

The Secretary-General's Mechanism

Issue 12, July 2026

Newsletter of the United Nations Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of Alleged Use of Chemical, Biological and Toxin Weapons



UN Photo/Mark Garten

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Upcoming Activities

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share the twelfth issue of the biannual UNSGM newsletter, highlighting activities conducted in support of the UNSGM during the first half of 2026.

This issue provides updates on roster management and readiness, including onboarding activities and ongoing efforts to update the assessment and mapping of roster capabilities. It also highlights progress in the implementation of the preparedness training programme for Qualified Experts, with three courses delivered so far this year. In addition, the issue features updates on activities aimed at strengthening the capabilities and preparedness of Analytical Laboratories, as well as recent outreach and stakeholder dialogue activities. An overview of upcoming activities is provided in the final section.

UNODA remains deeply grateful to Member States, experts, laboratories, donors, and other partners whose continued contributions and engagement make these activities possible and enable UNODA to fulfil its role as custodian of the UNSGM. We look forward to building on this cooperation to further strengthen and sustain the readiness of the UNSGM, ensuring that it continues to serve as a critical instrument for reinforcing global norms against the use of chemical and biological weapons.

We trust that you will find this issue informative and would welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Your UNODA team in support of the UNSGM,

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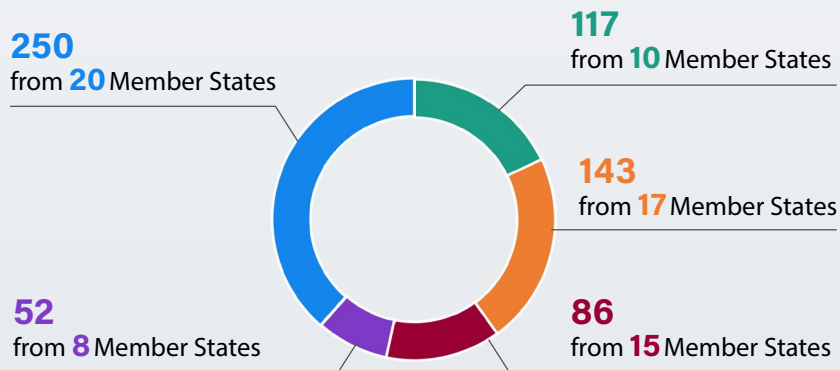
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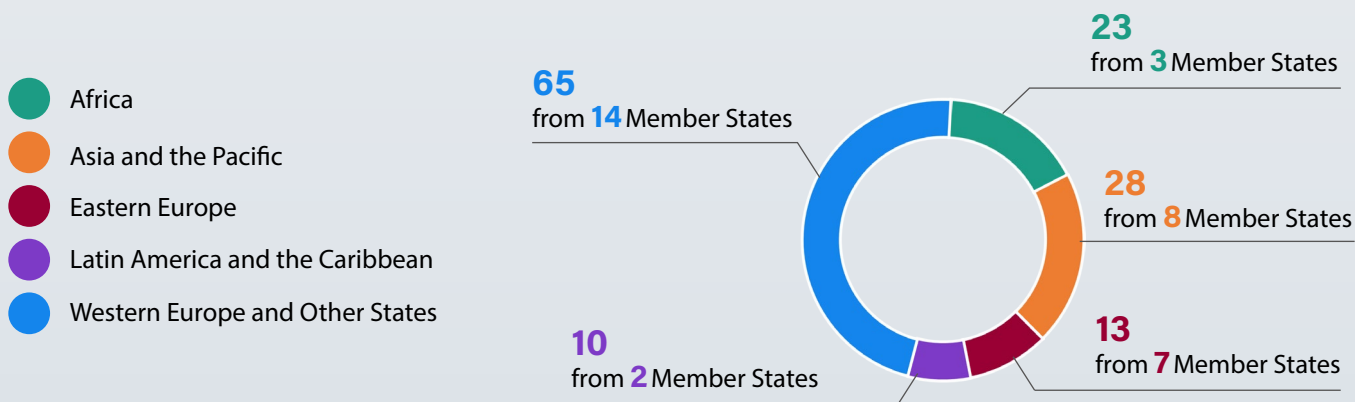
Roster Management and Readiness

Status of the UNSGM roster: Nominations of Qualified Experts, Expert Consultants and Analytical Laboratories (as of July 2026)

