



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9235th meeting

Thursday, 5 January 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Ishikane (Japan)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Spasse
Brazil	Mr. Cunha Pinto Coelho
China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Ms. Bongo
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates	Ms. Shaheen
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 29 December 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/1016)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Expression of welcome to new members and of thanks to outgoing members of the Security Council

The President: As this is the first formal meeting of the Security Council this year, I should like to extend my warm wishes on the occasion of the New Year to all members of the Security Council, the United Nations and the Secretariat.

In presiding over this first formal meeting of the Council in 2023, I am happy to welcome the new members — Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland. We look forward to their participation in the work of the Council. Their experience and wisdom will be of invaluable assistance in the discharge of the Council's responsibilities.

I also take this opportunity to express the Council's gratitude to the outgoing members — India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico and Norway — for their important contributions to the work of the Council during their terms.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to Her Excellency Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, Permanent Representative of India, for her service as President of the Council for the month of December 2022. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Kamboj and her team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 29 December 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/1016)

The President: 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 Mr. Adedeji Ebo, Director and Deputy to the High Representative, United Nations Office 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/2022/1016, which contains the text of a letter dated 29 December 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ebo.

Mr. Ebo: I thank Security Council members for the opportunity to brief them on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. I am conducting this briefing on behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, who is currently away from the office.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new non-permanent members of the Council — Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland. The High Representative looks forward to working closely with all of them on this important issue.

Since the Council's previous consideration of this matter (see S/PV.9207), 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 resolution 2118 (2013).

Efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration and subsequent declarations of the Syrian Arab Republic have not progressed since the Council previously met on this matter. Unfortunately, all efforts by the OPCW Technical Secretariat to organize the next round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority continue to be unsuccessful.

As Council members were previously informed, the OPCW Technical Secretariat provided the Syrian Arab Republic with the list of pending declarations and other documents requested by the DAT since 2019, with the aim of assisting the Syrian Arab Republic in resolving the current 20 outstanding issues. However, I have been

advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not yet received the requested information from the Syrian Arab Republic.

Due to this situation, and in pursuit of its ongoing efforts to implement its mandate, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has informed the Syrian National Authority of its intention to send a reduced team to conduct limited in-country activities in the Syrian Arab Republic from 17 to 22 January. It is my understanding that the Syrian Arab Republic has welcomed the intention by the OPCW Technical Secretariat to send a reduced team and has requested supplementary information in order to make the necessary arrangements.

Full cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat is essential to closing all outstanding issues. As has been stressed many times before, 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 complete implementation by the Syrian Arab Republic of all its declaration requirements and to assisting Syria in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention, the OPCW policymaking organs' decisions and resolution 2118 (2013). I want to take this opportunity to reiterate the High Representative's support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of the OPCW's work.

With regard to the inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre, I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat will continue to plan the next round of inspections, to be held in 2023. I regret to inform the Council that the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet provided sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the OPCW Technical Secretariat to close the issue related to the detection in November 2018 of a Schedule 2 chemical at the Barzah facilities. Neither has it received the information requested from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the unauthorized movement of the two cylinders related to the chemical-weapon incident in Douma on 7 April 2018 that were destroyed in an attack on a chemical-weapon production facility. I call on the Syrian Arab Republic to respond with urgency to all of the OPCW Technical Secretariat's requests.

With regard to the invitation to an in-person meeting extended by the OPCW Director-General to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, I note that while the Technical Secretariat was still awaiting a response from Syria on the most recent version of the agenda, submitted in December 2021, the Syrian Arab Republic suggested holding a preliminary meeting in Beirut. Since then, as Council members were previously informed, communication between the focal points in charge of the preparations for the meeting between the Director-General and the Syrian Minister has been reinitiated by the Technical Secretariat, and the Syrian Arab Republic has responded. With regard to the tripartite agreement concluded between the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Syrian Arab Republic, it is my understanding that on 8 December 2022 all the parties finalized an extension for a period of six months from 1 January up to and including 30 June.

