



## Security Council

Distr.: General  
29 May 2020

Original: English

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### Letter dated 28 May 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the eightieth monthly report of the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) (see annex). The report covers the period from 24 April to 23 May 2020.

In view of the recent events related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, the OPCW Director-General decided to postpone all scheduled deployments and missions of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, including missions to take place in the Syrian Arab Republic, until further notice. Notwithstanding the travel restrictions, the Technical Secretariat continues its mandated activities related to the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in this regard. The Technical Secretariat is monitoring the situation closely and will keep the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction duly informed of the next developments.

The Declaration Assessment Team continues its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues related to the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic to OPCW. I note that, as at the date of the eightieth monthly report, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not received a response to a letter sent by the OPCW Director-General on 21 April 2020 requesting the Syrian National Authority to submit further information in accordance with the proposed plan of action for the resolution of the outstanding issues.

With regard to the finding of a Schedule 2 chemical detected at the Barzah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre during the third round of inspections conducted in November 2018, I note that exchanges of correspondence between the Secretariat and the Syrian authorities to resolve this issue have continued, and that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide information or explanations that would enable the OPCW Technical Secretariat to close the issue.

The fact-finding mission continues to study all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The mission is continuing to analyse information collected from its most recent deployments. Further fact-finding mission deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the OPCW activities.

I note that, after the presentation on 8 April 2020 to the States Parties to the Convention of the First Report by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) Pursuant to Paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 'Addressing the Threat



from Chemical Weapons Use' Ltamenah (Syrian Arab Republic) 24, 25, and 30 March 2017, the OPCW Director-General and the Coordinator of the Investigation and Identification Team briefed the Security Council on 12 May 2020 on the findings of the Team's report via videoconference. Pursuant to the note entitled "Work of the Investigation and Identification Team Established by Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2019)", the Team continues its investigations into incidents in which the fact-finding mission determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic.

As I have stated previously, the use of chemical weapons by anyone and anywhere is intolerable, and impunity for their use is equally unacceptable. It is imperative to identify and hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons. Unity in the Security Council is essential to achieve this urgent obligation.

*(Signed)* António **Guterres**

**Annex**

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled “Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme”, prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of the OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1, and Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council. My report covers the period from 24 April 2020 to 23 May 2020 and also covers the reporting requirements of the Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

*(Signed)* Fernando **Arias**

**Enclosure**

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

**Report by the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons****Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme****Background**

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.
2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities” (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation “in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria” (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015), noting the Director-General’s intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM), along with information on the Council’s discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled “Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director General’s intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.
4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled “OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall “regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
5. This, the eightieth monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 24 April to 23 May 2020.

**Impact of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19)**

6. On 13 March 2020, the Secretariat informed the Syrian Arab Republic through a note verbale that, in view of the recent events related to the COVID-19 outbreak,

and in line with measures announced by the Dutch authorities, inter alia, the Director-General had taken the decision to postpone all scheduled deployments and missions of the Secretariat until further notice. This includes missions to take place in the Syrian Arab Republic.

7. The travel restrictions notwithstanding, the Secretariat is continuing its mandated activities related to the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in this regard. The Secretariat is monitoring the situation closely and will keep the States Parties duly informed of the next developments.

### **Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1**

8. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) As stated in previous reports, the Secretariat has verified the destruction of all 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic.

(b) On 20 May 2020, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its seventy-eighth monthly report (EC-94/P/NAT.3, dated 20 May 2020) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

### **Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities**

9. As stated in previous reports, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have been destroyed.

### **Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5**

10. The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continues its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with paragraph 3 of Council decision EC-81/DEC.4 and paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5.

11. In accordance with the decision of the Director-General to postpone all planned deployments and missions until further notice in view of the COVID-19 outbreak, the twenty-third round of consultations, initially planned to begin on 15 March 2020 in Damascus, will be rescheduled.

12. As previously reported, the Director-General sent a letter dated 21 April 2020 to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, H.E. Dr Faisal Mekdad, with a document containing an updated status of outstanding issues and the proposed plan of action for their resolution, as discussed in October 2019 during the twenty-second round of consultations. In the letter, the Director-General requested the Syrian National Authority to submit further information in accordance with this plan at the earliest opportunity. As of the date of this report, the Secretariat had not received a response to this letter from the Syrian National Authority.

13. In accordance with paragraph 10 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat continues to assess conditions for the conduct of inspections at the sites identified by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in its third and fourth reports. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat conducted the sixth round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) from 6 to 11 November 2019. The outcome of those inspections will be reported to the Council in due course. The conduct of further inspections of these facilities will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on OPCW activities.

