



Security Council

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Letter dated 5 February 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in the Middle East (Syria)” convened on Wednesday, 3 February 2021. A statement was also delivered by the representative of Turkey.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, this briefing and these statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Barbara **Woodward**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs,
Izumi Nakamitsu**

I thank you for the opportunity to brief the Council on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

As always, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has maintained ongoing communication with its counterparts at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities. In that context, per established practice, I held my monthly call yesterday, 2 February, with the OPCW Director-General to receive an update and ascertain his views on the matter. In addition, on 6 and 14 January, the Office for Disarmament Affairs received information from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic concerning chemical issues for this period. That information was studied carefully and forwarded to the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

As I have previously informed the Security Council, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to impact the OPCW's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. The OPCW Technical Secretariat maintains its readiness to deploy, subject to the evolving pandemic. In spite of the travel restrictions, the Technical Secretariat has continued with its mandated activities related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in that regard.

Efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration to the OPCW are ongoing. As reported by the OPCW Director-General during his briefing to the Security Council on 11 December 2020 (see S/2020/1202, annex II), while three outstanding issues related to the Syrian Arab Republic initial declaration were closed during the twenty-third round of consultations with the Syrian National Authority, held in Damascus from 22 September to 3 October 2020, 19 issues remain outstanding.

I note that one of the outstanding issues pertains to a chemical weapons production facility declared by the Syrian National Authority as never having produced chemical weapons. However, a review of all the information and other materials gathered by the DAT since 2014 indicates that production and/or weaponization of chemical warfare nerve agents did take place at this facility. Consequently, the Technical Secretariat has requested that the Syrian Arab Republic declare the exact types and quantities of chemical agents produced and/or weaponized at that site. I understand from the Technical Secretariat that the Syrian National Authority has yet to respond to that request.

As a result, the Technical Secretariat continues to assess that, due to the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved at this stage, the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. I urge the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the Technical Secretariat in that regard. As I have noted on many occasions, the confidence of the international community in the full elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme depends upon the OPCW being able to close these outstanding issues.

I hope that during the next round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority, to be held later this month, further progress will be made to resolve these issues.

I have been advised that the samples collected during the seventh round of inspections conducted in November by the Technical Secretariat at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre were split at a OPCW laboratory in the presence of a representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and sent to designated laboratories for analysis. The outcome of that round of inspections will be reported to the OPCW Executive Council in due course.

With regard to the finding of a Schedule 2 chemical detected at the Barzah facilities of the Research Centre during the third round of inspections held in 2018, I understand that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the Technical Secretariat to close that issue.

The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission continues to study all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and continues its engagement with the Syrian Government and other States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with regard to a variety of incidents. As previously reported, further Fact-Finding Mission deployments will be subject to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic.

The Investigation and Identification Team continues its investigations into incidents in which the Fact-Finding Mission has determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic, and will issue further reports in due course.

With regard to the inspections mandated by paragraph 8 of Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2, entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic”, I have been advised that the Technical Secretariat continues to monitor the security situation and will inform the Syrian Arab Republic when it is prepared to deploy for that purpose. Those inspections will also be subject to the evolving pandemic.

I say this every month because it bears consistent repeating — there is an urgent need to not only identify but hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons, in violation of international law. Otherwise, we are allowing the use of chemical weapons to take place with impunity. It is imperative that the Council show leadership in demonstrating that impunity in the use of such weapons will not be tolerated. The Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever support and assistance it can.

Before concluding, I wish to echo the Secretary-General’s 28 January remarks to Members States on his priorities for 2021:

“Our seventh priority for the year must be to heal geopolitical rifts and find common ground. To address today’s roiling peace and security threats, we need to find a bridge back to common sense. We need a united Security Council.” (see A/75/PV.51)

Annex II**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

[Original: English and Chinese]

I wish to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

The monthly consideration of the issue of Syrian chemical weapons highlights the importance that the Council attaches to this issue. But the monthly reports of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) often do not contain much new information. As mentioned in this month's report (see S/2021/84), for example, the Syrian Government held the twenty-third round of technical consultations with the OPCW in order to close the case on three outstanding matters, all of which were contained in previous reports.

At the same time, the concerns expressed and the questions raised by some Council members are not reflected in the report. For example, several Council members have repeatedly expressed their desire to know how the OPCW Technical Secretariat is handling information provided by the Government of Syria on incidents of chemical weapons fabricated by terrorist groups, and what progress has been made in that regard, as well as how the Technical Secretariat should respond to technical questions raised by Council members and independent experts regarding the content of the reports issued by the Investigation and Identification Team and the Fact-Finding Mission. The monthly report of the OPCW should reflect these elements, as requested by Council members and expected by the international community.

I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate that China is firmly opposed to the use of chemical weapons by any State, organization or individual, under any circumstance and for any purpose. The OPCW's investigation and attribution of the alleged use of chemical weapons should be conducted strictly within the framework of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, with full adherence to the principles of independence, impartiality and objectivity, and must respect facts and science. We hope that Council members will also reach consensus on these principles, as they are the basis for in-depth discussion and mutual trust.

Nevertheless, in past Council deliberations, some Council members have shown little interest, regrettably, in the technical details of the alleged use of chemical weapons or in the integrity or conclusiveness of the chain of evidence in the investigation reports. Instead, they are keen to discuss the means and measures of accountability, proceeding from the presumption of guilt. This seems rather impatient. The discussions in the Council must be based on scientific analysis substantiated by facts and must not be rushed in the absence of hard evidence in the face of serious differences among the parties.