I have been advised by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission that it remains in the process of studying all the available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. In the context, I understand that the Fact-Finding Mission was deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic from 6 to 12 November 2022 to conduct interviews with witnesses regarding several of the incidents under review. The Investigation and Identification Team is also continuing its investigations into incidents in which the Fact-Finding Mission has determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Investigation and Identification Team will issue further reports in due course.

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

Any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and the absence of accountability for that use is a threat to international peace and security and a danger to us all. It is therefore imperative to hold accountable all who would dare to use chemical weapons. As we start the

new year, I state my sincere hope that Council members will unite on the issue. The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever support and assistance it can.

The President: I thank Mr. Ebo for his 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*): We congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. We also welcome the other new non-permanent members of the Council — Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland and Ecuador. We wish them every success and productive work.

It is a shame that we are starting the new working year with yet another meeting on the Syrian chemical-weapons issue, whose complete lack of added value has us fed up to the back teeth. Like other Council members, we have said repeatedly that it is pointless for the Security Council to discuss this topic every month just for the record to please the domestic political agendas of a number of Western countries. It devalues the Council's discussion and undermines its authority. Given that the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Fernando Arias, continues to invent excuses to avoid coming to the Security Council for briefings, getting done with the job every month with carbon copies of the previous reports, we call for respect to be shown for Council members' time and for the schedule for these meetings to be improved once and for all. Until then, we see no point in engaging in substantive discussions on the issue.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I would like to join others in welcoming the new members of the Security Council. We look forward to working with them. My delegation is glad to see them aboard. And we congratulate you, Mr. President. We cannot think of a better, more experienced hand at the helm than that of the Japanese delegation to lead us as we start our new year. I would also like to thank Mr. Ebo for his useful and informative briefing. I would like to begin by saying that we also appreciate the efforts of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to provide credible and detailed information about Syria's progress, or lack thereof,

towards the complete and verifiable elimination of its chemical-weapons programme.

My Russian colleague said it is a shame to start our new year with this discussion. I disagree. Tragically, it is sadly fitting that we are yet again starting a new year in the Security Council by addressing the Al-Assad regime's repeated use of chemical weapons and failure to comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013).

It was positive news to hear that the Declaration Assessment Team will be in Syria soon. We appreciate that news. It is essential that the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team be allowed to meaningfully resume its work, and that is because many questions regarding Syria's declaration remain unanswered. Notably, the regime has yet to provide a credible explanation for the detection in 2018 of a scheduled chemical at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in Barzah. The Al-Assad regime has also yet to provide a credible explanation for the destruction of two chlorine cylinders implicated in the chemical weapons attack on Douma. And it has yet to provide documents repeatedly requested by the Declaration Assessment Team since 2019, which would shed light on the regime's chemical weapons programme overall.

Despite the Russian Federation's repeated assertions in the Council that the OPCW Director-General has not met with the Al-Assad regime, we note that in fact the regime has stalled the scheduling of such a meeting since June 2021. The Al-Assad regime and its Russian enablers have complained that the OPCW experts have exceeded their mandate, which is patently false. But what else should we expect from Russia, a country which itself has barely attempted to mask its own pattern of chemical weapons use and disinformation?

It is hardly intrusive to demand the regime to comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, which it willingly joined in 2013 only to violate one of its core prohibitions shortly thereafter. The OPCW and the United Nations have concluded independently that the regime has used chemical weapons on eight occasions, and the tireless efforts of the Declaration Assessment Team have caused the regime to amend its declaration 17 times. That is hardly a pattern of behaviour that engenders trust in the Al-Assad regime.

In conclusion, the United States once again calls on the regime to comply with its obligations and

immediately cease its obstruction of the OPCW expert teams so that we can resolve the issue of Syria's chemical weapons use once and for all.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, and the delegation of Japan for assuming the presidency of the Security Council. I also warmly welcome Japan and all the other new non-permanent members of the Council, namely, Ecuador, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland. The three African members of the Council (A3) look forward to working closely with them during their tenure. We also pay tribute to India, the President of the Council for the month of December 2022, and the other outgoing members of the Council — Ireland, Kenya, Mexico and Norway — and we cherish the work that we did together over the past year. I have the honour to deliver the following joint statement on behalf of the A3, comprising Gabon, Mozambique and my country, Ghana.