14. With regard to the finding of a Schedule 2.B.04 chemical that was detected during the third round of inspections at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC, exchanges of correspondence between the Secretariat and the Syrian authorities to resolve this issue have continued.<sup>1</sup> The Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the Secretariat to close this issue. The Secretariat will continue its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in this regard and will inform the Council in due course.

### **Other activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic**

15. As at the cut-off date of this report, one OPCW staff member was deployed as part of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic.

16. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) continues to provide support to the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement concluded between the OPCW, UNOPS, and the Syrian Arab Republic. This agreement facilitates the Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and to any subsequent decision or resolution of the relevant organs of the OPCW or the United Nations, as well as any bilateral agreements concluded between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic.

17. Pursuant to EC-M-43/DEC.1 (dated 24 July 2014) regarding the destruction and verification of 12 declared CWPFs, the Secretariat has been monitoring and maintaining the remote monitoring systems installed at four sealed underground structures on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. The conduct of further deployments related to this mandate will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on OPCW activities.

### **Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria**

18. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 4 February 2015 and 23 November 2015, respectively), as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution [2209 \(2015\)](#), the FFM continues to study all available information relating to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

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<sup>1</sup> Note verbale dated 7 November 2019 sent by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Secretariat; note verbale dated 20 February 2020 sent by the Secretariat to the Syrian Arab Republic; note verbale dated 12 March 2020 sent by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Secretariat; note verbale dated 21 April 2020 sent by the Secretariat to the Syrian Arab Republic; and, note verbale dated 12 May 2020 sent by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Secretariat.

19. Regarding the incident of alleged use of chemical weapons in Aleppo on 24 November 2018, the Secretariat has deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic three times to conduct interviews, visit hospitals, and receive samples provided by the Syrian Arab Republic. Additionally, since May 2019, exchanges of correspondence have been ongoing between the Secretariat and both the Syrian Arab Republic and the Russian Federation in relation to the Secretariat's request for information collected by the chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear specialists of the Russian Federation regarding this allegation.<sup>2</sup>

20. As of the date of this report, the Secretariat had not received any information or material evidence collected by the Russian Federation in relation to the Aleppo incident, whether from the Russian Federation or the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretariat is continuing to engage with both the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify this issue and will inform the Council of the outcome in due course.

21. While continuing its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic with regard to this and other incidents, the FFM is continuing to analyse information collected from its most recent deployments. The conduct of further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on OPCW activities. The FFM will report to the Council on the results of its work in due course.

### **Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 of the Conference of the States Parties at its Fourth Special Session related to the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic**

22. Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018), adopted by the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter "the Conference") at its Fourth Special Session, addresses, inter alia, the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

23. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat established the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic by identifying and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those chemical weapons in those instances in which the FFM determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, and cases for which the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism did not issue a report.

24. After the presentation on 8 April 2020 by the Director-General and the Coordinator of the IIT to States Parties of the "First Report by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team Pursuant to Paragraph 10 of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use" Ltamenah (Syrian Arab Republic) 24, 25, and 30 March 2017" (S/1867/2020, dated 8 April 2020), the Director-General and the Coordinator of the IIT briefed the United Nations Security Council on 12 May 2020 on the findings of the report via videoconference.

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<sup>2</sup> Note verbale dated 21 May 2019 sent by the Secretariat to the Russian Federation; note verbale dated 11 June 2019 sent by the Russian Federation to the Secretariat; note verbale dated 23 December 2019 sent by the Secretariat to the Russian Federation; note verbale dated 23 December 2019 sent by the Secretariat to the Syrian Arab Republic; note verbale dated 24 January 2020 sent by the Russian Federation to the Secretariat; note verbale dated 21 April 2020 sent by the Secretariat to the Syrian Arab Republic; note verbale dated 30 April 2020 sent by the Russian Federation to the Secretariat; note verbale dated 7 May 2020 sent by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Secretariat; and note verbale dated 13 May 2020 sent by the Secretariat to the Russian Federation.

25. The IIT is continuing its investigations into incidents in which the FFM determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic, as indicated in the Note entitled “Work of the Investigation and Identification Team Established by Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018)” (EC-91/S/3, dated 28 June 2019). Pursuant to paragraph 24 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the next progress report on implementation of that decision will be submitted to the Council at its Ninety-Fourth Session, to be held from 7 to 10 July 2020.

### **Supplementary resources**

26. The Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the FFM and other remaining activities, which presently include the work of the DAT and IIT, and the biannual inspections of the SSRC. As at the cut-off date of this report, total contributions to this fund stood at EUR 32.2 million. Contribution agreements had been concluded with Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

### **Conclusion**

27. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the activities of the FFM; the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration-related issues; inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah sites of the SSRC; and the implementation of Conference decision C-SS-4/DEC.3.

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