

Dear other Heads of Secretariat,

Dear National Focal Points and Deputies,

Dear representatives of the European Commission,

Dear UNICRI representatives,

Dear On-site technical assistance team,

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,

I am excited to be part of this memorable event, celebrating 15 years of partnership through the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative, to mitigate the risks of CBRN materials. Although I have not been part of the whole lifespan of the Initiative, I can feel the CBRN family vibe and see the impact that the Initiative has had thus far to bring CBRN risk mitigation from a niche to a mainstream activity.

In February 2025, the Regional Secretariat for Eastern and Central Africa hosted the 2025 Heads of Secretariat meeting in Nairobi. In fact, the event took place in one of the facilities of the organisation that I manage (the Kenya Nuclear Regulatory Authority). This was the first time this meeting was organised in a government facility.

During the Heads of Secretariat meeting, we deliberate together on the strategic direction of the CBRN CoE for the next year. We then capture the consensus in the Interregional Roadmap.

To support this process, we have shared very focussed experiences from each of the eight regions, so-called 'highlight presentations'. You will see more of these short and focussed presentations during the next two days, they are very attractive and inspiring.

For the next few minutes, I will introduce some elements that were captured in the five sections of the Interregional Roadmap 2025. Not surprisingly, you will recognise that the programme for the next two days here reflects what the Heads and the participating CBRN National Focal Points (one from each region) identified as priorities.

1. Section one covers aspects of Internal and External Cooperation within the CBRN CoE network. This is the backbone of our network and it was reiterated that we need to keep strengthening our NFPs, our National Teams and interagency cooperation.
2. Section two covers the CBRN CoE Projects. We recommended in this section for projects to also start looking towards longer term developments. We also need to prepare ourselves for future trends and challenges such as the impact – for better or for worse – of Artificial Intelligence.
3. Section 3 highlights the priority activities related to the National- and Regional Action Plans. These guiding documents are so helpful to keep our focus and to stimulate us to work together. The CBRN CoE should continue to support our partner countries with technical skills and tools to implement the plans and to convince our regional and international partners to invest in those plans.
4. Section four puts the focus on the Regional Secretariats themselves. Where will our support be most effective. The main areas are to facilitate exercises and trainings, promoting good practices and offer tailored on-site technical assistance. Visibility is another key area but this is so important that it has its own section.

5. Section five is called the Visibility and Sustainability of the CBRN CoE. One key new area where the Heads identified opportunities that we should explore, is to create links between CBRN CoE and the scientific community. Our projects, exercises and even the NAP/RAP process provide data, insights and recommendations. Likewise, existing science could play a bigger role in guiding the development of project terms of reference and the content of trainings. Another action that the Heads promoted, that you will see in the programme, is to look for Private-Public-Partnerships (PPP), as a way to increase sustainability and resources in our network.

I invite you to take another look at the Interregional Roadmap, to see the key areas of focus for the coming period. And to give you inspiration to experiment, to try something bold. Not everything is possible, but one of the (many) unique features of the EU CBRN CoE Initiative is that creativity and trying something new is welcomed, and what works can be replicated throughout our whole network!

Enjoy the next two days together!