We thank the Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Adedeji Ebo, for his briefing and acknowledge the participation in this meeting of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Türkiye.

We welcome the 111th monthly report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2022/1016), as well as the submission to the OPCW of the 109th report of the Syrian Arab Republic. We note with regret that, as has been the case in recent times, there has not been any significant development on this matter, which we consider on a monthly basis. The lack of progress towards a definitive resolution of the issues continues to be a matter of concern to us. Considering the threat chemical weapons pose to international peace and security, the Council must adopt a pragmatic approach to assist in the resolution of this matter, in accordance with international law. To do so, we must constructively support the OPCW in its efforts to verify the accuracy and completeness of the declarations made by Syria's national authorities.

While we acknowledge the efforts that have been made by Syria's national authorities, including a six-month extension of the tripartite agreement until 30 June, and their reaction to the intention of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to send a reduced team to conduct limited in-country activities for a week this month, we believe that much more could be done. We encourage

the Syrian Arab Republic to elevate constructive cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, in line with resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention, in order to help resolve, among others, the following lingering issues: first, the organization of the next round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team; secondly, the 20 outstanding issues that have been pending for some time now; thirdly, the issue of detection of a Schedule 2.B.04 chemical at the Barzah facilities in November 2018; and fourthly, the full declaration of all chemical weapons and their production facilities in the country's possession, including those not intended for purposes prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We underscore the importance of the proposed high-level in-person meeting between officials of the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW, as such dialogue and consultations among key players of the two sides could foster the momentum needed and speed up the process towards a conclusive resolution of the outstanding issues. We hope that the two sides will expedite action to prepare an early meeting.

In conclusion, the A3 collectively reiterates the call for enhanced and constructive engagement between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and Syria's national authorities, in order to urgently address all outstanding issues that constrain meaningful progress in the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

Mr. Cunha Pinto Coelho (Brazil): At the outset, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the newly elected members of the Security Council and congratulate Japan for assuming the presidency this month. I would also like to thank Mr. Adedeji Ebo, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his 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/2022/1016).

Like in previous months, little seems to have changed in the situation on the ground or in the relationship between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which reinforces our perception that there is a mismatch in the frequency of these meetings. While the Council should pay close attention to the progress in the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria, holding monthly meetings when there is little or no relevant

development on the ground does not seem efficient, in terms of both time and resources.

Brazil welcomes the efforts made to hold a meeting between representatives of the OPCW and the Syrian authorities in Beirut this past November. We regret, however, that the meeting could not take place. Noting the impossibility to conduct full rounds of consultations, we welcome efforts to send a reduced team to conduct limited in-country activities in Syria later this month. Furthermore, we welcome the six-month extension of the tripartite agreement between the United Nations Office for Project Services, the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic.

In the face of absence of relevant recent developments in the Syrian chemical weapons file, allow me to reaffirm our traditional positions on the matter. Such weapons are utterly incompatible with international humanitarian law and must therefore 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.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): Since this is the first formal meeting of the Security Council for 2023, and Malta's first as an elected member, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Council members for their warm welcome and the wider membership for the confidence and trust that they have placed in us. We look forward to engaging in an open and constructive manner over the next two years and contributing to the work of the Council in a meaningful way. I also congratulate Japan on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of January. Last, but definitely not least, I thank the Deputy to the High Representative of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Adedeji Ebo, for the briefing that he has just provided.

The lack of progress on this particular file remains worrisome. Malta attaches great importance to the universalization of the global norm on the prohibition of chemical weapons, which is underpinned by the Chemical Weapons Convention. There can never be any justification for the use of those abhorrent weapons. We call on Syria to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and resolve all the pending queries related to its initial

declaration. The Syrian Arab Republic must uphold its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, and that includes the settlement of all issues related to its initial declaration.

