



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

8990th meeting

Thursday, 10 March 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. Leite Novaes
China	Mr. Xing Jisheng
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Mibissa
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
India	Mrs. Maitra
Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
Mexico	Mr. Ochoa Martínez
Norway	Ms. Heimerback
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 4 March 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/181)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

22-28342 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 4 March 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/181)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/181, which contains a letter dated 4 March 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

Mrs. Nakamitsu: I thank Council members for this opportunity to brief them again on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical-weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Since my most recent briefing, on 28 February 2022 (see S/PV.8982), the Office for Disarmament Affairs has, as always, maintained regular contact with counterparts at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter.

As I have previously informed the Council, the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has impacted the OPCW Technical Secretariat's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. Nevertheless, the Secretariat maintains its readiness to deploy. Despite continued travel restrictions, the Technical Secretariat continues to undertake its mandated activities related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical-weapons

programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic to that end.

Efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) are still ongoing to clarify all the outstanding issues related to the initial and subsequent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I have been advised that the OPCW Secretariat has not yet received the requested declaration from the Syrian Arab Republic on all undeclared types and quantities of nerve agents produced and/or weaponized at a former chemical-weapons production facility that was declared by the Syrian Arab Republic as never having been used to produce and/or weaponize chemical-warfare agents.

I have also been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not yet received the requested further information and documentation from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the damage caused during the 8 June attack on a military facility housing a declared former chemical-weapons production facility. Nor has it received a response to the request for information regarding the unauthorized movement and remains of two destroyed cylinders related to the chemical-weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018. In that regard, I call on the Syrian Arab Republic to respond to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's requests with the necessary urgency.

I regret to inform Council members that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is still not in a position to conduct the twenty-fifth round of consultations in Damascus between the Syrian National Authority and the DAT owing to the continued refusal by the Syrian Arab Republic to issue an entry visa for one member of the DAT. It is my understanding that although the exchange of correspondence between the OPCW Secretariat and the Syrian National Authority on this matter continues, the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to confirm that all visas requested by the Secretariat will be issued. I have been informed that the OPCW Technical Secretariat stands ready to deploy the DAT to the Syrian Arab Republic subject to the issuing of visas to all DAT members as well as the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate arrangements for the deployment of the DAT and to comply with resolution 2118 (2013), including by allowing immediate and unfettered access

for the personnel designated by the OPCW Secretariat as soon as possible.

Full cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat is essential to closing all outstanding issues. As has been stressed repeatedly, owing to the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the Technical Secretariat continues to assess that at this stage the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is planning to conduct the next rounds of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in the course of 2022. With regard to the detection of a Schedule 2 chemical at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC in November 2018, I regret to inform the Council that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the OPCW Technical Secretariat to close this issue.

I note that preparations for the in-person meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic remain ongoing. The Technical Secretariat will keep the OPCW Executive Council informed of further developments on this matter.

Consistent with previous updates to the Council, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) remains in the process of studying all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. I note that the OPCW Director-General's monthly report (see S/2022/181) refers to the FFM reports issued by the Technical Secretariat on 24 and 31 January 2022, which concluded that sulfur mustard was used in Marea on 1 September 2015 and that a chlorine cylinder was used as a weapon in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016, respectively. Copies of both FFM reports were circulated to members of the Security Council last month.

I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat planned to deploy the FFM to the Syrian Arab Republic from 22 January to 4 February 2022 to collect information and conduct interviews with regard to incidents in the Aleppo governorate in 2016. However, due to confirmed positive coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases identified within the support team in Damascus, the deployment had to

be postponed. The FFM is preparing for upcoming deployments, which remain subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I understand that the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues its investigations into incidents in which the FFM has determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic. The IIT will issue further reports in due course, subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. I take this opportunity to once again reiterate my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of the work of the OPCW.

With regard to the decision entitled "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" (C-25/DEC.9), adopted on 21 April 2021, I have been informed that, unfortunately, the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet completed any of the measures stipulated in paragraph 5 of decision EC-94/DEC.2. I therefore reiterate my call on the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in this regard.

The use of chemical weapons is a grave violation of international law and an affront to our shared humanity. We need to remain vigilant to ensure that these awful weapons are never used again and are eliminated, not only in Syria, but everywhere.

Let me close by assuring Council members of the commitment of the United Nations to work with all Member States to restore the taboo against chemical weapons and to ensure that those responsible for their use, who have violated such a profound international norm, are held to account.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Council met 10 days ago to discuss the Syrian chemical weapons (see S/PV.8982), and since then there have been no changes on the ground or at the level of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). This was reconfirmed by the report of the Director-General of the OPCW for the month of February (see S/2022/181). Indeed, the fact that the report came out with a delay in March, rather than in the last days of February, as usual, can only be interpreted as an attempt to provide us with a

formal reason to meet today, which in turn confirms the fact that our current schedule for discussing chemical weapons in Syria in the Council is completely artificial. The delegations have nothing to discuss, so when the discussions are held this frequently, we are simply repeating the same thing all over again.

