



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

9141st meeting

Thursday, 29 September 2022, 3 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. De Rivière	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Stastoli
	Brazil	Mr. Wazima Szatmari
	China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
	Gabon	Ms. Bongo
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Mr. Brady
	Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
	Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Norway	Ms. Syed
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Almazrouei
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Eckersley
	United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 August 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/658)

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22-60546 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 August 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/658)

The President (*spoke in French*): 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 Türkiye 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/2022/658, which contains the text of a letter dated 30 August 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 Security Council members for the 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 the previous consideration of this matter by the Council, and consistent with established practice, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been in regular contact with its counterparts at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter. Per established practice, I held a monthly call with the OPCW Director-General on 23 September to receive an update on developments and ascertain his views.

Efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to clarify all the outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration and subsequent declarations of the Syrian Arab Republic remain as previously outlined.

Unfortunately, the Syrian Arab Republic continues to place conditions on the DAT's deployment, in

contravention of its declaration-related obligations as well as its obligations to cooperate with the OPCW as stipulated under the Chemical Weapons Convention, the decisions of the OPCW policymaking organs and relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Consequently, the OPCW Technical Secretariat's attempts to organize the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority in Damascus continue to be unsuccessful.

In the light of that situation, and subject to a change in attitude by the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has proposed to address the shortcomings of Syria's initial declaration through the exchange of correspondence, even if such exchanges demonstrably bring about fewer outcomes when compared to the DAT's deployments to the Syrian Arab Republic, as was the case for the period between June 2016 and April 2019.

With the aim of assisting the Syrian Arab Republic in resolving the 20 outstanding issues, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has provided the Syrian Arab Republic with the list of pending declarations and other documents requested by the DAT since 2019.

I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not yet received the requested information from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the unauthorised movement of the two cylinders related to the chemical weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018, which were destroyed in an attack on a chemical weapons production facility. The Syrian Arab Republic must respond with urgency to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's requests.

Full cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat is essential to closing all outstanding issues. As has been stressed on a monthly basis for many years now, due 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.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat remains fully committed to ensuring the full implementation by the Syrian Arab Republic of all its declaration requirements and to assisting Syria in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. I take this opportunity to reiterate my full support for the integrity, professionalism,

impartiality, objectivity and independence of the work of the OPCW.

I have been informed that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is currently planning the 2022 rounds of inspections of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre. With regard to the detection of a schedule 2 chemical at those facilities 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.

With regard to the invitation extended for an in-person meeting between the OPCW Director-General to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, I note that, while the Syrian Arab Republic has suggested the meeting place in Beirut, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has requested clarifications from the Syrian Arab Republic, as it has not yet received a response on the latest version of the proposed agenda submitted on 20 December 2021.

Further to previous updates to the Council, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) remains in the process of studying all information available related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. I have been advised that the FFM is continuing its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic and other States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with regard to a number of incidents and is preparing for upcoming deployments.

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.

On 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. The OPCW Technical Secretariat will continue to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic with regard to their completion and will continue to report to the OPCW Executive Council as mandated.

The preamble of the Chemical Weapons Convention calls on us to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons. Such use is indefensible and

constitutes a threat to international peace and security. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be identified and held accountable. It is an obligation that applies to all of us. I reiterate my call for unity in the Council, a body that has demonstrated how much it can accomplish when it is determined to work towards a common goal. The Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever support and assistance it can.

The President: 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*): Before I address the topic of the meeting directly, I would like to express my bewilderment at the fact that you, Mr. President, did not see fit to grant our urgent request to convene a meeting today on the situation regarding the sabotage of the Nord Stream pipeline. As a result, we will now be discussing the report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) (see S/2022/658), which was issued back in August and clearly has no urgency whatsoever. And the meeting on the situation concerning Nord Stream, which threatens the energy security of an entire continent, will not take place until tomorrow. We are deeply disappointed with that decision.