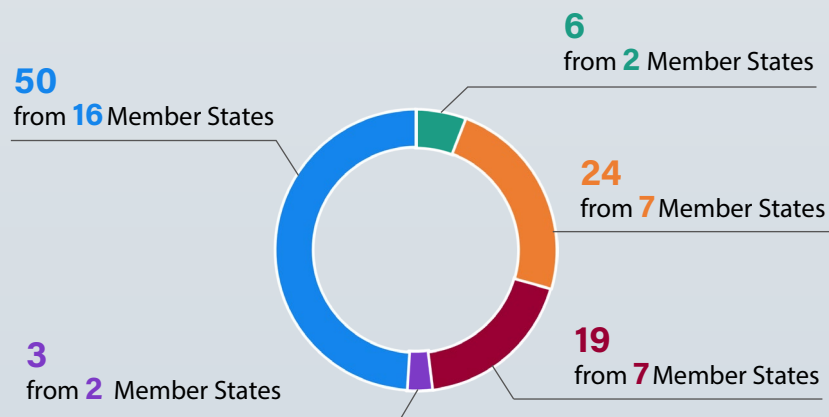
649 QUALIFIED EXPERTS



139 EXPERT CONSULTANTS



102 ANALYTICAL LABORATORIES



Roster Capabilities Mapping and Assessment

To support the assessment of roster capabilities and ensure the availability of the expertise required for a range of investigative scenarios, UNODA has continued to update and validate information on experts and laboratories nominated by Member States. The exercise aims to maintain accurate and up-to-date records, facilitate capability mapping, and inform targeted outreach efforts to address identified gaps in required specializations.

As part of this ongoing process, UNODA issued a renewed call to roster members, in April 2026, to update their profile information through the standardized forms for all three roster categories. Based on the information requirements set out in the appendices of the UNSGM Guidelines and Procedures, the forms are designed to capture and update key information about nominated experts and laboratories, including academic qualifications or certifications, professional experience, areas of expertise, relevant skills and competencies, and contact details.

The response has been very positive, with a significant number of roster members already submitting updated information. UNODA is consolidating these submissions and updating roster records accordingly. Experts and laboratories nominated to

the UNSGM are strongly advised to update their profiles with UNODA to help maintain the accuracy and completeness of roster data.

Onboarding Sessions

In June 2026, UNODA organized the sixth annual virtual onboarding sessions for all Qualified Experts, Expert Consultants, and points of contact for Analytical Laboratories nominated by Member States, with a particular focus on those nominated since the previous sessions held in May 2025. The sessions are intended to familiarize roster members with the UNSGM, including their respective roles and functions during investigations, as well as the requirements associated with their participation in the standing preparatory measures.

A total of 126 participants attended the two sessions held on 23 and 24 June. They received an overview of the UNSGM's background, mandate, guiding framework, structure, and past investigations, as well as detailed briefings on the processes for assessing allegations and conducting investigations. Finally, UNODA shared an update on the standing preparatory measures for the mechanism, including the preparedness training programme for Qualified Experts, support provided to Analytical Laboratories, and engagement with Expert Consultants.

Preparedness Training

UNODA continued to make progress in implementing the multi-tiered preparedness training programme for Qualified Experts, launched in 2022 to strengthen the operational readiness, promote interoperability among experts, and ensure proficiency in the application of UNSGM investigation procedures. During the first half of 2026, three training courses were conducted in collaboration with Member States, UN entities, International Organizations and specialized institutions. During the past six months, UNODA completed one basic course (Tier-1) and two skills courses (Tier-2).

Basic Training

3-17 July 2026 – Johannesburg, South Africa

In cooperation with the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), a division of the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS) of South Africa, UNODA organized a Basic Training Course for 16 Qualified Experts from 11 countries. The activity marked the seventh basic training course organized since 2022 and the fifth to be hosted by NICD.

The intensive course combines theoretical classroom instruction with participatory group work, live demonstrations, and practical exercises. UNODA provided comprehensive briefings on the mandate and structure of the UNSGM, the processes and procedures for assessing allegations, mission planning, the collection of samples and information, the maintenance of chain of custody, and the reporting of investigation findings. A representative from the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) also provided guidance on operational

safety and security, cultural awareness, communication strategy and field communication during missions.

Technical instruction was provided by NICD specialists on a range of topics relevant to biological investigations, including bio-risk assessment, personal safety and decontamination procedures, and best international practices in sampling, and sample packaging and transport. The course also benefited from a virtual presentation by a representative of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) on biological crime scene management.

Furthermore, representatives from the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI) delivered presentations on effective, ethical and procedurally sound investigative interviewing techniques, including interview planning and documentation, witness management and credibility assessment.



