

may be necessary to meet the criteria for initiating an investigation. Each of these stages takes time.

Once the information has been considered by the international authority and a decision taken to initiate an investigation, a number of activities can take place simultaneously. The international authority will have to determine whether an on-site inspection is feasible (with the agreement of the combatants and involving a local cease-fire if the site is still a combat zone). Other matters related to right of passage (for personnel, equipment and samples) and local security will also have to be arranged.

If a technical secretariat (including experts in various disciplines) with stockpiled equipment is in existence, it will be possible to place an investigating team with its supporting equipment on immediate standby. If circumstances warrant it, they could even be dispatched to a "holding point" in a country more easily accessible to the country or region in which the investigation would take place. Then, upon receipt of the necessary clearances and upon being informed of the procedures to follow, the team could make contact with the designated authorities and proceed with the investigation.

The process is rather more complicated when there is no technical secretariat in existence. As is now the case under resolution 37/98D, there will be a need to communicate with experts whose names appear on a list, and these experts ideally should be able to drop whatever they are doing and proceed either directly to the "holding point" mentioned above or to the headquarters of the international authority. Bearing in mind that there may be some risk involved in conducting an on-site