We have already repeatedly voiced our concerns that the Security Council’s discussions on the Syrian chemical weapons issue are going around in circles. The reports of the Director-General of the OPCW on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) repeat the same set of unfounded accusations against the Syrian side time and again. Those reports, which are extremely unbalanced and do not take into account the progress made on the part of Damascus, have the sole aim: to give the impression that the dialogue between the OPCW and Syrian Arab Republic is stalled solely because Syria is not cooperating.

At the same time, our numerous questions to the leadership of the Technical Secretariat remain unanswered. In July, Mr. Fernando Arias, Director-General of the OPCW, once again declined an invitation to address the Security Council, citing the holiday period. And as far as we understand, he has done the same thing this time. However, Mr. Arias’

busy schedule, which time after time prevents him from briefing Council, does not prevent him from travelling abroad — for example, to the United States. He has never ever been to Syria himself during his entire tenure as head of the Technical Secretariat. How is that possible? It begs the comparison with Mr. Rafael Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, who personally visits the facilities that are under Agency safeguards, engages in dialogue with Member States and appears before the Council at very short notice, even in inconvenient locations — for example, on an aeroplane. That is how a responsible head of an international specialized agency should behave if he claims to be the impartial guardian of the non-proliferation regime.

Despite the non-constructive attitude of the leadership of the Technical Secretariat, which is harping on the far-fetched issue of the non-issuance of a visa to just one expert of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), Syria continues to cooperate in good faith with the OPCW and to fulfil its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). A clear example of that is the visit of the Technical Secretariat's inspectors to the Basra and Jamrayah research facilities on 11 to 19 September. Syria has agreed, as an interim measure, to change its format of cooperation with the DAT and continue it in the form of an exchange of documentation.

In addition, on 21 September, Syria offered to hold consultations in Beirut between those responsible for preparing the meeting between Mr. Arias, Director-General of the OPCW, and Mr. Mekdad, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic. But there is not a word about that in the report of the Director-General that was presented today, and once again the Syrians are asked to change their attitude as a precondition for continuing consultations with the Technical Secretariat.

We believe that it is up to the leadership of the Organization, not Damascus, to change its attitude. It has stubbornly refused to correct the basic mistakes in the methodology of its work on the Syrian file. It is a kind of original sin to violate the requirements of the CWC in terms of the principles of investigation, above all with regard to the collection and preserving of evidence in the chain of custody. The FFM's infamous 2018 report on the incident in Douma, whose conclusions were redacted under pressure from Western delegations

to smear Damascus, continues to be a shameful stain on the reputation of the OPCW leadership.

The fact that Mr. Arias is simply running from the Council like a first-grader from a school principal gives us no reason to hope that he is willing to work on his mistakes. The same flawed methodology is used by the illegitimate Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), whose establishment was forced through the OPCW Executive Council, in violation of the principle of consensus and the CWC. Its reports have one goal — not to establish the real picture of events, but to fit them into a conclusion that puts the blame on the Syrians. We reject the IIT's previously released products, as well any illegitimate fodder it may release in the future.

As long as the OPCW Technical Secretariat leadership continues its approach, we see no point in discussing the Syrian chemical weapons issue in the Security Council every month. We believe that meetings conducted in an open manner once every quarter are sufficient to ensure a transparent discussion of the subject.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank the High Representative for her briefing. My delegation appreciates her persistent efforts and the efforts of the experts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to provide independent, thoroughly researched, detailed information about Syria's chemical weapons programme and its use of chemical weapons.

As we noted last month, August 2022 marked the ninth anniversary of the Al-Assad regime's vicious deployment of the nerve agent sarin on Syrian civilians in the Ghouta district of Damascus. Since then, the OPCW, the Security Council and the global community have witnessed many egregious violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and continued malign behaviour by the Syrian regime. Those violations include not only the use of chemical weapons, but also the Al-Assad regime's failure to completely declare its entire chemical weapons programme and its continued interference with the work of the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team.

Our desire to end the outrageous behaviour of the Al-Assad regime and its Russian enablers is what brings us to these meetings each month, to speak truth and urge the Al-Assad regime to comply with its international obligations.