Having noted that Syria has repeatedly expressed its willingness to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat, China recognizes Syria's constructive attitude and encourages both sides to continue to resolve outstanding issues through dialogue and communication. We also hope that the Technical Secretariat will work to help bridge differences between the parties, reduce antagonism and return to the good tradition of decision-making based on consensus among Member States, thereby upholding the authority and effectiveness of the OPCW.

Annex III

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson

I would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing. We appreciate her strong position in defending the norm against the use of chemical weapons and stressing the need for accountability.

The Al-Assad regime has used chemical weapons throughout the Syrian conflict. Although there can be no justification for their use and there is no military necessity that can be cited in their defence, chemical weapons have been an important part of the regime's war strategy. Sarin and chlorine have been used indiscriminately against the Syrian people to spread terror, force them to leave their homes and surrender.

The top independent and impartial experts in the field have established the Syrian regime's responsibility for chemical weapons use on seven separate occasions. The United Nations-Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Joint Investigative Mechanism determined that the Syrian Arab Armed Forces used chemical weapons in Talmenes in 2014, Sarmin and Qmenas in 2015, and Khan Shaykhun in 2017. The OPCW Investigation and Identification Team has concluded that members of the Syrian Arab Air Force were responsible for the use of sarin and chlorine in three instances in Ltamenah in March 2017. Those attacks resulted in the enormous suffering and death of thousands of people, many of them children.

These attacks all occurred after Syria declared that all of its chemical stockpiles and production facilities had been destroyed. The fact that there are still 19 unresolved issues with regard to its declaration means that the situation continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. Worryingly, one of the outstanding issues pertains to the existence of a chemical weapons production facility that Syria never even declared.

In the light of the blatant disregard of international norms and obligations, we welcome the determination of OPCW member States to take action. The OPCW Executive Council adopted a decision in July to respond to the findings of the Investigation and Identification Team. Due to Syria's non-compliance with that decision, a draft decision will now be submitted to the Conference of the States Parties in April in order to suspend certain rights and privileges of Syria under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Accountability for these heinous crimes is an essential pillar of a political solution that will enable lasting peace in Syria. Just and lasting peace can be achieved only if the perpetrators of the war crimes and crimes against humanity are identified and brought to justice.

We should be equally aware that the global norm against the use of chemical weapons erodes if we tolerate impunity without providing an effective response to these crimes. In addition to Syria, chemical weapons have been used in recent years in Malaysia, the United Kingdom and Russia to target adversaries and political opponents. The aim is clear — to silence those who dare to speak out and pose a threat to those in power. We condemn in the strongest terms the poisoning and illegal imprisonment of Mr. Navalny. We call on Russia to stop using chemical weapons, stop concealing its chemical weapons programme and conduct a thorough and transparent investigation into Mr. Navalny's poisoning.

Any use of chemical weapons is a matter of international peace and security, and therefore a matter for the Security Council. Those responsible must be held to account, and the Council has an important role in ensuring that.

I ask that Mrs. Nakamitsu elaborate on the main obstacles to resolving the remaining 19 open issues. Are there any prospects of closing any additional outstanding issues during the next round of consultations that are taking place this month? With regard to the work of the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team, how many incidents are the teams currently considering? And can she provide a timeline for the publication of the next reports?

Annex IV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: English and French]

I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing. I would like to make three points.

First, I note that the Syrian regime continues to evade its international obligations. As is all too often the case, the report that has just been presented (see S/2021/84) does not show any progress.

Let us consider the initial declaration. How many times have we said that Syria should shed light on that declaration? How then can we explain the fact that 19 issues remain outstanding more than seven years after the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013)? Among those issues, I note, is an undeclared production facility for which the regime has still not provided any explanation. Under these circumstances, it is dishonest to claim, as some do, that the case is closed. I call on the regime to cooperate fully with the initial Declaration Assessment Team, which is expected to be deployed to Syria in early February.

Secondly, the repeated use of chemical weapons by the regime against its own people is an indisputable fact. Its guilt is no longer in doubt. After Ghouta, Khan Shaykhun, Douma and Ltamenah, how many more? I say this with gravity: France will be very attentive to the conclusions of the forthcoming reports of the Investigation and Identification Team. The chemical dossier remains a priority. This is why France, on behalf of 46 delegations from four geographical groups, submitted a draft decision to the OPCW Technical Secretariat in November in order to take the necessary measures. This draft will soon be studied by the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is time for Syria to finally comply with its international obligations.

Thirdly, I would like to pay tribute, once again, to the work carried out by the OPCW, with full impartiality and great professionalism. Its teams work with robust and transparent methodologies. The Director General reports regularly, including to the Security Council, on the progress of work in The Hague. I repeat: there is no conspiracy, no instrumentalization and no pressure. Discrediting the OPCW simply for doing its job — and, I would even go as far to say, for doing its job well — is undignified and irresponsible. And this is particularly so amid the context we are all aware of, that is, the re-emergence of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere.

The fight against impunity and the total ban on the use of chemical weapons remain our priorities. This is the purpose of our continued mobilization, particularly within the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which we launched in 2018.

Annex V**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative and Political Coordinator of the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, Ravindra Raguttahalli**

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing.

We appreciate the monthly report shared by Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) with the Council today regarding the activities of the OPCW in implementing resolution 2118 (2013).