Recalling resolution 2118 (2013), which was unanimously adopted by the Council, we regret to have to note that the list of pending declarations and other documents that the Declaration Assessment Team has been requesting since 2019 has not yet been provided by the Syrian Arab Republic and that the declaration submitted is inaccurate and incomplete. We also urge Syria to agree on an agenda and engage with the OPCW so that a meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs can take place.

Malta fully supports the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat. We would also like to underline our support for the work of the Fact-Finding Mission and its task of determining the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We look forward to the publication of additional reports on that work, including by the Investigation and Identification Team. We should all strive to uphold the international ban on the use of chemical weapons. The lack of progress, as reported by the Technical Secretariat and the OPCW, remains a grave concern. We call on Syria to engage with the OPCW and to present the necessary assurances on its chemical-weapons programme in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Spasse (Albania): Let me begin by warmly welcoming the five newly elected members to the Security Council and wishing you, Mr. President, every success in presiding over the Council for the month of January. I want to assure you of my delegation's readiness to work together constructively. I also thank Mr. Ebo for his briefing.

The repeated use of chemical weapons against civilians by the Al-Assad regime is an affront to the most basic rules of international society and should be met with decisive action on the part of the Council. Syria's persistent lack of cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is unacceptable. The declarations it has submitted are neither accurate nor complete. It has refused to issue a visa to a member of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), despite paragraph 7 of resolution 2118 (2013), which compels it to accept OPCW-appointed personnel. Let us hope that the eventual visit of the reduced

DAT team will bring about a change in the situation. Syria refuses to respond to the list of 20 issues of the Declaration Assessment Team, creating uncertainty about its elimination of its chemical-weapons programme. That is unacceptable, and we condemn it. Syria's lack of cooperation continues to block the holding of a high-level meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria and the Director-General of the OPCW. We encourage those in charge of preparations to hold such a meeting as soon as possible.

The use of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime and the uncertainty about the chemical-weapons programme are deeply troubling. We look forward to the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and Syria to shed light on those matters. Likewise, we await the results of the ninth round of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities. We call on Syria to cooperate promptly and honestly with the OPCW. We commend the Fact-Finding Mission, which is continuing its activities determining the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We also commend the Office of the Investigation and Identification Team, which is working to identify those responsible for the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria. We look forward to the publication of their reports. Albania reiterates its full support for the objective, impartial and professional work of the OPCW teams. We welcome the decision adopted at the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention suspending the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian regime owing to its non-compliance with the Convention.

The use of chemical weapons by the regime in Syria is a horrific act that should unite the international community against such weapons and in ensuring that those responsible are held to account. Albania will continue to offer active support for the fulfilment of the fundamental objective of the OPCW in 2023, which is the final destruction of all declared stockpiles of chemical weapons and a world free of them.

Ms. Shaheen (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new colleagues, Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland, to the Security Council. We wish you, Mr. President, success during your presidency of the Council this month. I also thank Mr. Adedeji Ebo, Deputy High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his briefing.

We would like to recall that the Secretary-General opened the Chemical Weapons Convention for signature in Paris in January 1993. It was signed at the time by 130 countries, indicating a broad consensus in the international community, and making the Convention one of our most important historical achievements in the field of disarmament. However, the Syrian chemical dossier is unfortunately still one of the most politicized dossiers in the Council today, as we saw during the first half of our current term on the Council. In that regard, I would like to once again reiterate the firm position of the United Arab Emirates in clearly rejecting and condemning the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and in any circumstances. Their use constitutes a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law.

Making tangible progress on this dossier requires engaging in a constructive dialogue. From that standpoint, the United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of communication and dialogue between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and Syria. We call on the parties to work in a spirit based on the principles that form the foundation of the OPCW and its technical nature, including a consensus-based approach and non-politicization. In that context, we welcome the agreement to send a reduced team to conduct limited activities in Syria this month, and we hope that bilateral consultations will be held as soon as possible.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates emphasizes the importance of making progress on the Syrian chemical-weapons dossier and all other dossiers related to resolving the Syrian crisis.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate Japan and wish you every success in presiding over the Security Council for the month of January. I thank the Deputy to the High Representative of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Adedeji Ebo, for his briefing.