On many occasions, we have proposed that the schedule be amended so that the Council can work more effectively on this issue. In addition, the same proposals were put forward by the delegation of China, but our proposals were not supported by our Western colleagues. We regret that, for them, holding meetings for the sake of holding meetings is more important than having a substantive discussion in the Council, and this kind of approach can but undermine the authority of this body of ours.

Now, to illustrate the exaggerated attention that our Western colleagues are paying to Syria, I propose that we recall what is happening in other hotspots and which is not being discussed in the Council as frequently. For example, let us take Libya. In Libya, on 10 February, the House of Representatives confirmed Fathi Bashagha as the new prime minister of the country, while there continues to be an acting head of the Government of National Unity, Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh. The new prime minister was inaugurated. Prior to the inauguration, however, two new Ministers were kidnapped, and, as recently as February, there was an attempt on Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh's life. In such conditions, there is a growing risk of ending up with de facto dual Government and deterioration of the situation in the country, which could in turn lead to a renewed armed confrontation. But the penholders on Libya in the Security Council are pretending that nothing extraordinary is taking place.

Despite such a kaleidoscope of worrying events, no one proposed that we amend the schedule that we have on Libya, which is once every two months. But, on the other hand, every month, we have to discuss Syria at least twice, and only because the number of such meetings is of importance for our Western colleagues. In this, we can see yet another egregious manifestation of double standards.

Turning to the issue at hand, I must say that our concerns with regard to the OPCW on Syria are very well known. Let me repeat them briefly since, after all, we are meeting on this topic. They include the politicized work conducted by the OPCW; the breaches by the Technical Secretariat of Chemical

Weapons Convention methodology; the discovered facts of direct forgery conducted when the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission report on the Douma incident was being prepared; the activity of the illegitimate Investigation and Identification Team, which time and time again churns out biased conclusions about Damascus' culpability, ignoring the fact that chemical weapons were used by terrorists; and most importantly, the lack of a desire on the part of the OPCW leadership to rectify this deplorable situation.

We addressed this in great detail at our most recent meeting, less than two weeks ago, so I am not going to dwell on it now. Let me simply repeat that we expect that the Director-General of OPCW will, in the very near future, find time in his allegedly busy schedule to brief the Council and answer all of the questions that the Russian Federation put to him earlier. Otherwise, our suspicion that the Technical Secretariat does have something to hide will only be heightened. There is nothing else for me to say today.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank the High Representative for her briefing this morning.

It continues to be essential that the Security Council receive these regular updates on chemical weapons in Syria and on the critical work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in that regard.

Last week, the Security Council received the 101st report of the OPCW Director-General on Syria's chemical weapons (see S/2022/181) — the 101st report — and yet, sadly, very little is new. This report, as well as the contents of the 23 February Technical Secretariat briefing to the CWC States parties in The Hague, continues to drive home a simple point — the Syrian regime has yet to meet its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013). We urge Syria to stop obstructing the work of the OPCW and to come into compliance with its obligations.

We have heard again that the Syrian Government continues to refuse to issue the necessary visas to all members of the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team so that they can travel to Syria for the twenty-fifth round of consultations. It has been over a year since the previous such consultations occurred. The Syrian Government does not get to select which OPCW experts are involved in the assessment. It is obligated instead to cooperate fully with the OPCW.

We have heard again today that the Al-Assad regime continues to withhold evidence corroborating the claimed destruction in 2021 of two chlorine cylinders related to the April 2018 chemical weapons attack in Douma. We have heard again that the Al-Assad regime continues to fail to explain why those chlorine cylinders were moved from their inspected and documented location, despite specific instructions not to move them without prior OPCW notification and approval. They were moved to the site of the air strike, where they were purportedly destroyed.

I think it is important again to note that every single one of the 17 amendments that the Syrian Government has made to its declaration has been in response to unreported materials and irregularities in Syria's Declaration uncovered by OPCW experts conducting their thorough examinations. The amendments are not evidence of serious cooperation, but rather were made because of its failure to fully cooperate.

Despite the regular claims to the contrary by Syria and its enablers, the Al-Assad regime has not fully cooperated with the OPCW, as it is required to do by resolution 2118 (2013). Syria has not been forthcoming in its declaration regarding the scope of its chemical weapons programme. It has yet to carry out any of the measures requested by the OPCW Executive Council after it was found by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team to have used those weapons on its own people in three separate attacks in Ltamenah in March 2017.

Instead of cooperation, the Al-Assad regime offers thin excuses and claims of bias. Those claims are belied by the detailed reports of the impartial, objective and thorough investigations that are performed by OPCW experts.