India recognizes the continuing efforts of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria and the Investigation and Identification Team mechanisms of the OPCW, especially in these challenging times. We appreciate the announcement that the DAT intends to deploy in the coming week to Syria for the next round of consultations. We look forward to receiving its findings. We also hope that the OPCW Technical Secretariat will report on the outcomes of the inspections of the facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre that were conducted between 8 and 13 November 2020. We also note the development concerning extension of tripartite agreement among the OPCW, Syria and the United Nations Office for Project Services. We hope that agreement will be signed soon.

We encourage continued engagement and cooperation between Syria and the OPCW Technical Secretariat towards an early resolution of all outstanding issues. India has consistently underlined the need for an impartial and objective investigation into any alleged use of chemical weapons, scrupulously following the provisions and procedures laid down in the Convention. Any concerns should be addressed on the basis of consultation among all parties concerned. In our view, politicization of the issue will result in parties taking extreme positions, jeopardizing the ongoing efforts towards any resolution.

India attaches high importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is a unique, non-discriminatory disarmament instrument and serves as a model for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. Under the Convention, India enjoys the distinction of becoming one of the first State parties to be declared “chemical-weapon free”. India has also provided a financial contribution of \$1 million to the OPCW Trust Fund for activities relating to destruction of chemical stockpiles and related facilities in Syria.

India remains concerned about the possibility of such dangerous weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorist organizations and individuals. Terrorist groups have taken advantage of the decade-long conflict in Syria to entrench themselves, posing a threat to the entire region. Reports of the resurgence in the region of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Shams are being heard with increasing frequency. The world cannot afford to give these terrorists any sanctuary or desist in its fight against these terrorist groups.

India has consistently called for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict through a Syrian-led dialogue, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of the people of Syria. We have also contributed to the return of normalcy and rebuilding of Syria through humanitarian assistance and human-resource development. We now stand ready to work with humanitarian-relief agencies in devising a suitable vaccination-relief programme for the country and the Western Asia as a whole.

Let me conclude by reiterating our full-hearted support to both the Geneva and the Astana processes for an expeditious resolution of the decade-long conflict in Syria.

Annex VI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason

I want to offer my congratulations and full support to you, Sir, in taking on the presidency of the Security Council in month of February. I also would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her briefing today.

Ireland unequivocally condemns any use of chemical weapons. The international community, and the Council in particular, ought not to remain silent in the face of the use of such weapons. Such violations of international law must not go unaddressed. Accountability is vital.

I would like to make three short points today.

First, I want to reiterate Ireland's full confidence in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and in the diligence, professionalism and impartiality of its staff. This has been clearly demonstrated in the rigorous work and reporting of the Technical Secretariat, including the Declaration Assessment Team, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria and the Investigation and Identification Team, in addressing chemical weapons and their use in Syria.

Given the importance of this work, I would like to ask the Under-Secretary-General, in relation to the worsening health crisis in Syria as a result of coronavirus disease, what she thinks is the realistic time frame for the OPCW's various deployment operations to return to full capacity on the ground in Syria. And how can we minimize the risk that the pandemic is used as a pretext for lack of political will?

My second point is that the problems we face in Syria, the gaps and inconsistencies in its initial declaration, and the reports of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and of the Investigation and Identification Team on chemical-weapons use, which attributed use to the Syrian authorities in several instances, are issues that we take very seriously. We believe the Security Council should act urgently and should act in a united way to address this issue. Otherwise, we fail the victims of these attacks in Syria, and we risk undermining the established global norm against the use of these appalling weapons.

Finally, the Syrian authorities bear the responsibility, the immediate responsibility, to fulfil their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and Security Council resolutions, and to cooperate actively, openly and in good faith with the OPCW. The OPCW Executive Council has set out the actions Syria needs to take to return to full compliance with the CWC. I regret that Syria did not respond in the time frame envisaged by the Executive Council, and now I urge Syria to take immediate action on these. In the absence of these actions, Ireland will support action by the Conference of States Parties to the CWC to address Syria's non-compliance.

Annex VII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Martin Kimani**

Allow me to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her brief and her consistent updates on the ongoing activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as well as the regular reports on the ongoing investigations on the use of chemical weapons.

I reaffirm Kenya's support for the mandate of the OPCW and its responsibility towards the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We condemn any use of chemical weapons wherever and by whomsoever, convinced that such atrocities constitute a deplorable violation of international law and cannot be justified under any circumstance whatsoever.

Kenya takes note of the eighty-eighth monthly report of the OPCW, transmitted on 26 January 2021 (see S/2021/84, annex). We further appreciate that, despite the challenges induced by the coronavirus disease pandemic, including the postponement of planned deployments and missions, the OPCW has found ways to ensure continuity of its work.

We welcome the submission by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Council of its eighty-sixth monthly report and emphasize the need for coordination between Syria and the OPCW to clear up the 19 identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved. We also hope that the envisaged consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian Government will materialize and yield positive outcomes in order to hasten the conclusion of the investigations.

It is important that the Security Council support all efforts to strengthen the OPCW to ensure that these investigations are concluded without unnecessary delays and with utmost professionalism and transparency. The expeditious closure of the investigations will allow the Council to direct its energies to helping the Syrian people arrive at a much-desired political solution to the conflict that has impoverished millions of innocent lives.