Ecuador has closely observed the Security Council's meetings on the chemical-weapon situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. We appreciate the work of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in providing comprehensive, reliable and independent information on the

complete and verifiable elimination of the country's chemical-weapons programme.

Ecuador regrets the lack of progress, despite the efforts made by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team, in clarifying all outstanding issues on the Syrian declarations. In that regard, we hope that the Team will be allowed to return to resume its work. It is unacceptable that, nine years after Syria's accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, its national declaration still cannot be considered accurate and complete. We call on the Syrian authorities to remain committed to the full implementation of their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the respective Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2118 (2013), and to cooperate fully and in good faith with both the OPCW and its technical and investigative teams.

Ecuador supports the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and its technical teams, which, despite countless obstacles, carry out their work in a professional manner, while adhering to international standards. We firmly believe that incidents involving chemical weapons must be dealt with in a transparent manner and be subject to thorough and impartial investigations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Ecuador expresses its solidarity with all the victims of chemical-weapon attacks in Syria. We strongly condemn the use of such weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances.

One of Ecuador's priorities for its 2023–2024 mandate is precisely the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. That and our historic commitments to disarmament will also guide our contribution in this organ.

Finally, as this is my first intervention in the Security Council, allow me to acknowledge the work of the elected members that have completed their term of office — India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico and Norway.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to wish you, Mr. President, all the best for your presidency. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the members of the Security Council for the kind words of welcome addressed to Switzerland and the other incoming States. We look forward to working with them and wish them every success.

I thank Mr. Ebo, Deputy to the High Representative of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, for his detailed briefing.

As we begin our term in the Security Council, Switzerland wishes to affirm its unwavering commitment to respect for international law, including the Chemical Weapons Convention. Throughout our presence in the Council, we will work to support this important pillar of our collective security. Ratified by almost all States, including Syria in 2013, the Convention offers overall protection against the threats and devastating effects of chemical weapons. However, over the past decade, its obligations have been repeatedly violated, particularly in Syria. We call on Syria to comply with its obligations as a State party and under resolution 2118 (2013).

One such obligation is Syria's full cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The OPCW's monitoring activities play a key role in achieving the common goal of States — to completely exclude the possibility of the use of chemical weapons. To that end, the organization's fact-finding missions and investigation and identification teams must be able to operate on the ground. Their work is fundamental, and their integrity and professionalism are beyond doubt. Switzerland wishes to stress its full confidence in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its support for all its missions.

Since April 2021, the experts of the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team have been unable to enter Syria. That is of great concern to us. We call on Syria to allow the Team unhindered access to its territory so that it can carry out the necessary investigations and verifications. We are still not certain that the chemical-weapons stockpiles have been completely eliminated. There are currently 20 outstanding issues in that regard, and only four have been resolved in almost 10 years. All those obstacles must be removed without delay in order to verify Syria's initial declaration.

Resolution 2118 (2013) was adopted unanimously. Through it, the Security Council made a clear commitment to ensure the non-use of chemical weapons in Syria. For almost 10 years, regular Council meetings have served to remind us of a central issue — preventing the development, production, stockpiling, use and transfer of such weapons and ensuring their destruction. Those who use such weapons must be brought to justice;

their impunity is unacceptable. That principle remains crucial today.

Switzerland will continue to take the strongest possible stance against the use and proliferation of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. Our collective security and the credibility of the instruments of the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture that guarantee depend on it.

Considering the frightening images of the effects of chemical weapons, we can only say “never again”.

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): As the first order of business, I would like to congratulate Japan on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We welcome Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland to the Security Council as new non-permanent members. We look forward to greater coordination and cooperation with them and other members of the Council in order to promote unity among Council members and effective mandate implementation by the Council in the new year.

I thank Mr. Adedeji Ebo, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his briefing. We also regret that the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) did not accept the invitation to brief the Council.