The course concluded with a scenario-based exercise during which participants were tasked with planning an investigation mission, conducting sampling and interviews, and writing a situation report documenting their activities and findings. The exercise allowed the Qualified Experts to put into practice the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the course.

Feedback from participants indicated that the course achieved its intended learning objectives, with respondents reporting

a significant increase in their knowledge and understanding of UNSGM investigation procedures and their roles and responsibilities as Qualified Experts.

In addition to the in-kind support provided by the Government of South Africa through NICD, the course was made possible through voluntary financial contributions from the Governments of Canada, Spain and the United Kingdom.





Transport of Toxic and Infectious Substances

19-21 May 2026 – Online

UNODA, in cooperation with the International Air Transport Association (IATA), organized a training course on the Transport of Toxic and Infectious substances for 15 Qualified Experts from 13 countries.

This was the fourth collaboration between UNODA and IATA in organizing this training and the first to be delivered online. The virtual modality increased accessibility and cost-effectiveness, enabling broader participation while maintaining a high-quality learning experience. Participant feedback was very positive, demonstrating that this particular course can be effectively delivered in a virtual format. Lessons identified from this pilot iteration will inform future courses to further enhance the experts' training experience.

As with previous iterations, the course enhanced experts' understanding of international guidelines and practices for the transport of toxic and infectious substances in the context of a possible UNSGM investigation. The programme was delivered by a certified IATA instructor and followed the IATA standardized curriculum, based on the requirements for transporting toxic and infectious materials under the Dangerous Goods Regulations.

During the course, participants reviewed the IATA Infectious Substances Shipping Regulations manual and were led through modules covering key aspects of classification, packaging,

marking, labelling, documentation and handling requirements when shipping infectious substances. The course began with a regulatory overview covering the definitions of dangerous goods, legal frameworks, and shipper responsibilities. Participants then reviewed the classification and identification of Category A and B infectious substances, including proper shipping names, UN number, and special provisions. This was followed by modules on packing and packaging specifications, which provided an overview of packing instructions and UN specifications for packaging. Finally, participants were led through best practices and requirements in terms of marking, labelling, and documentation. The course also featured a module on the packaging of toxins, as well as their rules and limitations for transport, given the scope of the UNSGM's mandate.

The course concluded with a written exam, after which experts received an IATA certificate.

Financial support for the course was generously provided by the Robert Koch Institute of Germany and the Government of Canada.

Feedback from Participants

"Valuable opportunity and ... excellent training experience"

"The lessons were very good and useful."

Safe and Secure Approaches to Field Environments (SSAFE)

4-8 May 2026 – Cha-Am, Thailand

UNODA and the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) organized the sixth training course on Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments (SSAFE) for a group of 11 Qualified Experts from 11 countries.

The course provided participants with an understanding of the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS) and the practical skills needed to anticipate, mitigate, and respond to safety and security risks in complex operational environments. These competencies are essential for the safe and effective conduct of UNSGM investigations in diverse field settings. The curriculum is based on UNDSS and UN System Staff College (UNSSC) standard modules and is delivered by certified SSAFE instructors.

UNODA started the course with a refresher on the UNSGM's mandate, investigation mission components, and the procedures governing on-site investigations. Subsequently, UNDSS delivered a comprehensive series of theoretical and

practical sessions on the UNSMS and related principles, policies and guidelines for working in field environments. Topics covered included the use of communication technologies, safe conduct and preparations for road missions, personal security awareness and cultural sensitivity, as well as procedures for responding to captivity and detention scenarios. Participants also received training on medical aspects of field operations, including individual first aid and the management of injuries in field environments.

A half-day field exercise was then organized, which simulated various situations that may be encountered in the field and required participants to apply the concepts covered during course in realistic operational scenarios. The course concluded with an interactive discussion facilitated by UNODA on the application of SSAFE principles and skills in the context of potential UNSGM investigation mission. Upon successful completion of the course assessments, participants received certifications in both SSAFE and Individual First Aid Kit (IFAK).

In addition to the in-kind support provided by UNDSS, the course was made possible through voluntary financial contributions from the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom.





Feedback from Participants

"The teaching methods and instructors were excellent."

"A highly professional, informative, and well-coordinated training course."

"The lessons were clear, relevant, and practical. The practical demonstrations and scenario-based exercises were especially useful."