We strongly believe that it is imperative that the international community, including the members of the Council, set aside their national interests on the whole Syrian situation and choose to prioritize the interests and welfare of the Syrian people. We are persuaded that the long-term solution to the Syrian crisis lies in a political dialogue that includes the widest spectrum of the Syrian people but excludes terrorist groups and their leaders, who have caused the Syrian people untold suffering.

I reaffirm Kenya's unwavering solidarity with the people of Syria as they continue to seek a sustainable solution based on an inclusive Syrian-led dialogue, aimed at a political resolution reflective of the will of the people of Syria.

Annex VIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

We thank the United Kingdom for having organized this meeting, which we hope will allow us to focus on substantive issues and give objective, frank and non-politicized consideration to the various aspects of the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Mexico reiterates its condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances. We are, of course, committed to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and to upholding our obligations as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We commend the professionalism of the work carried out by the OPCW.

All States parties to the CWC should take united action in rejecting these inhumane weapons and in upholding the provisions of the Convention. We hope that, in that spirit, the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC, chaired by Mexico, will succeed in continuing its work in The Hague and conclude its session.

We thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her monthly briefing on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). We reaffirm the importance of the full implementation of that resolution, which endorses the 27 September 2013 decision of the OPCW Executive Council, aimed at ensuring the destruction of all chemical weapons in Syria in the safest possible manner. To that end, we call once again on Syria, as a State party, to cooperate openly with the Organization.

While we recognize the participation of the Syrian Government in consultations and its clarification of certain questions regarding its facilities, we remain concerned that there remain not 18 but 19 pending issues in its declaration, and that it cannot therefore be considered as complete.

We hope that the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic (FFM) will continue its investigations into the various incidents having occurred on Syrian territory from 2017 to 2019, that they will reach conclusions on the samples taken from the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre locations in Barzah and Jamrayah. We also hope that Syria will provide the necessary information on the types and precise quantities of chemical agents produced and/or weaponized in inspected facilities.

We urge the authorities to comply with all their international obligations with a sense of urgency, as well as to provide information to clarify the outstanding inconsistencies in its initial declaration and continue collaborating with the FFM and the Investigation and Identification Team.

Mexico, understanding this matter well and having its own point of view thereof, once again calls on all parties involved in this conflict to respect their obligations under international law in international humanitarian law. We reiterate that the only solution to this conflict is a political one and that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable.

Annex IX

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry

[Original: French]

At the outset, I should like to congratulate the United Kingdom on its presidency of the Council this month and to assure you, Madam President, of my delegation's full support.

I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing, which was informative as usual.

The Niger remains determined in the fight for the total prohibition of chemical weapons and will cooperate with the international community for the total elimination of such weapons. The use of such weapons, it must be recalled, constitutes a threat to security and a violation of international law, whether in Syria or anywhere else on Earth. We therefore reiterate our support for the remarkable work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

If this fight on the part of the entire international community is to have a chance of succeeding, the Council should avoid any politicization of this subject and should establish such conditions for the results of investigations conducted to be used in an orderly and technical fashion. That would undoubtedly bring the truth to light and thereby facilitate accountability.

We welcome the ongoing efforts of the Syrian Government to present its version of events, including through its regular communication with the Security Council.

We welcome the ongoing dialogue between the OPCW secretariat and the Syrian Government, and hope that it will lead to solutions to outstanding issues, strengthen Syria's initial declaration and advance the work of the Declaration Assessment Team, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

At the same time, it is just as important that all suspected incidents of use of chemical weapons in Syria be accorded due attention by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic and Identification and Investigation Team. In that regard, tangible progress must be made, under the auspices of the same regular procedure, on incidents of alleged use of chemical weapons that have not yet been subject to extensive investigation. We therefore hope to see a full resumption of the deployment of OPCW missions in Syria, once the restrictions taken as a result of the coronavirus disease pandemic are lifted.

In conclusion, my delegation calls once again on the United Nations and the OPCW Secretariat to pay particular attention to the allegations that terrorist groups in Syria are in possession of chemicals that could be used to prepare for a chemical weapons attack. If that information were confirmed, it would be a serious threat to peace and security in the region and beyond.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

I would like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her statement.

Despite the grave nature of these crimes, and the global consensus on the condemnation of the use of chemical weapons; regrettably this briefing confirms that the situation — and lack of accountability — remains largely unchanged from last month. With no new developments to comment on, I will focus my remarks on three issues: the monthly report, the issue of accountability and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) itself.

First, with regard to the OPCW monthly report on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme (S/2021/84, annex), which again reports that 19 of the 22 issues from Syria's initial declaration remain outstanding, we remain particularly concerned that the OPCW has found reasons to doubt Syria's declaration that a certain facility has never been used for the production of chemical weapons. It is critical to rebuild trust, and in this regard we continue to urge the Syrian Arab Republic to comply fully with the OPCW's request for information about the types and quantities of chemical agents produced and/or weaponized at the site. Norway remains aligned with the European Union's restrictive measures on persons and entities involved in the development and use of chemical weapons.

Secondly, with regard to accountability, the use of chemical weapons in Syria is well documented and confirmed by the former OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the first report of the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (S/2020/310, annex). They concluded — beyond reasonable doubt — that Syrian armed forces were responsible for the use of chemical weapons on three separate occasions in 2017. This constitutes a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). Yet, no one has been held accountable for these atrocious acts. This is unacceptable.

Thirdly and finally, we again express our full confidence in the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat. Norway firmly rejects attempts to discredit or bring into disrepute the OPCW and the work of the Technical Secretariat. Such attempts against the international community's efforts to secure accountability and prevent the use of chemical weapons are deeply concerning.