Unfortunately, the Al-Assad regime has helped on the Council. The Russian Federation has repeatedly spread disinformation regarding Syria's repeated use of chemical weapons. The recent web of lies that Russia has cast in an attempt to justify the premeditated and unjustified war it has undertaken against Ukraine should make clear once and for all that Russia also cannot be trusted when it talks about chemical weapons use in Syria.

The global norm against the use of chemical weapons and the Chemical Weapons Convention have helped to make the world a safer place. Failure to hold the Syrian regime to account for its use of chemical

weapons and violations of its international obligations puts not just the Syrian people and not just the people in the Middle East, but all of us at risk.

In conclusion, the United States once again calls on the Al-Assad regime to end its systematic obstruction of the work of the OPCW, to fully cooperate with the Fact-Finding Mission, the Declaration Assessment Team and the Investigation and Identification Team and, to fulfil its international obligations related to such horrific weapons once and for all.

Mr. Xing Jisheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

First of all, China would like to echo Russia's comment about improving the working method on the Syrian issue. The Security Council should proceed in its work on the basis of effectiveness by reducing the frequency with which it considers the issue of chemical weapons in Syria or combining relevant issues for joint consideration. China has taken note of the latest monthly report (S/2022/181, annex) on the issue of chemical weapons in Syria submitted by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The Council discussed the issue of chemical weapons in Syria just last week (see S/PV.8982). No further progress has been made thus far.

I wish to reiterate China's position. The issue of chemical weapons is of great importance. The OPCW's investigation and attribution of the alleged use of chemical weapons should be conducted strictly within the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention, while respecting the facts and drawing conclusions based on conclusive evidence.

In that connection, China has always been concerned about the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team and its work. Before issuing a new report, the Fact-Finding Mission should first clarify the questions on the Douma incident report, as well as setting norms on the sources of information and working methods and improving the credibility of its work.

The issue of chemical weapons in Syria must be resolved through dialogue and cooperation. We call on the Technical Secretariat to show flexibility by sending experts with valid visas to Syria for consultations

on the assessment of the initial Declaration to avoid a stalemate.

We also encourage the Technical Secretariat to maintain communication with the Syrian Government on such matters as visits to the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre and face-to-face meetings between the OPCW Director-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria. With regard to the information provided by the Syrian Government on the position and use of chemical weapons by terrorist organizations, the Technical Secretariat must take that seriously.

The OPCW currently faces challenges in its work. The parties are seriously divided and opposed. We hope that the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat will make greater efforts to uphold objectivity and neutrality, depoliticize the work of the OPCW, encourage States parties to return to the tradition of making decisions by consensus and maintain the authority and effectiveness of the organization.

China also hopes that the Director-General himself will come to brief the Security Council as soon as possible.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Just 10 days ago, we discussed Syria and its chemical weapons in the Council (see S/PV.8982). It was clear then that Syria remained uncooperative. The serious outstanding issues on its chemical weapons declaration, which include the fate of thousands of chemical munitions and hundreds of tons of chemicals agents, remain unresolved.

The terms of resolution 2118 (2013) continue to be breached. We therefore call on the Syrian regime, as we do every month, to cooperate with Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and return to compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In the 10 days since we last met, Russia has continued its war of aggression against Ukraine, besieging cities, killing civilians indiscriminately and forcing millions to flee in search of safety. The parallels with Russian action in Syria are clear. Regrettably, the comparison also extends to chemical weapons, as we see the familiar spectre of Russian chemical weapons-related disinformation raising its head in Ukraine.

Russia has a long history of deflection, denial and obstructive behaviour when it comes to chemical weapons. In 2017, President Putin claimed that the Khan Shaykhun attack — for which the expert and impartial OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism found the Al-Assad regime responsible — was staged by the West.

Russia has offered more than 40 different narratives about the chemical weapons attack its military agents carried out in Salisbury four years ago. We have seen nothing but obfuscation and falsehoods in relation to the Novichok attack on Alexei Navalny.

As colleagues listen to the Russian statements during this meeting, I ask them to consider who we should believe. Should we believe the State, with a track record of using chemical weapons, that has denied and deflected questions about attacks by its clients, the Al-Assad regime, whether in Khan Shaykhun, Ltamenah or Saraqib, or should we believe the independent, impartial international organizations that have conducted rigorous investigations, attributing responsibility based on clear evidence?

The Council has heard enough lies about chemical weapons from the Russian Federation. We must stop pretending that the Al-Assad regime is acting in good faith. We should stand up for the rules that we have all agreed, look those who break them in the eye and hold them to account for their actions.

Finally, I note that Libya is on our agenda for next Wednesday. I look forward to discussing it then.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Let me thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I have a moral obligation to say a few words on what is happening these days in Mariupol before I return to Syria.

There is this city of roughly half a million people in Ukraine — the country that for two weeks has been under a brutal attack from Russia. It is a city besieged, cut off by the aggressor, which has not been able to capture it and is bombarding it savagely. It is a city that has been left without electricity, water and food — whatever is needed to live — and where civilians are cutting trees to fight the cold and melting snow to drink and not die from dehydration. That is Mariupol — once a centre for industry and education in Ukraine, now a scorched earth, the face of the Russian aggression.

