the arms trade, and mitigating the impact of explosive weapons in

populated areas. From 2010 to 2019, she held progressively senior roles at the African Union, overseeing portfolios on disarmament, mine action, counter-terrorism, transnational security and security sector reform. Earlier in her career, from 2006 to 2010, she worked with the World Health Organization on emergency health programs in Sudan, Somalia, and the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office. This position was made possible thanks to a generous financial contribution from the Government of Canada.

## Supporting the UNSGM

UNODA's work to ensure the readiness of the UNSGM is made possible by generous financial support and in-kind contributions, such as the provision of training material and hosting events, from Member States. We are especially grateful for the support from Canada, China, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union. We also appreciate the support from our international partner organizations, including INTERPOL, the OPCW and WHO. This voluntary support from Member States and organizations is a cornerstone for ensuring and improving operational readiness of the UNSGM.

## Contact us

Questions, concerns, suggestions? Please do not hesitate to contact UNODA with any questions regarding supporting the UNSGM or if you are interested in participating in activities.

We would love to hear from you!  
Please contact us here:



UNSGM@un.org