Annex XI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

[Original: English and Russian]

We thank Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing.

We have quite a few things to say regarding today's topic, so I would kindly ask you to be patient and listen carefully. I think that you will find it interesting.

Soon enough we may encounter a serious problem that risks imperilling the interaction between Damascus and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and inflicting greater damage on the reputation of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. I refer here to the situation concerning Syria's so-called initial declaration. Let us turn to the facts.

Syria is a responsible partner in the dialogue with the OPCW and the United Nations. It is a partner that despite unprecedented pressure seeks to do its best to reiterate its commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Basic common sense tells us that Damascus must be most interested in resolving issues with regard to its chemical file. However, in reality, the more concessions it makes, the more accusations it encounters.

Members of the Council should clearly understand that this stance aimed at "squeezing Syria" can take away all its motivation to cooperate with the OPCW. The country is living under a sword of Damocles as represented by accusations of non-compliance with the CWC — this time in the form of outstanding issues with the initial declaration. Our Western colleagues are trying to enact this through a punitive decision of the Conference of the OPCW States parties that would incapacitate Syria at the organization.

Those who criticize Damascus base their position on a knowingly issued impossible ultimatum that was enshrined in a July 2020 decision of the OPCW Executive Council. It demanded that Syria declare the chemical weapons that it does not have that were allegedly used in Al-Lataminah in March 2017. We have repeatedly expressed our criticism of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) regarding that incident, to say nothing of the illegitimate nature of the IIT itself, which was established once a corresponding decision had been pushed through the Executive Council. But now I would like to highlight other facts that our Western colleagues prefer to keep silent about.

First of all, Shayrat airbase was first declared as one of Syria's chemical-weapons production facilities, and OPCW inspectors visited it several times. The OPCW confirmed that the facility had been destroyed as per CWC provisions long before the events of 2017.

Secondly, right after Western air forces bombed the base, claiming that it remained a chemical-weapons production facility, on 11 April 2017 Damascus requested the OPCW to dispatch experts to carry out an on-the-ground inspection without any time limits and with full access, inter alia to collect samples. The previous leadership of the OPCW Technical Secretariat had declined that request.

Finally, Western delegations blocked our proposal in the OPCW Executive Council to formally authorize the Director General to inspect Shayrat. We see why that was done: to hinder any serious investigation into the context of the allegations they had made against the Syrian leadership.

Had that inspection taken place at Shayrat airbase at the time, before the trail got cold, it could have provided an exhaustive answer to all questions. However, the IIT failed not only to study those circumstances but even to mention them in the report. Instead, it readily accepted all evidence from biased, so-called open sources, false witnesses and non-governmental organizations with rather dubious reputations.

Unlike our Western colleagues, we do not impose our conclusions on anyone but only call for an objective and truly professional investigation and frank dialogue between the Security Council and the OPCW.

That is why for several months on end we struggled to have incumbent Director General Arias invited to a Security Council discussion on the Syrian chemical issue. He evaded this for quite some time on various pretexts but finally came to brief the Council in December 2020 (S/2020/1202). But he failed to answer any of the questions regarding the numerous shortcomings and irregularities in the work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat on Syria's chemical file that we had raised. But the problem will not vanish if you just close your eyes and pretend it is no longer there. We hope that Director General Arias will find an opportunity to answer our questions publicly. Council members have a list of those questions.

Today our Western colleagues will again predictably refer to the monthly report of the OPCW Director General (S/2021/84), especially to the parts that address the initial declaration, to prove their allegations that Syria has been deliberately violating its obligations under the CWC almost since the day of its accession. Again, they will attempt to frighten us with a difficult to believe figure of 19 outstanding issues with regard to the initial declaration and present it as if it were Damascus's fault, among other things.

But that is manifest slyness and a shift in emphasis. I call on the Council, primarily its newly arrived members, which can develop their own independent vision of current developments, to look at this situation through the lens of objectivity. The facts show that even amid the current complicated internal military-political and epidemiological context, Syria is not evading cooperation with the OPCW. It faithfully accommodates all inspections, provides materials and demonstrates readiness for dialogue in every possible way. Even the current report of the Director General proves this, even though it could hardly be called pro-Syrian.

From 8 to 13 November 2020, the Technical Secretariat carried out a seventh round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities, as the report mentions. What it does not mention is that the Syrian side once again demonstrated maximum openness and readiness to cooperate.

On the initial declaration, the Director General confirms that the twenty-third round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian side took place in autumn 2020. As a result, three outstanding issues were resolved. Is that not objective progress on this track? Why is it addressed only in a negative way?

In addition, in December last year Syria submitted to the OPCW Director General its regular report on steps to implement resolution 2118 (2013), in which the Syrian national authority responsible for OPCW-related issues reiterated that they were ready to continue consultations and technical meetings with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in order to resolve all remaining outstanding issues.

Why do our Western colleagues never speak of those positive developments but deliberately shift their emphasis to the issues that remain pending?

No matter how biased the behaviour of the Technical Secretariat and regardless of how many facts about anti-Syrian manipulation and falsifications on the part of its

leadership emerge, Syria still keeps the door open. Would Damascus be doing this had it anything to hide?

We often hear urgent calls on Syria for more cooperation. In response to that, may we ask: what is meant by “more”? It seems that the only thing that would meet those requirements would be Syria’s acknowledging its guilt and publicly confessing to all deadly sins.