Here are a number of difficult truths that no volume of denial can counter. Over the past nine years, the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team have independently confirmed that the Al-Assad regime used chemical weapons on eight separate occasions. Our own assessment is that the Al-Assad regime has used chemical weapons at least 50 times since Syria joined the Convention.

Despite our knowledge of those horrors and our numerous efforts to reduce the risk that such an attack might ever happen again, the Al-Assad regime and its backers, especially Russia, continue to stonewall efforts to account for Syria's chemical weapons.

The regime's continued refusal to provide answers or information requested years ago by the Declaration Assessment Team is an affront to the Security Council and to the OPCW. The fact is that Syria has not declared its entire chemical weapons programme and it retains a hidden stockpile — a stockpile of chemical weapons. The risk remains that the Al-Assad regime will again use chemical weapons against its own people. Syria continues to deny a visa to a member of the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team, preventing its deployment. We again call on the Syrian regime to immediately permit the Declaration Assessment Team to return to Syria, resolve all discrepancies and help ensure the verified elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme.

After nine years and 24 rounds of consultations, the Director-General of the OPCW tells us that Syria's declaration cannot be considered accurate and complete. The regime has shown it is willing to deploy inhumane measures. The threat of future attacks will remain until the regime clearly and thoroughly answers the questions that have been posed by the OPCW, fully declares its chemical weapons programme in accordance with its obligations under the CWC and ceases its obstruction and provides visas to the OPCW experts so they can deploy to Syria.

In conclusion, our commitment to hold actors accountable for their use of chemical weapons is universal and shared — so it is said — by everyone on the Security Council, and it is not limited to Syria. We condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances. In that spirit, we call on the regime to end its intransigence and simply meet its chemical

weapons obligations as quickly as possible. Doing so will reduce the risk of further chemical weapons use and help to ensure that we will never again be faced with the horrific scenes we have witnessed over the past nine years.

Mr. Wazima Szatmari (Brazil): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. I would also like to thank the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for his latest report (see S/2022/658).

Once again, we meet in this Chamber in a context where little seems to have changed in the situation on the ground or in the relationship between the Syrian Arab Republic and the organization. It seems by now incontrovertible that the frequency of these meetings has to change. While regular OPCW reports continue to be a valuable tool for monitoring this file, holding monthly meetings with the Council when the reports point to little or no relevant new developments on the ground does not seem efficient in terms of both time and resources.

In the face of the absence of new developments in the Syrian chemical weapons file, allow me once again to reaffirm our traditional positions on the matter. Chemical weapons are utterly incompatible with international humanitarian law, and therefore must have no place in the practices and doctrines of today's world. The use of such weapons violates international agreements and poses serious threats to international peace and security. Incidents must be addressed with transparency and be subject to thorough and impartial investigations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Stastoli (Albania): I would like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing on the total elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

We find ourselves today faced with a situation that has hardly changed since the previous meeting (see S/PV.9097). There has been no progress in the discussions between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian Government, no progress either on the next inspection in Syria and no progress on the face-to-face meeting between the Director-General of the OPCW and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Syria.

The situation of eternal deadlock in the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) and the serious chemical weapons programme continues to remain out of the international community's control. Since February 2021, all attempts by the Technical Secretariat to organize the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority have been unsuccessful, because Syria continues to impose conditions on the deployment of the DAT and refuses the issuance of visas to the Declaration Assessment Team, in violation of its obligation and Security Council resolutions. We deeply regret the observation of the deliberate lack of cooperation by Syria with the OPCW.

The 107th monthly report of the OPCW (see S/2022/658) is clear on the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified in the Syrian regime's declaration on its chemical weapons programme. As a result, the OPCW still cannot confirm that the declaration is accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013).

Albania reiterates its full support for the objective, impartial and professional work of the OPCW technical team. Syria's obtuse refusal to cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat, with the support of its allies, is unacceptable.

Therefore, we continue to expect that Syria demonstrate its willingness to cooperate with the OPCW on all the requests required by the OPCW reports in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013).