Yesterday, the most vulnerable and defenceless people, pregnant women with their newborns, might have believed that they were in one of the most secure places one can image — a hospital, where one goes to heal and where one is taken care of. They were not. Russian bombs found them in a deliberate attack. We heard that it was a base for the Ukrainian army. What we saw were women in labour among rubble.

We condemn that in the strongest terms. It is a crime, which should not remain unpunished, and no one should get away with a crime.

(spoke in French)

Less than a fortnight ago, we made an observation on this issue that has unfortunately become a constant, damning fact — the deliberate lack of cooperation on the part of Syria to respond to the demands clearly formulated in resolution 2118 (2013) (see S/PV.8943). We commend the professional and impartial work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its Technical Secretariat to shed full light on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, which is not in doubt.

However, for more than a year, the OPCW team of experts has not carried out any verification on Syrian territory, and that is because Syria is hiding behind a response that is neither accurate nor complete under the terms of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We demand full and unequivocal cooperation from the Syrian authorities with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and reject any efforts to discredit or politicize its work. Syria has no right to decide on the rules of procedure or the choice of inspectors.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor under any circumstances.

We remain convinced that the swift conclusion of the investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria serves, first and foremost, Syria and its citizens and will, in turn, enable the Council to more effectively support the Syrian people in their quest for a peaceful and better future. It is time for the regime to understand that.

(spoke in English)

Let me end where I started — in Ukraine. As we speak of chemical weapons in Syria, we are extremely worried by the claims from Kremlin officials about alleged chemical and biological weapon laboratories in

Ukraine. We know how harmful such information can be. We consider it yet another false pretext that we have seen Russia repeatedly use to justify the unjustifiable and to excuse the inexcusable — its horrific actions in Ukraine.

Mr. De Rivière (France) *(spoke in French)*: First of all, I would like to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

We must not lose sight of why we are here. Since 2013, the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons against its own population on at least eight occasions. That has been demonstrated unequivocally by the investigations of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations. Yet, since the unanimous adoption of resolution 2118 (2013) more than eight years ago, no progress has been made.

I would like to make three points.

First, France welcomes the publication a few weeks ago of the two reports of the Fact-Finding Mission (S/2022/85, annex and S/2022/116, annex). They are very well documented. They show that chemical weapons were used in Marea in 2015 and in Kafr Zeita in 2016. The work of the Investigation and Identification team to identify the perpetrators is essential. France will be paying attention to its further conclusions.

Secondly, it is not acceptable that the Syrian regime continue to obstruct the work of the OPCW. It has still not issued the necessary visas for the deployment of the initial Declaration Assessment Team. It continues to interfere in the selection of inspectors. Under false pretences, it seeks to obstruct the tasks of the Technical Secretariat, which is showing persistence and great professionalism. The disinformation campaigns against it are unacceptable and must stop.

Thirdly, the measures taken in April 2021 at the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention are not irreversible. The suspended rights and privileges can be restored. All that is required is for Syria to comply with its treaty obligations.

Everyone knows the despicable acts for which the regime is responsible. That is why France is firmly committed to fighting impunity. Victims are turning to national courts. Let us be clear: there will be no leniency for the war criminals who use these shocking weapons, banned by international law.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for another briefing on the progress towards the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

Let me start by underlining Norway's consistent message that the Syrian Arab Republic must fulfil its obligations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). Today, I would like to highlight four items that require immediate attention in that regard.

First, and most urgently, there are 20 outstanding issues from Syria's initial declaration that stand unresolved. We urge Syria to provide sufficient technical information and explanation to close those outstanding gaps.

Secondly, we regret that persistent delays remain in the issuance of visas to the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). Regular DAT consultations are important for ensuring consistent cooperation and exchanges of information and for providing technical assistance to Syria. In that regard, I would also like to underline Syria's obligation to cooperate fully with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Resolution 2118 (2013) explicitly mentions Syria's obligation to: accept personnel designated by the OPCW and to provide these personnel with immediate and unfettered access and the right to inspect any and all sites.

Thirdly, the OPCW has requested further information about the reported attack on a former chemical-weapons production facility that apparently contained equipment of relevance to an ongoing OPCW investigation. The OPCW has also requested the declaration of all undeclared types and quantities of nerve agents produced and/or weaponized at a certain former chemical weapons production facility. It is vital that Syria comply with those requests.

Fourthly, it is critical that Syria complete the necessary measures to lift the suspension of its rights and privileges as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Let me conclude by underlining that cooperation is essential for settling all unresolved issues and finally achieving this eight-year-long effort to ensure the full elimination of the Syrian chemical-weapons programme.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): I want to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her very important briefing to the Security Council today.