Damascus is doing everything possible to confirm its commitment to the CWC. But the case of Iraq and its chemical file clearly shows that so long as certain countries need to maintain political pressure on it, there will always be unresolved issues.

New York is not a specialized platform for discussing issues relating to the initial declaration as such. That is the prerogative of The Hague, which has all the relevant technical expertise, unlike the United Nations Secretariat, so it remains unclear to us why the Secretariat would afford such freedom of comments and conclusions on that topic. But since colleagues address it so widely, I would like to point out that the initial declaration touches only on the military-chemical activities that Syria had carried out before it joined the CWC. Therefore, all questions pertaining to that issue lie in a historical dimension and clearly cannot be considered evidence proving that Syrians are hiding something.

Besides, as we learned from former OPCW inspector Ian Henderson during our Arria Formula video-teleconference held on 28 September 2020, the guidance of the Technical Secretariat gives direct instructions to the Declaration Assessment Team to keep outstanding issues open. Given such an approach, no matter how hard Syrians justify themselves, they will not be able to close this part of the file. According to the same expert, at the initial stage of joining the CWC, many States that filed their declarations at that time encountered similar problems. But those were interpreted as “minor drawbacks” that did not undermine the integrity of the declaration.

As per established OPCW practice, initial declaration is a dynamic instrument. States add to their declarations all the time, which is not perceived as something extraordinary. Western States, including the United States, Canada, Belgium, France and Germany, update their declarations on a regular basis; therefore, their declared stockpiles are growing — moderately, yet constantly.

Let me also remind you of Libya’s case. In 2012 around 500 undeclared projectiles were discovered there. Or we can also mention Iraq’s initial declaration — no one confirmed it and it was based solely on United Nations documents at hand. But in those cases, for some reason, the Technical Secretariat was easy on the drawbacks with initial declarations. Facts indicate that the Syrian initial declaration was not an extraordinary case and that the Technical Secretariat and Western delegations prefer to inflate agitation around it artificially.

We repeatedly called on the OPCW leadership to explain why the Technical Secretariat openly uses double standards and “forgives” minor drawbacks in the initial declarations of some countries while “inflating” accusations against others. We received no answer to that. Instead, we see further groundless accusations that the Syrian authorities allegedly “do not cooperate actively enough” with the OPCW in resolving this issue.

At the same time, the opposition seems to be enjoying the “presumption of innocence”. Both the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the United Nations Secretariat neglect vast evidence proving that non-State entities — that is, terrorist groups — used chemical weapons on Syrian territory. Since 2013, Syria has sent

over 200 letters to the Secretariat informing about terrorist activities to prepare and carry out acts of chemical terrorism. Almost every month the Syrian side provides information about chemical-weapon provocations planned by terrorists. We do not see that reflected in OPCW documentation.

Let me stress that Russia, as any other responsible OPCW member State, in the strongest terms condemns the use of chemical weapons by whomever and for whatever purposes. We are fully committed to strengthening the non-proliferation regime on weapons of mass destruction. However, our conversation on this matter must not turn into a means to “punish the unwanted”. We will robustly oppose such attempts.

In conclusion, here is what I urge you to think about. If Syria is deprived of any right to partake in the OPCW decision-making process, what will be the point for Damascus to continue cooperating with the organization? After all, what is your goal — to “crush” Syria as you did with Iraq, on far-fetched pretexts, or to ensure that Syrian soil is free of chemical weapons?

We hope Member States will approach current developments in a critical manner and will not take part in a performance with the anti-Syrian draft decision at the April session of the Conference of the State Parties, because such a performance threatens to undermine the authority of the OPCW and, for that matter, of the Security Council, which is responsible for implementing resolution 2118 (2013).

Annex XII**Statement by the Counsellor of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Diani Jamesha Prince**

We congratulate the United Kingdom on assuming the presidency for this month. You can be assured of our full support. I thank High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

As the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), plays a critical role in safeguarding international peace and security. The importance of the organization's efforts aimed at eliminating and preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, as well as the promotion of the peaceful uses of chemistry, can never be overstated. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines therefore remains fully supportive of the OPCW's mandate.

Successful implementation of both the Convention and resolution 2118 (2013) requires sustained international cooperation. However, this becomes severely strained where trust deficits exist. As such, the OPCW must continuously strive to ensure that its internal structure and all activities are characterized by integrity, transparency and non-politicization. Further, States parties to the Convention should engage constructively and pursue consensus-based decisions to thwart polarization and divisiveness. In all discussions political quarrels ought to be set aside and the collective vision of achieving a world free of chemical weapons must remain at the forefront.

Although there has been slow movement on this file, we recognize the continued cooperation of the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat, despite the impediments presented by the global pandemic. It is our hope that this collaboration will assist in making meaningful progress and assist in swiftly resolving all identified gaps and inconsistencies in the original declaration. We commend the OPCW for maintaining its readiness for deployments as soon as conditions allow and for continuing its important work remotely in as far as it is possible to do so. In this vein, we look forward to receiving all outstanding reports related to this dossier.

There is no question that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances violates international law. Allegations of the use of chemical weapons must therefore never be dismissed. They must always be thoroughly and promptly investigated, and findings must be able to withstand rigorous scrutiny to ensure accountability and prevent impunity. The norm against this reprehensible form of warfare must be preserved.