As nine years have passed since the chemical massacre in eastern Ghouta, let me be clear that we owe it to the victims to ensure that there is no impunity for the chemical weapon attacks. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not — and will not be — tolerated.

In that context, we welcome the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission, which continues its activities in the determination of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, as well as the Investigation and Identification Team, which continues its activities to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical products as weapons in Syria. We look forward to their report.

The Security Council and its members are responsible for protecting the international non-proliferation regime, which involves our collective security. It is

one of the most successful disarmament regimes in the world, and it has ensured the destruction of over 98 per cent of declared stockpiles of chemical weapons.

We reject any attempts to politicize the work of the OPCW. Such an attitude only serves to delay the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) by Syria, which also damages the reputation of the Security Council. We call on the members of the Security Council to be united in demanding the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

Finally, we remain convinced that the rapid closure of the investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria primarily serves that country and its citizens and would allow the Security Council and the international community to continue to support the Syrian people more effectively in their quest for a peaceful future.

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

We thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing. We welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Türkiye at this meeting.

We take note of the report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2022/658), highlighting the unchanged situation since the previous briefing (see S/PV.9097), which has become characteristic of the Syrian chemical weapons file in recent times.

As we also take note of the submission of the 108th monthly report by the Syrian national authorities on the country's chemical-weapons programme, we remain concerned that there has not been any significant headway in the attempts to fully address the issue, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The A3 collectively reiterates its position against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. We remain committed to the established norms against the use of chemical weapons and support all efforts to end their production, storage and use.

We reiterate our support for resolution 2118 (2013), which provides the framework for the expeditious and verifiable destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. For that reason, we regret the persistent divergence between

the positions of the OPCW and the Syrian authorities regarding the outstanding gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies.

It seems that the momentum that initially galvanized the international community, including the Security Council, into action on this issue is dissipating. But it is worth bearing in mind that, without a definite closure of the matter by the OPCW, the lingering danger of the production and possible use of chemical weapons in Syria or elsewhere cannot be completely ruled out. The expeditious resolution of the investigation will also allow us the opportunity to focus our time and resources on the other existing challenges facing the Syrian people.

The A3 hopes that, as part of the efforts to de-escalate the current rise in hostilities in Syria, the international community will act collectively to uphold the tenets of the Chemical Weapons Convention and ensure a world free of such deadly weapons.

It is our considered view that constructive cooperation between the Syrian National Authority and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW will facilitate the conclusive resolution of all the outstanding issues, including the organization of the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team.

In that regard, we encourage the early convening of the high-level in-person meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Director-General of the OPCW, as it would help to revive efforts towards the final resolution of the issues.

In conclusion, we wish to reiterate our call for enhanced engagement between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian National Authority in order to address all outstanding issues, which constrain meaningful progress in the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) in a satisfactory manner.

Ms. Syed (Norway): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing on the progress in the elimination of Syria's chemical-weapons programme.

It is unfortunate that we must convene amid no progress made on this file, not just in the past month, but, in reality, for the entirety of 2022. It is clear that Syria is still not fulfilling its obligations in line with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013).

First, Syria has an obligation to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). However, there have been no consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian authorities since the spring of 2021. That is due to the Syrian authorities' refusal to issue a visa to the DAT's lead technical expert. Such stagnation is simply not tenable. We urge Syria to follow up on the offer for an exchange of correspondence, provide the information requested and again engage with the DAT.

Secondly, Syria must provide the sufficient technical information and explanations requested by the OPCW. There still remain 20 outstanding disparities and inconsistencies from Syria's initial declaration. Furthermore, the OPCW has requested additional information related to several former chemical-weapon production facilities. We urge Syria to comply with those requests for information.

Thirdly, and finally, it is critical that Syria undertake the measures necessary to lift the suspension of its rights and privileges as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. We must not tolerate impunity and allow the essential global prohibition against the use of chemical weapons to erode.