China has consistently opposed the use of chemical weapons by any country, organization or individual, under any circumstances and for any purpose. We look forward to a world free from all chemical weapons as early as possible. There is no alternative to dialogue and negotiation for resolving the Syrian chemical-weapons issue. The Syrian Government and the OPCW Technical Secretariat should strengthen engagement and communication between them and move in the same direction in order to settle any outstanding issues promptly. In that regard, we welcome the successful extension of the tripartite agreement among the Syrian Government, the Technical Secretariat and the United Nations Office for Project Services.

With regard to the meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Syrian Foreign Minister, China encourages increased coordination between the Syrian Government and the Technical Secretariat in order to jointly advance the preparations for the meeting. We also call on the Technical Secretariat

to fully consider the realities faced by the country concerned and facilitate its participation in the twenty-fifth round of technical consultations. The Technical Secretariat must fully take into account the information provided by the Syrian Government earlier on terrorist organizations possessing and using chemical weapons.

Finally, China reiterates its call that the Council reduce the frequency of deliberations on the Syrian issue or consider combining the different tracks of the dossier. That would enable us to adopt a holistic approach to the Syrian issue and to make the Council’s work more efficient.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to congratulate Japan on its assumption of the functions of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January, and I would also like to welcome all the new non-permanent members who are at this table today for the first time. I thank Mr. Ebo for his briefing.

As everyone knows, we are in this Chamber once again because the Syrian regime used weapons of mass destruction against its own population. Independent investigations conducted by the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have demonstrated this on eight occasions. I recall that resolution 2118 (2013) was adopted unanimously and that the reality of the deadly attack on Ghouta in August 2013 has never been disputed by anyone.

The lack of progress since then is frustrating, but the responsibility for that lies exclusively with the Syrian regime. It is the regime that stubbornly refuses to cooperate, in obvious bad faith. It is the regime that chose to derail the bilateral meeting scheduled in November with the Technical Secretariat by setting conditions that it knew were impossible to meet.

In the face of this, the Technical Secretariat is making tireless efforts to implement its mandate. In yet another attempt to make progress on the initial declaration, the OPCW has informed Syria of its intention to send a small team to the field in the near future. We call on Syria to facilitate the deployment of this team and to finally cooperate.

It is urgent that Syria shed light on its chemical-weapons stockpiles, not all of which have been destroyed. It is time for Syria to comply with its

international obligations, which is the only way for it to have its rights and privileges restored.

France will continue to pay close attention to the conclusions of the forthcoming reports of the Investigation and Identification Team on the attacks in Douma and Marea. There must be no impunity for the perpetrators of chemical-weapons use. The fight against impunity is a priority for France and the basis for the effectiveness and credibility of the prohibition regime. We will continue to mobilize to this end.

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): Mr. President, the United Kingdom join others in welcoming you to the Security Council and assuring you of our full support during the Japanese presidency of the Council. We would also like to extend a warm welcome to our colleagues from Ecuador, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland.

I would like to thank Mr. Ebo for his briefing and the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for his monthly report (see S/2022/1016).

Last year we marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Each of us has a responsibility to ensure that it is upheld.

We all know the facts. Prior to the start of the conflict in 2011, Syria had an extensive chemical-weapons programme. In 2013, after multiple chemical-weapons attacks, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013). But it became clear that Syria had retained a chemical-weapons capability in contravention of resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention. And, worse than that, further attacks took place. OPCW and joint United Nations-OPCW investigations confirmed that the Syrian regime used chemical weapons, including chlorine and sarin, on at least eight occasions.

These were shocking attacks by the Syrian regime, designed to inflict mass casualties and extreme suffering on its own people. Syria has since done everything possible to deflect and deny OPCW efforts to resolve the many serious gaps and omissions in its chemical-weapons declaration.

And, as we have heard, Syria still today shows its contempt for its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). Sadly, over the last nine years, accountability and effective

action to uphold resolution 2118 (2013) have been consistently blocked in the Security Council. There has also been a relentless disinformation campaign designed to undermine the OPCW and protect the Syrian regime from accountability for its crimes.