Strengthening Analytical Laboratories Preparedness

RefBio Laboratory Network Annual Workshop

6-7 May 2026 – Berlin, Germany

UNODA participated in the annual workshop organized by the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) under the RefBio Laboratory Network Project, supported by the Government of Germany. During the workshop, UNODA delivered opening remarks and a presentation highlighting the critical role of Analytical Laboratories in providing the scientific evidence that underpins UNSGM investigations. The presentation further outlined the functions of laboratories during the preparedness and

investigation phases. UNODA also reviewed recent progress in expanding and diversifying the network of laboratories on the UNSGM roster and highlighted priorities for strengthening preparedness through inter-laboratory exercises and enhanced cooperation arrangements with laboratories and host Member States.

In addition, to promote broad geographical participation in inter-laboratory exercises and related cooperation platforms offered by Member States, UNODA sponsored the participation of 4 Analytical Laboratories from 4 countries in the workshop. This sponsorship programme is made possible through a voluntary contribution from the Government of Canada.



Strategic Partnerships, Cooperation and Outreach

Engaging the Biosecurity Community at the Global Health Security Conference

9-12 June 2026 – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

During the fourth Global Health Security Conference, UNODA promoted greater understanding among health security practitioners and policymakers of the UNSGM's role in responding to the deliberate use of biological agents by leading a panel discussion entitled '*Investigating the Use of Biological Weapons: Suspicious Biological Events in an Evolving Bio-risk Landscape*'. The panel featured speakers from UNODA, Global Affairs Canada, the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

The discussion explored the challenges of distinguishing between naturally occurring disease outbreaks and deliberate events, as well as opportunities for intersectoral cooperation in investigating suspected deliberate biological events through the UNSGM. Panellists highlighted the role of public health and veterinary networks in detecting unusual or suspicious outbreak patterns. In light of these evolving health security risks, the discussion underscored the UNSGM's role within the global architecture for investigating alleged deliberate events, the range of scenarios for which the Mechanism should maintain preparedness, and the multi-stakeholder cooperation integral to the ongoing preparedness activities of the Mechanism.

In addition to the panel discussion, UNODA engaged conference participants through a poster presentation outlining the Mechanism's components and stakeholders, and ways they can contribute to different aspects of preparatory measures. UNODA highlighted the range of advanced public health specializations and expertise relevant to UNSGM investigations and encouraged greater engagement from public health professionals whose knowledge and experience could further strengthen the UNSGM roster.

Coordination Meeting of the UNITF-UNSGM

18 May 2026 – UN Headquarters/Hybrid

UNODA convened a coordination meeting of the members of the UN Internal Task Force (ITF) for the UNSGM, which brings together various UN Secretariat departments and other UN entities to mobilize and coordinate system-wide technical, operational, and legal support for preparedness measures and potential investigations. Focal points from the member departments and entities reviewed and discussed updates on the standing preparatory measures, planned deliverables for 2026-2027, and areas for ITF members' support and guidance.

Engagement in Partner-Led Activities

- > **Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in Latin America and the Caribbean:** At the invitation of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), UNODA delivered a virtual presentation at the 27th regional meeting, held from 14 to 16 July 2026 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The presentation explained the distinct but complementary mandates of the UNSGM and the CWC in addressing allegations of chemical weapons use, including how the UNSGM may investigate allegations involving States not party to the CWC in accordance with the UNSGM Guidelines and Procedures and the CWC Verification Annex. The presentation also highlighted the institutional framework governing cooperation between the UN and the OPCW, which facilitates the provision and coordination of technical and operational support for such investigations.
- > **Workshop on Strengthening the CBRN Investigation, Prosecution and Adjudication Capabilities of Moldova:** UNODA delivered a virtual presentation at the workshop, organized by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) from 25 to 26 June 2026 in Chisinau, Moldova. The presentation provided an overview of the UNSGM and marked the fourth occasion on which UNODA contributed to this workshop series, reflecting continued efforts to raise awareness of the Mechanism among relevant legal, investigative, and judicial professionals of Member States.
- > **Regional Workshop on National Implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention in Southeast Asia:** In line with UNODA's commitment to leveraging synergies across its programmes in support of chemical and biological

disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, the workshop, which was dedicated to facilitating the effective implementation of the BWC in the subregion, featured a session on the UNSGM aimed at raising awareness and promoting regional engagement. In this regard, the session highlighted the UNSGM's contribution to strengthening the global norm against biological weapons, acting as a deterrent against their development and use. Participating States were also encouraged to consider ways in which they could support the Mechanism, including through nomination of experts and laboratories, support for preparedness training exercises, and other and in-kind and voluntary financial contributions.