Mr. Brady (Ireland): I would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Ireland remains deeply concerned about the lack of progress towards the closure of this file. The reason for that stasis is Syria's failure to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in a real and meaningful way. Syria continues its efforts to block the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team and to place conditions on the OPCW's work, contrary to resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Equally, Syria continues its deplorable efforts, supported by Russia, to undermine the work and reputation of the OPCW and its investigation teams. We remain confident that the Technical Secretariat is carrying out its vital work with the highest degree of professionalism, integrity and impartiality, and we reject any baseless claims to the contrary.

The Security Council has given the OPCW a clear mandate to resolve such issues with Syria, and the OPCW should have the full backing of the Council in carrying that out. The importance of that work is

made clear by the fact that the OPCW and the United Nations have so far found that, since 2013, the Syrian authorities have used chemical weapons against its citizens on eight occasions, with further instances still being investigated.

At the same time, the OPCW has set out 20 significant areas that need to be clarified regarding Syria's initial declaration. Those areas go to the heart of whether Syria retains, or is looking to reconstitute, its chemical-weapons capacity. Those are issues that the Council cannot, and must not, ignore given their ramifications for the people of Syria and the region.

Ireland is resolute that there can be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons. It is essential that Syria end its pretence at cooperation and engage in a serious and meaningful way with the Technical Secretariat. The proposed meeting between Director-General Arias and Foreign Minister Mekdad has been outstanding for almost a year despite the best efforts of the Director-General. That meeting must take place urgently, focusing on achieving concrete outcomes.

Syria must take real steps to resolve the outstanding issues urgently and without prevarication. It is only through genuine engagement with the OPCW that it can provide real assurance that its chemical-weapons programme is verifiably and definitively destroyed.

Until we see real movement in that direction, it remains essential that the Security Council uphold the international legal norm against chemical weapons by holding Syria to its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013) and the CWC and by supporting the OPCW in its mandated task.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing. I welcome the representatives of Syria, Iran and Türkiye.

A little more than nine years ago, Syria applied for membership to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), but to date it has been impossible to ascertain if its initial declaration is accurate; 20 outstanding issues remain. Mexico regrets that the Security Council is once again meeting to discuss this dossier without any major progress having been made. As was said earlier here, the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority has yet to take place.

Technical information explaining the detection of chemical residue at the Barzah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre has not yet been received, and neither has light been shed on the unauthorized transfer of the chlorine cylinders related to the April 2018 Douma incident. The flexibility of the Technical Secretariat to share information on the outstanding issues through written correspondence has so far also failed to produce results. However, my delegation underscores that correspondence in writing is not a substitute for in-person consultations. As such, and in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013), Mexico once again urges the Syrian authorities to cooperate constructively with the OPCW and the United Nations.

Mexico takes note of the inspections carried out this month at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre, and we look forward to the publication of the corresponding reports. Furthermore, we also take note of the proposed meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Minister for Foreign and Expatriate Affairs of Syria to be held in Beirut, although its agenda and date have yet to be confirmed. We hope that such a meeting will provide an opportunity for substantive discussions to allow for genuine progress to be made.

We commend Member States' contributions to the Trust Fund for Syria Missions, which, among other things, enables the DAT, the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team to carry out their mandates. We await further reports from those missions.

In conclusion, my delegation once again expresses its support for the Technical Secretariat and its technical teams, which observe the highest standards of professionalism and impartiality. Mexico reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor, under any circumstance.

Mr. Almazrouei (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing.

In line with today's discussion, we reiterate the position of the United Arab Emirates represented by the explicit rejection and condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstance. We all agree that the use of such weapons constitutes a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law.

I would like to remind everyone that the ultimate goal of the Syrian chemical dossier is to address the gaps and outstanding issues between the Syrian authorities and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). That goal should continue to guide our discussions. In that regard, we regret that the two parties were unable to decide on the visit by the Declaration Assessment Team to Syria or on holding limited consultations in Beirut. While we understand the concerns of the relevant authorities concerning the required arrangements for the visit, the issue of one particular expert's participation in the consultations is insufficient reason not to convene them.