I want to begin by stressing the importance of maintaining our collective commitment to upholding the international legal norm against chemical weapons, which are abhorrent. There can be no justification for their use at any time, anywhere.

The role of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as the independent organization mandated by the international community to implement the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), in maintaining the absolute prohibition on chemical weapons remains essential. In carrying out that role, the OPCW has clearly and repeatedly demonstrated its integrity, professionalism and impartiality, including in its work on Syria.

The ongoing efforts within the Council and externally to politicize the work and findings of the OPCW and to defend Syria's actions are deeply disturbing. The Council should be united and clear in its full support for the OPCW and Director-General Arias and in its rejection of disinformation efforts aimed at undermining the work of the Organization.

The efforts by Syria and others to frustrate the work of the OPCW have serious consequences. For more than eight years, the OPCW has sought to resolve Syria's issues around Syria's declarations. Twenty substantive issues are outstanding. These cover production facilities, stockpiles of munitions and agents and research and development activities left undeclared by Syria.

Over the same period, the OPCW, with clear and compelling evidence, has shown 17 incidents where chemical weapons were likely or definitely used in Syria, in some cases by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, but in most cases by the Syrian Air Force. Those attacks have led to the deaths of hundreds of people and lasting injury and suffering for many more. Similar conclusions have been reached by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mission. There is no justification for those attacks and no one should be allowed to confuse or excuse these facts.

The Council must uphold its decisions in resolution 2118 (2013) and stand united behind the OPCW in

its work to ensure that Syria's chemical-weapons programme is verifiably destroyed. At the same time, Syria should engage in serious and meaningful cooperation with the OPCW. That is the only route to a resolution on this file.

We hope that the proposed meeting Director-General Arias and Foreign Minister Mekdad will take place soon and that it will focus on achieving concrete outcomes. Ireland calls on Syria to engage sincerely with the OPCW to finalize arrangements for that meeting. The Technical Secretariat has made clear the concrete actions necessary to resolve outstanding issues with Syria's declarations. Syria should implement them and provide the necessary clarity on all outstanding matters.

We urge Syria to cease blocking the deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to Syria, now outstanding for almost a year. Under resolution 2118 (2013) and the CWC, Syria is obliged to provide immediate and unfettered access to OPCW personnel in Syria. We call on Syria to issue the necessary visas for all members of the DAT in order to enable the Organization's inspection work to continue.

Syria's engagement should take the form of positive, productive action rather than excuses and delays. Ireland will continue to support all efforts to resolve outstanding issues on this file.

Mr. Leite Novaes (Brazil): I would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing. I would also like to welcome the delegations of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.

Only 10 days ago we met here to debate this very topic and to discuss the same reports by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM). The Council must pay close attention to the progress in the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria and everywhere, as well as enforce accountability for their use. However, Brazil does believe that the periodicity of these meetings should be better discussed among members or we risk diminishing the importance that Member States and other actors attach to the subject.

Having said that, I once again thank the OPCW Director-General for his latest report (S/2022/181, annex). Brazil firmly supports the work of the Organization in implementing the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Brazil condemns in

the strongest possible terms the use of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances. We therefore support a strong, transparent and independent OPCW.

I would also like to take this opportunity to once again note the important work of the Fact-Finding Mission, including its latest reports on allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Marea and Kafr Zeita. Brazil has thoroughly analysed not only these, but also previous reports issued by the FFM, the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Investigation and Identification Team on episodes related to the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Given the gravity of the situation, we reiterate that all investigations pertaining to those incidents must be impartial, balanced, technical and comprehensive.

We continue to advocate for the need to restore trust between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic, which would constitute a fundamental step towards overcoming the regrettable politicization that has undermined the culture of consensus within the Organization and its decision-making bodies.

Brazil welcomes recent efforts made by both the OPCW Director-General and the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates to have an in-person meeting. That is the kind of constructive approach that helps build confidence and paves the way for the consolidation of a comprehensive and effective dialogue. We encourage both parties to keep up the good work in order to ensure that the meeting takes place as soon as possible.

Finally, we encourage the Syrian Government to provide full access to the OPCW expert teams, including by issuing the necessary visas. Once travel restrictions worldwide begin to be lifted, we look forward to the deployment of further on-site inspections, which could help advance a conclusion to the Syrian file.

Mrs. Maitra (India): We would like to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her update.

We have taken note of the contents of the latest reports by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted to the Security Council pursuant to resolution 2118 (2013), as well as of the monthly submission made by the Syrian Arab Republic detailing measures

undertaken in order to implement its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

We encourage continued engagement between Syria and the OPCW Technical Secretariat in order to resolve the outstanding issues. We continue to hope that the twenty-fifth round of talks between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian Arab Republic will be organized at the earliest possible date. We also hope that the in-person meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria and the OPCW Director-General will be held soon.

It is our principled stand that the CWC is a unique, non-discriminatory disarmament instrument for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. India attaches high importance to the CWC and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. We support the collective efforts of all the parties to ensure that the credibility and integrity of the Convention are maintained to the fullest.

