

international inspections and reporting. The focus of our inspection was thionyl chloride, a Schedule 3 chemical, which can be misused for the production of mustard gas. The chemical is used in a batch process for the production of a pharmaceutical intermediate. The production takes place in a multipurpose reaction vessel to which reactants can be supplied by pipelines from a central storage depot.

#### Preparations

The inspection team did not make any preliminary visits to the facility prior to the inspection. Detailed information on the process and the plant was obtained by two visits to a pilot plant which uses the same chemical processes. The pilot plant belongs to the same company, but is located in a different part of the country. The pilot plant is similar, though not identical to the industrial plant.

This approach was chosen because an inspection team cannot be expected to know all the details of an unknown facility beforehand. By visiting a different plant first, we avoided the possibility of the members of the inspection team becoming too familiar with members of the staff of the facility. The information obtained from the visit to the pilot plant was used to plan the inspection.

The staff of the facility were given written information on the synthesis of mustard gas a few days before the inspection. Two members of the staff were familiar with the analysis and properties of chemical warfare agents. A representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was present to advise and assist members of the staff. This was a precaution to ensure that the staff were not exposed to undue pressure from the inspection team.