Only through committed partnership can we prevent the development, stockpiling, transfer and use of chemical weapons. The international community must find common ground to fulfil this enormous responsibility.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb**

[Original: Arabic]

I congratulate you on the assumption by the United Kingdom of the Council presidency this month and wish you and your team every success. I also thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

At the outset, Tunisia reiterates that it is firmly committed to the regime for the prohibition and non-proliferation of chemical weapons, which consists of the Chemical Weapons Convention and its implementing body, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The international community needs to work collectively to preserve the authority, stability and sustainability of this regime, which is based on cooperation, multilateralism and consensus. The aim is to rid the world of chemical weapons and end the threats that weapons of mass destruction pose to humankind, thereby helping to maintain international peace and security.

We must also work to protect the authority and mandate of OPCW, which was established to monitor the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention by States parties and to verify compliance with its provisions, as well as to provide a platform for consultation and cooperation among States parties.

We have been briefed on the latest developments in the Syrian chemical dossier during the reporting period. We note that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose challenges for the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat and to hinder their ability to carry out the Organization's mandate in the Syrian Arab Republic.

We appreciate the commitment to continued cooperation between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Government despite the challenges facing them, as evidenced by the efforts to schedule the twenty-fourth round of technical consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian authorities later this month in Syria.

We urge the Government of Syria to continue to engage in dialogue and to cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in a spirit of constructive engagement, in order to ensure that pending issues are resolved quickly and that the Government fulfils its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Tunisia reaffirms that all allegations of the use of toxic chemical substances as weapons in Syria, including by terrorist groups, must be investigated in a thorough, impartial, independent and transparent manner.

Tunisia once again condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical substances as weapons anywhere, under any circumstances, by anyone and for any reason. The perpetrators of such abhorrent crimes must be held accountable.

In conclusion, we reaffirm that the international community and, in particular, the Security Council have a duty to take collective, concerted and unified action on the Syrian chemical question. We believe that upholding that responsibility is the best way to resolve this matter and thereby to contribute to resolving the Syrian crisis.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward**

We extend our thanks to High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing today, and I welcome the contributions from other members of the Council. As recognized by the Security Council in resolution 2118 (2013), ongoing coordination between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is vital if we are to collectively resolve this issue.

Despite decisions of the Council and that of the OPCW Executive Council of 27 September 2013, Syria's declaration of its chemical weapons programme can still not be considered accurate and complete. The unresolved issues are of a serious and substantive nature.

As the OPCW Director-General notes in his 25 January report (S/2021/84, annex), one of the 19 outstanding issues pertains to a chemical weapons production facility declared by the Syrian National Authority as never having been used for the production of chemical weapons. The review of all the information and other materials gathered by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) since 2014, including samples, indicates that production and/or weaponization of chemical warfare nerve agents did take place there.

The fact that four of the unresolved issues have been closed shows that, contrary to the assertions of some that they are artificial, they can be resolved if Syria chooses to engage genuinely and constructively. Syria needs to provide complete access to documents and witnesses. The cat-and-mouse game of non-credible explanations and excuses cannot continue. The Technical Secretariat has repeatedly made clear that it stands ready to assist Syria in this regard. I note DAT's intention to deploy for consultations again early this month. We expect Syria to provide a full response to all the queries during those meetings.

The ongoing threat posed to international peace and security by these unresolved issues is not hypothetical, especially to the thousands of Syrians who have suffered the horrifying effects on the body of nerve agents and chlorine since 2014.

Annex XV**Statement by the Acting Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Richard Mills**

I thank you, High Representative Nakamitsu, for your briefing.

As we all agree every month, the use of chemical weapons anywhere constitutes a clear threat to international peace and security. The United States remains committed to holding those who use these horrific weapons to account.

The High Representative reiterated an important message from the Secretary-General in her remarks just now, so I would like to reiterate a key message from the United States on this issue. The Al-Assad regime has repeatedly used chemical weapons against the Syrian people, and then subsequently sought to avoid accountability by obstructing independent investigations and undermining both the responsibility and work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The Al-Assad regime's allies, including Russia, have actively sought to block all efforts to promote accountability. Russia, unfortunately, continues to shield the Al-Assad regime from accountability for its chemical weapons attacks, including by spreading disinformation, attacking the professional work of the OPCW, and otherwise seeking to undermine efforts by responsible nations to hold the Al-Assad regime accountable for its use of chemical weapons.

Let me be clear — the United States firmly supports the impartial and independent work of the OPCW. We applaud the OPCW's leadership, the Technical Secretariat and the professional manner in which it carries out its mission. The OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues to carry out its mandate, and we look forward to its future reports.

In response to the IIT's first report, released last April (S/2020/310, annex), in which it concluded that the Al-Assad regime had used chemical weapons on three occasions, the OPCW Executive Council adopted a decision in July 2020 requesting that Syria take measures to redress the situation. Unsurprisingly, Syria failed to complete any of the measures set forth in the decision, as reported by the OPCW Director-General in October.

The United States, along with 45 sponsors, has submitted a draft decision to the OPCW Conference of the States Parties in response to Syria's failure to complete the measures requested by the OPCW Executive Council. We again call upon the Conference of States Parties to take appropriate action when it reconvenes this spring so that we send a strong message to the Al-Assad regime and its supporters that the use of chemical weapons in direct contravention of the Chemical Weapons Convention has consequences.