India is against the use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. India has consistently maintained that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, credible and objective. Such an investigation should follow scrupulously the provisions and procedures embedded in the Convention and in conformity with the delicate balance of power and responsibility enshrined in it to establish facts and reach evidence-based conclusions.

India has also repeatedly cautioned against the possibility of terrorist entities and individuals gaining access to chemical weapons, including in the region. The reports of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant have also referred to the repeated deployments of chemical weapons by United Nations-proscribed terrorist groups and those affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) against civilian populations between 2014 and 2016. ISIL/Da'esh remains active in Syria and Iraq, where the group is seeking to rebuild its capabilities, as indicated by the Al-Hasakah prison attack in January.

India continues to believe that progress on other political and humanitarian tracks would also help in facilitating the overall political peace process in Syria, as advocated by resolution 2254 (2015).

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3): Gabon, Kenya and my country, Ghana.

To begin with, let me express our appreciation to Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing on the activities undertaken in the past month towards the implementation of the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, pursuant to resolution 2118 (2013) and other relevant decisions of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The A3 welcomes the report of the OPCW covering the period from 24 January to 23 February (S/2022/181, annex). We also welcome the participation of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey in this meeting.

In adopting resolution 2118 (2013), the Council signalled its unanimous and strong objection to the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstance and, recognizing the threat posed to the maintenance of international peace and security, endorsed the expeditious and verifiable destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. It is in this context that we acknowledge the role of the OPCW in the implementation of the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme.

We note with concern, however, the persisting divergence between the positions of the OPCW and the Syrian authorities with regard to the unaddressed gaps, inconsistencies and outstanding issues in Syria's initial and subsequent submissions in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We believe that meaningful progress can be made towards the full implementation of the elimination programme through enhanced relations and good-faith cooperation between the OPCW, together with its implementing bodies, and the Syrian National Authority. We therefore urge the Council to concertedly support efforts in that direction.

In our view, the proposed in-person meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Mr. Fayssal Mekdad, and the Director-General of the OPCW could be a useful opportunity for confidence-building and a recommitment by Syria to its obligations. It is therefore our expectation that the officials in charge will make meaningful progress for that meeting to be held sooner rather than later.

The A3 takes note of the Syrian National Authority's submission to the Executive Council of its ninety-ninth monthly report concerning activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons, as well as its chemical weapons production facilities, as required of it by the Executive Council.

With regard to the deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to Syria, the A3 urges the Syrian National Authority to comply with its obligations to grant unfettered and unhindered access to Syria for all members of the Team. We believe that the DAT and the Syrian National Authority, working collaboratively through enhanced communications and exchange of information, can explore opportunities to overcome the present limitations to the holding of the twenty-fifth round of consultations

We also look forward to further information on subsequent rounds of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre, which have been planned for this year. We take note of the continuous support of the United Nations Office for Project Services within the framework of the Tripartite Agreement reached with the OPCW and the Syrian authorities. The A3 also acknowledges the difficulties posed by the ongoing coronavirus disease pandemic to the work of the OPCW in Syria and notes the Technical Secretariat's commitment to ensuring continuity, pending improvement in the situation.

The A3 will continue to support accountability measures to hold perpetrators to account, deter the further use by State and non-State actors of chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and reinforce the international norms against their use. We acknowledge, in this regard, the important work of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria and the Investigation and Identification Team and stress the need for them to remain independent, transparent and impartial in carrying out their mandates.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate Africa's principled position against the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances, as no cause could justify their use. In that regard, let me express our support for efforts towards the early closure of the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme.

Mr. Ochoa Martínez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I thank High Representative Nakamitsu

for her presentation and welcome the participation of the delegations of Syria, Iran and Turkey.

We are meeting once again today to review the Syrian chemical weapons dossier, and we note that inconsistencies persist in the initial Syrian declaration. Unfortunately, despite many attempts, convening the twenty-fifth round of consultations has also not been possible, owing to the refusal to issue visas to all members of the Declaration Assessment Team. We once again respectfully but firmly appeal to the Syrian authorities to facilitate the work of the Declaration Assessment Team.

With regard to the visits scheduled for 2022 to the Scientific Studies and Research Centre facilities in Barzah and Jamrayah, we urge the authorities to allow the timely deployment of the inspectors of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Likewise, we renew our request for clarification concerning the facts in connection with the unauthorized custody and transfer of chlorine cylinders related to the April 2018 Douma attack.

We regret that Syria continues to fail to comply with the obligations set out both in resolution 2118 (2013) and under the Chemical Weapons Convention itself. We call once again for compliance with both. As we mentioned at February's meeting (see S/PV.8982), we have noted with concern that the investigations of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria have found reasonable grounds to believe that chemicals were used as weapons at Marea and Kafr Zeita. Without question, the possibility that non-State actors, including those listed as terrorist groups by the Council, could acquire chemical weapons is of great concern.