We understand that every organization includes personnel with extensive experience, and, while it is difficult to avoid relying on them for certain tasks, that does not mean that the work cannot be accomplished without them. Ensuring the continuation of the work should be the principal objective. We also regret that written correspondence is the only means of communication between the two parties, as opposed to an in-person visit and holding constructive discussions. We therefore look forward to the upcoming meeting between the Syrian Foreign Minister and the Director-General of the OPCW.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates stresses the need to make tangible progress on the chemical dossier in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013). We will continue to support the Security Council's efforts to achieve those objectives. We also look forward to having a meaningful discussion related to the meetings of the Security Council on that dossier.

Mr. Ragutthalli (India): I will be brief in my remarks. At the outset, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her update.

We note the consistent lack of progress on this track of discussions on Syria in the Security Council. We continue to encourage sustained engagement between Syria and the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to resolve all outstanding issues. India attaches a high level of importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. India is against the use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstance. India has consistently maintained

that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, credible and objective.

We have repeatedly cautioned against the possibility of terrorist entities and individuals gaining access to chemical weapons, including in the region. Therefore, any allegation of the use of chemical weapons needs to be dealt with the utmost attention. India continues to believe that progress on other tracks would also help in facilitating the overall political peace process in Syria, as advocated by resolution 2254 (2015).

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Nakamitsu for her briefing.

China is firmly opposed to the use of chemical weapons by any country, organization or individual, under any circumstance. The world should be free of all chemical weapons as soon as possible. Dialogue and consultation are the only way to resolve this Syrian chemical weapons issue. The latest monthly report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2022/658) indicates that, from 11 to 18 September, the Technical Secretariat conducted the ninth round of inspections of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre, which China welcomes.

We have taken note that the Syrian Government and the Technical Secretariat have begun consultations through written correspondence on the declaration assessment. We call on the Technical Secretariat to give its full attention to the concerns issue of the States parties concerned regarding the visa issue. We also encourage both sides to continue discussions on, inter alia, the proposed meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Syrian Foreign Minister. We reiterate that the OPCW's investigation and attribution of the alleged use of chemical weapons should be strictly limited to the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention, with compliant procedures, reliable evidence and credible conclusions. We hope that the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat will take practical measures to maintain the technical integrity of the OPCW.

In conclusion, like most members of the Security Council, China would like to see the Council meet less frequently to consider the Syrian chemical weapons issue.

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her very clear briefing and all the efforts of the United Nations team.

Month after month, we hear the same story. Syria is refusing to make any progress to fulfil its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). That is a crystal-clear reminder of Al-Assad's disregard of international norms and the threat that his regime poses. This is not a dormant issue. This is an active refusal to implement the Security Council's resolutions.

We have heard countless excuses for Syria's non-compliance; none stand up to scrutiny. We must all be clear about the fact that, given Syria's behaviour and the many inconsistencies in its declarations to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), there is a real and ongoing risk from its chemical weapons programme to international peace and security.

We also all know that Syria's failings are only part of the story. The actions of Russia, in continuing to protect the Al-Assad regime in its use and stockpiling of chemical weapons, show that Russia has no genuine interest in implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention or in protecting international security.

We have just sat through another assault on the integrity of the OPCW. However, it is not just about disinformation and distraction in the Security Council. For several years now, Russia has also systematically blocked or attempted to block mechanisms related to the investigation of chemical weapons use in Syria. It blocked the Joint Investigative Mechanism from operating in 2017 and 2018. It tried to block the creation of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) in 2018. It tried to block the OPCW budget that funded the IIT in 2018. It blocked the adoption of the outcome document at the Review Conference of the States Parties to the OPCW, over references to the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the IIT. It tried to block the OPCW budget again in 2019. Russia voted against an Executive Council decision on Syria in 2020. It again tried to block the OPCW budget in 2020. It voted against the decision of the Conference of States Parties on Syria in 2021. It tried to block the OPCW annual report that mentioned the IIT in 2021.