We also believe that the Security Council must ensure that there are serious consequences for the Al-Assad regime's use of chemical weapons. In 2013, the Security Council decided in resolution 2118 (2013) that the Al-Assad regime shall not use, develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons. The Council further decided that the Al-Assad regime must cooperate fully with the OPCW and the United Nations.

The United States supports these and other efforts aimed at holding the Al-Assad regime responsible for the use of chemical weapons and other ongoing atrocities against Syrian civilians, including mass detention, torture and indiscriminate attacks on civilian infrastructure. Accountability for all of this will be essential to bring long-overdue justice to the victims and their families who need and deserve

the international community's support. Accountability would also help to build confidence in the broader political process, as called for in resolution 2254 (2015), intended to bring stability and peace to Syria.

Let me end by saying, the Syrian people must be allowed to live in a world free of the threat of chemical weapons. It is time for the Al-Assad regime to uphold its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). The Security Council must call out such atrocities and hold those who use chemical weapons accountable.

Annex XVI**Statement by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Pham Hai Anh**

Let me begin by extending our appreciation to Tunisia for a very efficient presidency last month and by congratulating you, Madam President, and the United Kingdom, on assuming the Council's presidency for February.

I thank Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives of Syria and Turkey in our meeting today.

Regarding the cooperation between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian Arab Republic, our delegation takes note of the eighty-eighth monthly report of the OPCW Director-General (see S/2021/84).

We note that there is continued engagement between the Organization and Syria in order to put an end to this protracted issue of chemical weapons in Syria. We are concerned about the impacts of the coronavirus disease on many aspects of the lives of the Syrian people, as well as on the cooperation between the OPCW and Syria during the past period.

It is our strong belief that in order for further progress to be made, there is no other option than that of ensuring cooperation between the two sides. It is a matter of course that the support of the international community for their endeavours remains of great importance in order to facilitate the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

The initial declaration is only the first step but a very important one in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We also experienced initial difficulties when we had just joined the Convention. With assistance from and cooperation with the OPCW Technical Secretariat, we resolved all clarification issues and focused our efforts on other aspects of the implementation.

We will continue our support for the work that the OPCW has been entrusted with, guided by the Convention in assisting its implementation by States parties.

We therefore encourage the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian National Authority to further enhance their technical consultations in order to resolve all outstanding issues. We take note of the continued cooperation and preparations for the next round of consultations later this month.

We are concerned about the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria, which gives rise to serious civilian-protection concerns and long-term impacts on their daily lives.

Viet Nam categorically condemns the use of such weapons in any form, by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, as it is a flagrant violation of international law. We are also concerned over the information regarding the possession of chemical weapons by armed groups.

We share the view that the investigation of alleged uses of chemical weapons help to prevent any recurrence. To achieve that goal, investigations need to be conducted in the most comprehensive, objective and impartial manner possible in order to obtain irrefutable evidence.

Last but not least, our obligations to ensure the full implementation of the CWC are unquestionable, with a view to fulfilling the common commitment to a world free from chemical weapons. Efforts in that direction should be continuously demonstrated by the State parties and the OPCW itself.

Tangible results can be achieved only through promoting unity and cooperation in a most constructive and non-politicized manner.

Annex XVII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Feridun Sinirlioğlu**

I would like to congratulate you on the United Kingdom's assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I would also like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

The Syrian regime, more than seven years after its accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), has not yet made a complete and accurate declaration of its chemical-weapons programme. That should have been done no later than 30 days after the accession. That is unacceptable.

The eighty-eighth monthly report of the OPCW Director General (see S/2021/84) once again attests to a straightforward fact: there are still outstanding issues regarding the Al-Assad regime's chemical-weapons declaration. The regime's declaration can by no means be considered accurate and complete.

Of those 19 remaining outstanding issues, one needs the urgent attention of the Council. Despite the regime's allegations to the contrary, there is a chemical-weapons production facility on which the OPCW Technical Secretariat has requested information. Accordingly, the regime must be forced to declare the exact types and quantities of chemical agents produced and/or weaponized in that facility.

We expect concrete action from the Council to make the regime fully cooperate with the Declaration Assessment Team and immediately declare the full extent of its chemical-weapons programme to the OPCW. I would like to stress once again the importance of the Security Council's unity and determination in that regard.

In reaction to the Syrian regime's non-compliance with its CWC obligations, the OPCW Executive Council adopted an important decision on 9 July 2020. It set clear and verifiable parameters for action and required the Syrian regime to return to full compliance with the Convention within 90 days. Turkey co-sponsored that decision.

However, the Syrian regime has yet again failed to fulfil its obligations under that decision. Further effective measures are needed. In that context, a draft decision has been submitted to be considered during the second part of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties. Turkey is one of the co-sponsors of that draft decision, together with 45 States parties.

The current investigations by the fact-finding mission and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) are important in order to establish the truth about chemical-weapons use in Syria. The IIT must be supported, as it has a unique role in identifying the perpetrators of such use. The Syrian regime's denial of a visa to the IIT is another violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Turkey once again commends and supports the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its investigative bodies.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances is a grave violation of international law and a crime against humanity. We strongly condemn the repeated and well-documented use of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime against its own population. It is our collective responsibility to ensure accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We owe that to the victims.

Ending impunity is indispensable to achieving peace in Syria. The Council must be unified in urging the regime to undertake swift and tangible cooperation with

the OPCW without any further delay. That is also key to preventing the recurrence of any chemical-weapons use in Syria. Those who have influence on the Syrian regime have a historic responsibility in that regard.