Mexico once again expresses its confidence in the professionalism, impartiality and independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and investigation teams, and reiterates its condemnation of the use of any type of chemical weapon by any actor and under any circumstances.

In conclusion, Mexico reiterates that there is no military solution to the conflict in Syria. We call for full compliance with resolution 2254 (2015) and constructive participation in the political process facilitated by the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing.

The total elimination of chemical weapons is a shared goal among the international community, considering the horrific effects of their use. In this context, we reiterate the principled position of the United Arab Emirates, which rejects and condemns the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances, by anyone and anywhere, especially as their use constitutes a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law and is also a serious threat to international peace and security.

With regard to today's discussion, any tangible progress in the chemical weapons file of the Syrian crisis requires addressing the existing gaps. In principle, a constructive and meaningful dialogue between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Syrian Arab Republic should be encouraged. Furthermore, the modalities of their cooperation should be improved upon, in line with the principles on which the organization was established and its technical nature, which includes consensus and non-politicization. We believe that facilitating the Declaration Assessment Team's visit to Syria will contribute to achieving these goals.

In the context of the presence of terrorist groups and armed militias in Syria, such as the terrorist organization Da'esh, and these groups' efforts to develop their weapons and combat capabilities, special importance should be accorded to preventing terrorists from obtaining chemical weapons, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. Accordingly, we stress the importance of continuing to combat Da'esh in Syria to prevent it from reorganizing its ranks or acquiring chemical weapons.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates stresses the need to continue working with State parties and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to eliminate this peril, which poses a grave threat to international peace and security. We also note the importance of ensuring progress on the chemical weapons file in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013).

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has requested the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I am not going to take up too much of my colleagues' time.

Since a number of our Western colleagues touched on issues that are not related to the topic of today's meeting — namely, Russia's special military operation in Ukraine — I would like to respond to what has been said. For example, the representative of Albania mentioned the situation of maternity hospital No. 1 in Mariupol, where there were allegedly casualties after an attack by Russian aviation. Yesterday, we distributed, as an official document of the Security Council, a letter by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, in which we underscored that as early as 7 March, in our statement to the Council (see S/PV.8988), we drew members' attention to the fact that the facility in question had long been taken over by Azov Battalion and converted into a military facility for Ukrainian nationalists. There have not been women in labour there for a long time, which can be confirmed in the abundant evidence on social media.

Furthermore, if Council members are considering exploring this topic further, I would like to underscore that the people of Mariupol, whom the Azov Battalion is using as human shields, saw the photos that were published on the Internet and identified the model in the photos as Marianna Podgurskaya. She plays three pregnant women, with different makeup for each character. She can also be seen in other photos by the same photographer, Evgeniy Maloletka, who is covering the tragedy in Ukraine. That photographer works with the Associated Press, *The New York Times* and so forth.

I urge my colleagues to not spread fakes in the Security Council. We had enough of those with the White Helmet story, but Council members have not learned their lesson. Therefore, I call on them to be responsible at our meetings.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of China has asked for the floor for a further statement.

Mr. Xing Jisheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The subject of today's meeting is the issue of chemicals in Syria. China hopes that the members of the Security Council can focus on the topic of this meeting and refrain from introducing issues that are not related to the subject under discussion, so as to ensure that the Council can consider and deliberate on relevant issues in an efficient and normal manner.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My country's delegation would like at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your sisterly country, the United Arab Emirates, on your accession to the presidency of the Security Council this month. We are confident that you will manage its work successfully. We would also like to thank the permanent delegation of the Russian Federation for its efforts during its presidency of the Council in February.

Nine years ago, on 19 March 2013, terrorist groups launched a chemical weapons missile in Aleppo governorate. That attack claimed 25 martyrs, most of whom were from the Syrian Arab Army, and 110 others who suffered asphyxia and fainting in Khan Al-Assal. In the wake of that incident, my country's Government sent a request to the previous Secretary-General, asking for the creation of an independent technical mission to investigate the incident. Unfortunately, and despite months-long delays, the mission has never visited the site or investigated anything to date. The Khan Al-Assal incident remains evidence of the fact that some well-known countries are covering for the crimes of terrorist organizations, which is living proof of the scope of manipulation and politicization of what is called the Syrian chemical dossier.

The approach to addressing the incident of Khan Al-Assal, which, I repeat, claimed 25 martyrs, most of them members of the Syrian Arab Army, and 110 others who suffered asphyxia and fainting, became the approach adopted by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Mission for all these past years. Requests from the Syrian Government to investigate similar incidents, in which terrorist groups used lethal chemical weapons against civilians and Government forces, have been met with the same delaying tactics.