The Council must not be distracted by tactics that are designed to undermine the international system and

protect the Syrian regime from accountability for its crimes. We must not accept any erosion of the rules we have all agreed. We must continue to work together to push Syria to meet its obligations in full.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I too thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Nine years ago, in August 2013, the Syrian regime deliberately murdered more than 1,000 of its own civilians — women, children and older persons — on the outskirts of Damascus, with sarin gas. No one has ever disputed the fact that that attack took place. Following that attack, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013).

The repetitive nature of our meetings should not make us lose sight of what is important. The perpetrators of that attack must be identified and held to account. Regrettably, once again, we deplore the complete lack of progress. The regime refuses to cooperate and continues to obstruct the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Syria's initial declaration remains incomplete. Some 20 questions are still pending. After six refusals by the regime, the Technical Secretariat finally gave up deploying the Declaration Assessment Team to the country. Syria must shed light on its stockpile. It must comply with its international obligations if it wants to restore the rights and privileges that were suspended in April 2021.

Despite the obstacles, OPCW teams have continued their work with independence and professionalism, and I want to commend them once again. The smear campaigns against them discredit their authors. We will pay very close attention to the conclusions of the next two reports of the Investigation and Identification Team on the Douma and Marea attacks.

The fight against impunity and the total ban on the use of chemical weapons remain our priorities, as they are the foundation of the credibility of the prohibition regime. That is why we continue to mobilize in support of the international partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Syrian Arab Republic has reiterated, time and again, its unequivocal condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstance. Therefore, we categorically reject all the baseless accusations made by some countries, first and foremost the United States of America, which supports the terrorist groups that use chemical weapons in Syria.

Since its voluntary accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, even before its entry into force, the Syrian Arab Republic has been keen to fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). My delegation would like to provide some updates, which were not included in Mrs. Nakamitsu's briefing.

First, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Director-General of the OPCW its 106th report, dated 15 September. The report includes information on the activities of the Syrian Arab Republic related to the destruction of chemical weapons and their production facilities.

Secondly, the Syrian Arab Republic underscores its eagerness to hold the expected high-level meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Head of the Syrian National Committee, and the Director-General of the OPCW as soon as possible, in line with an agenda agreed upon by both parties, which would contribute to settling outstanding issues. In that regard, I note that the Syrian National Committee has proposed to the OPCW Technical Secretariat to convene a coordination meeting for both parties in Beirut. Just to be clear, it would be a coordination meeting, not the actual meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates and the Director-General, to agree on the agenda for the high-level meeting.

Thirdly, the Syrian Arab Republic facilitated a visit by the OPCW Technical Secretariat to the Scientific Studies and Research Centre, from 11 to 19 September, to conduct the ninth round of inspections. In that regard, my delegation is surprised that the monthly report of the Director-General did not mention the report of the eighth round of inspections, which underlined the absence of any banned activities in accordance with the Convention. It also commended the significant

cooperation and facilities that Syria granted to the inspection team during that round.

Fourthly, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that it welcomes the twenty-fifth round of consultations by the Declaration Assessment Team. We stress that there are no restrictions on the deployment of that Team. We believe that excluding one member of the Team should not prevent that round of consultations from taking place, especially as the organization has so many qualified experts who can carry out the same tasks.

We remind members of the Council that the Syrian party had expressed its readiness to hold that round in Damascus, The Hague or even in Beirut. However, the OPCW Technical Secretariat insisted on including that person on the Team. Therefore, the Syrian National Committee agreed to the Technical Secretariat's proposal to exchange correspondence and information on matters within the mandate of the Declaration Assessment Team, even though we believe that such an approach would limit results.

Fifthly, turning to the work of the Fact-Finding Mission, Syria is still awaiting the publication of the Mission's delayed reports on the incidents reported by the Syrian Arab Republic since 2017. Syria calls upon the Mission to abide by the reference working paper and the provisions of the Convention, especially the verification annex. We also call upon the Mission to undertake its task with professionalism, neutrality and objectivity.