- > **Training Course on Microbial Genomics and Bioforensics:** UNODA participated in the first two days of the second edition of the training course, co-organized by the BWC-ISU and the Bundeswehr Institute of Microbiology from 16 to 27 March 2026 in Munich, Germany. The course included a module on the UNSGM that aimed to raise awareness and facilitate the identification of interested participants with relevant expertise whose governments may wish to nominate them to the UNSGM roster.
- > **Working Group Meeting of the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction:** During the meeting, held from 12 to 13 February 2026 in Paris, France, UNODA engaged with a broad range of Member States, international organizations, and specialized institutions to highlight the important role of the UNSGM within the global non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and to mobilize financial and in-kind support for strengthening and maintaining the Mechanism's preparedness and operational readiness.

Upcoming Activities

During the second half of 2026, UNODA will continue to implement activities under the standing preparatory measures and contribute to partner-led initiatives relevant to the UNSGM. For any questions regarding these activities, please feel free to reach out to UNODA.

Engagement with Expert Consultations

- > **Expert Consultant Workshop:** UNODA will organize a pilot Orientation and Engagement Workshop for Expert Consultants from 1 to 4 September in Geneva, Switzerland. The workshop will bring together representatives from the UN Internal Task Force, and relevant international organizations to strengthen expert consultants'

understanding of their roles and functions within the UNSGM framework. The workshop is funded through voluntary contributions from the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom.

Preparedness Training for Qualified Experts

- > **Transport of Toxic and Infectious Substances:** The course will be held virtually on 10-13 August in partnership with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and through financial support from RKI and the Government of Canada.
- > **Investigative Interviewing:** The course will be organized on 12-16 October in Nairobi, Kenya, in cooperation with the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI)

and with funding from the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom.

- > **Decontamination:** The course will take place on 17-20 November, in Lisbon, Portugal in cooperation with the Portuguese Army's Military Laboratory Unit for Biological and Chemical Defense (UMDLBQ). In addition to the in-kind support from the Government of Portugal, the course will be funded through voluntary contributions from the Government of Canada and the United Kingdom.
- > **Simulation Exercise:** A pilot simulation exercise will be organized from 30 November to 4 December in Brindisi, Italy in collaboration with a range of training partners and with financial support from the Government of Canada and the United Kingdom.

Strengthening Analytical Laboratory Preparedness

- > **UNSGM Designated Laboratories Workshop:** UNODA will participate in the eleventh UNSGM Designated Laboratories Workshop, to be hosted by Spiez Laboratory in Switzerland from 9 to 11 September. UNODA is also offering sponsorship opportunities to focal points of UNSGM Analytical Laboratories that have been invited to and are interested in attending the workshop.
- > **RefBio EQAEs:** The next round of External Quality Assurance Exercises (EQAEs) organized under the RefBio Project at

the Robert Koch Institute is currently under way, with the shipment of samples in June 2026 for the biological toxins EQAE and November 2026 for the bacterial and viral EQAEs.

Outreach

- > **Briefings to Member States:** During the First Committee of the UN General Assembly in October 2026, UNODA will convene the annual briefing on the UNSGM for all UN Member States at UN Headquarters in New York. UNODA will also convene an outreach event on the margins of the meeting of the Working Group on the Strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention, taking place from 7 to 11 December in Geneva, Switzerland. These outreach efforts are supported by voluntary contributions from the Governments of Canada and Spain.

Management and Maintenance of the UNSGM Roster

- > **Annual Call for Updates and Nominations:** In late 2026, UNODA will renew its request to all Member States, through their Permanent Missions to the UN in New York, to submit new nominations or update existing nominations of experts and laboratories to the UNSGM roster.

Note: Member States may submit updates or new nominations at any time. The note verbale circulated in 2025 is available on the [UNSGM webpage](#). Member States may contact the UNSGM Support Team for any queries regarding the nomination process.

Supporting the UNSGM

UNODA's work to ensure the readiness of the UNSGM is made possible through voluntary financial contributions and in-kind support from Member States and international organizations. Such support remains essential to ensuring that the Mechanism is prepared to respond effectively when called upon.

UNODA is therefore pleased to announce that, in March 2026, the Government of the United Kingdom, through the Ministry of Defence's International Biosecurity Programme (IBSP), provided an additional contribution of USD 847,500, supplementing its contribution made in 2025.

UNODA also wishes to reiterate its gratitude to the Member States and partner organizations whose support has enabled the milestones highlighted in this issue. In particular, we acknowledge the contributions of Canada, Germany, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

Contact us

Thank you for your interest in our biannual newsletter. We welcome your contributions to future editions.

Please do not hesitate to contact UNODA with any questions regarding the UNSGM or if you are interested in supporting our efforts.

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



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