Furthermore, the Fact-Finding Mission has used faulty and dangerous methods that are not in line with the provisions of the Convention and the terms of reference, whereby it accepts and receives samples from anonymous third parties outside of Syria, instead of collecting and preserving samples itself. In addition, the Mission uses open sources and information from terrorist groups and their sponsors, which leads to erroneous results and undermines the credibility of its reports and the professionalism of its work.

My country, Syria, voluntarily acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention and destroyed its stockpile of chemical weapons and their production facilities. We were mindful of addressing specific outstanding issues by cooperating with the OPCW in order to close this dossier permanently. In that regard, the Syrian National Authority has facilitated the holding of 24 rounds of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team over the years. We welcome the twenty-fifth round of consultations, to be held in Damascus or in The Hague.

The Technical Secretariat of the OPCW bears full responsibility for the delay of the twenty-fifth round of consultations. That is because its Director-General has stated, right here in the Council, that it was too hot in Syria during the summer months for its staff to go there. He then linked the delay to the non-issuance of a visa to one member of the Team. Just one individual was denied a visa. It was not, as speakers have said today, that all Team members were denied visas. Work does not depend on that one person who was not granted a visa. My country, Syria, is not obstructing the deployment of the Team. This is yet another example of the pressure being exerted and of attempts to undermine Syria's cooperation efforts.

With regard to its cooperation efforts, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted its ninety-ninth monthly report on its destruction of chemical weapons and associated production facilities. Efforts are under way to facilitate the holding of a high-level meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Director-General of the OPCW as quickly as possible, and to define its agenda and work programme to allow progress to be made on certain issues related to the erroneous practices of the teams of the OPCW.

The success of the work of the OPCW and its mandate will neither be achieved by subjecting it to pressure and dictates, nor by politicizing the work of its organs and compelling the Executive Board to adopt resolutions that are impossible to implement, nor by the suspension of Syria's rights and privileges by the OPCW Conference of States Parties.

The success of the work of the OPCW depends on undertaking a comprehensive review of all erroneous working methods used by the Technical Secretariat and its teams and on returning to the purely technical, non-politicized nature of its work. It should not become

a tool that serves the agendas of some countries at the expense of the non-proliferation regime and our shared values.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Takht Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Politicizing the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and exploiting the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for politically driven national goals has major negative consequences for the Convention's authority and credibility, as well as those of the organization. We reiterate our call for the complete, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention, as well as the preservation of the authority of the OPCW.

Syria has complied with its obligations under the Convention and continues to cooperate with the OPCW, submitting its 99th report on operations linked to the destruction of chemical weapons and associated production sites on its territory, on 17 January. In addition, Syria regularly provides information to the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and the Secretariat of the United Nations about the possession and use of chemical weapons by some terrorist organizations, as well as the fabrication of chemical incidents. The Syrian army is then blamed for those heinous acts. Recently, in Idlib governorate, members of the terrorist group Al-Nusra fabricated a chemical incident.

Mindful of the disastrous and horrific repercussions of the systematic use of chemical weapons by Saddam Hussein, Iraq's ex-dictator, during his aggression against our country, Iran reiterates its opposition to the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. Only the complete destruction and elimination of all chemical weapons on a global scale, as well as the implementation of all essential measures to prevent their production, can ensure that chemical weapons are never used again.

We reiterate our call on the Security Council to optimize its meetings on Syria. Dedicating one monthly meeting of the Council to the repetition of positions and unfounded allegations against the Syrian Government is not conducive to efficiency in the Security Council.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Keçeli (Turkey): We thank you, Mr. President, for keeping this topic on the agenda of the Security Council.

We also thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her continued work on this important issue.

The most recent report (S/2022/181, annex) of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) underscores one simple fact — the Syrian regime flouts its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention by failing to fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons. The outstanding issues we have discussed on numerous occasions persist, namely, identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in chemical weapons declaration. The information requests of the OPCW remain unanswered.

Furthermore, the regime continues to obstruct technical consultations with the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team by manipulating and abusing the visa issue. In addition, the regime refuses to cooperate with and grant access to the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). We also take note of the two most recent reports of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM), which have established the use of chemicals as weapons in Marea, on 1 September 2015, and Kafr Zeita, on 1 October 2016 (S/2022/85, annex and S/2022/116, annex, respectively). We await further investigation by the IIT into the identification of the perpetrators.

There is now a growing body of scientific evidence behind the Syrian regime's continued failure to comply with its international obligations. The reports of the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigation Mechanism, as well as of the FFM and the IIT, all point in the same direction. Such violations have serious repercussions for international peace and security.

It takes a war criminal to use chemical weapons once, but it takes the Al-Assad regime to use chemical weapons on at least eight separate occasions. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. We once again underscore the special responsibility of those backing the regime on its current course.

The Security Council must speak with a unified voice on this grave issue. The Syrian regime must be urged to fully cooperate with the OPCW.

The perpetrators of those attacks must be identified and brought to justice without further delay. Impunity for such abhorrent crimes against humanity cannot and should not be tolerated.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.