Sixthly, the Syrian Arab Republic once again stresses its position that the Investigation and Identification Team was established illegitimately. We reject the Team's erroneous and unprofessional working methods, which naturally lead to false conclusions that serve only the hostile agendas of certain Western countries that are exploiting the Team as a tool against Syria. The statements delivered by some countries today, particularly the United States of America, provide clear evidence in that regard. Syria therefore considers it necessary to denounce and condemn any reference to the reports of the Team or its conclusions.

Lastly, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its astonishment that the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) insist on disregarding the information submitted regarding the possession and use of chemical weapons by terrorist groups in Syria, as well as their fabrication of incidents in order to accuse

the Syrian army of perpetrating them. That is a flagrant sign of selectivity and double standards, reflecting the politicization that controls this dossier.

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

Mr. Jalil Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): As the main victim of most of the systematic uses of chemical weapons in modern history, the Islamic Republic of Iran once again condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstance. We share the view that the use of such inhumane weapons, which pose a serious threat to international peace and security, must not be tolerated. The only way to guarantee that chemical weapons are never used again is to destroy and eliminate all chemical weapons on a global scale and take all necessary measures to prevent the production of such weapons of mass destruction.

We reiterate our call for the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We believe that politicizing the implementation of the Convention and using the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for political ends endangers both the legitimacy of the Convention and the OPCW, which is as equally deadly as a chemical weapon. We emphasize that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, professional, credible and objective in order to establish the facts and reach evidence-based conclusions. In doing so, it must strictly adhere to all provisions and procedures within the framework of the Convention.

We acknowledge the critical importance of the Syrian Arab Republic's efforts to uphold its obligations under the Convention. We encourage continued communication and interaction between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic. In that context, we commend the Syrian Arab Republic for submitting its 106th monthly report to the OPCW Director-General on 15 September, detailing activities on its territory related to the destruction of chemical weapons and their production facilities.

In line with that constructive cooperation, the Syrian Arab Republic also facilitated a visit of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to Syria to conduct the ninth inspection tour of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre. We hope that a high-level meeting between the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and

Expatriates and the Director-General of the OPCW will take place as soon as possible, with an agenda agreed upon by both parties that will contribute to resolving the outstanding issues.

While the Syrian Arab Republic has met the Convention's requirements and continues to cooperate constructively with the OPCW, handling this file in a political manner and applying double standards will only divert discussions away from its technical nature and could undermine the Security Council's credibility and authority. We believe that it is high time for the Council to return discussions on the issue to the technical track within the OPCW in order to foster a constructive dialogue between Syria and the OPCW to resolve outstanding issues.

Furthermore, by focusing on the technical rather than the political aspect, the OPCW will be able to carry out its functions in an impartial, professional, credible and objective manner in order to draw conclusions based on factual evidence.

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

Mr. Keçeli (Türkiye): We would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu and her team for the briefing. We are grateful for their efforts.

The Al-Assad regime's failure to respect its international obligations is well documented in the reports of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, as well as of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The latest monthly report (see S/2022/658) of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirms once again that no progress has been made on any of the outstanding issues regarding the regime's chemical weapons declaration. In that regard, the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in that declaration remain unresolved, and hence the declaration cannot be considered accurate and complete. We call on the Syrian regime to fully cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and provide the necessary information required under the Chemical Weapons Convention. In that regard, issuing visas to the members of the Declaration Assessment Team remains an urgent priority.

We appreciate the OPCW Director-General's efforts to establish a direct line of contact in order to resolve the outstanding issues. We also commend the

work of the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team, which is essentially in unearthing the truth and holding the perpetrators of chemical-weapon attacks to account. We look forward to the conclusion of the ongoing investigations and the issuance of the next reports of the FFM and the IIT. We stand firmly against any attempt that aims to discredit the valuable work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its investigative bodies.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure accountability for the chemical weapons used in Syria. Genuine political reconciliation in Syria will be possible only through justice and accountability, and unity in the Council is essential for the realization of that goal. We owe it to the countless victims that have suffered from the atrocities committed by the Al-Assad regime.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.