It is not too late to turn this around. We welcome the Technical Secretariat's latest initiative to send a reduced team to Syria this month. This is an opportunity for the Syrian regime finally to start to come into compliance with its obligations. The responsibility rests with it.

We are approaching 10 years since resolution 2118 (2013) was adopted. As a Council we must insist on its full implementation. This means the complete destruction of Syria's chemical-weapons stockpile and accountability for the use of such weapons. As Mr. Ebo said today, the absence of accountability is a threat to international peace and security and a danger to us all. As a Council, we cannot turn a blind eye; we too must uphold our responsibilities.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Japan.

I thank Mr. Ebo for his briefing. Japan commends the professional and impartial work conducted by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its Technical Secretariat.

The use of chemical weapons should never be tolerated anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstance. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

It is regrettable that we have not seen concrete progress on this file, and the most recent report by the OPCW Director-General once again confirmed that

“the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete” (*S/2022/1016, annex, para. 18*).

Japan welcomes the joint statement delivered by the French delegation at the twenty-seventh Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention last month. In the statement, 57 Member States, including Japan, jointly reiterated their call on Syria to resolve the numerous gaps and inconsistencies in its declaration and live up to its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Japan urges Syria to fully comply with its obligations under both the Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). The decision made at the twenty-fifth

session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention should be taken seriously by Syria. Syria must engage in good faith with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and provide all required documents to resolve the outstanding issues related to the initial and subsequent declarations submitted by Syria.

We regret that all efforts during the past year to hold the next round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority have been unsuccessful. Syria should take the necessary steps to facilitate the holding of these consultations and refrain from making further excuses to impede the entry of a DAT technical expert to its territory.

We welcome the Investigation and Identification Team's continuing its investigations, including the investigation on the Douma incident in 2018. We sincerely hope its upcoming reports will lead to further clarification of the incidents of use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria poses a serious threat to international peace and security and to the global non-proliferation regime. Japan believes the Security Council should remain seized of this matter.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First and foremost, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on Japan's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also to congratulate the five new Council members that joined the Council at the beginning of this year. We stand ready to work with them in the Council on questions pertaining to Syria.

We still believe that there is a need to rationalize the Council's use of its time and resources, and to not hold discussions in the absence of developments requiring the convening of such a meeting. The fact that five new members have joined the Council gives us a reason today to present a brief overview of Syria's position on aspects related to that issue. I would therefore like to note the following.

First, the Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly condemned the use of chemical weapons by whomever, wherever, whenever and under any circumstances. We have always affirmed that we have never used such prohibited weapons or toxic chemical materials.

Secondly, the first incident of the use of chemical weapons in Syria took place on 19 March 2013, when terrorist groups launched a bomb containing toxic chemical material on Khan Al-Assal, in the Aleppo governorate, killing 25 people, most of whom were from the Syrian Arab Army. It also affected 110 people, who were asphyxiated and lost consciousness. It is regrettable that despite the fact that, at the time, Syria presented an official request to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to dispatch an independent team to investigate that incident, no visit to the site took place, and no investigation has been conducted to date.

Thirdly, the Syrian Arab Republic voluntarily joined the Chemical Weapons Convention in September 2013. It concluded the destruction of all its stockpiles and their production facilities in 2014, despite the difficult situation in the country at the time. We were careful to fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and we undertook to implement the Convention, even before it entered into force.

Fourthly, over the past nine years, the Syrian National Authority granted more than 500 entry visas to officials from the OPCW Technical Secretariat. That included all the teams from the organization that work in Syria. We also facilitated 24 rounds of negotiation for the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and 9 rounds for the inspection of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre. Furthermore, we facilitated several visits of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to Syria, the most recent of which took place in November 2022. We also approved repeatedly the renewal of the tripartite agreement between Syria, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services, thus facilitating the work of those teams visiting Syria.

Fifthly, Syria welcomed the holding of high-level negotiations between the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Head of the National Authority and the Director-General of the OPCW. We are looking forward to negotiations being held as soon as possible after agreeing on its agenda.

Sixthly, the Syrian Arab Republic has underscored the illegal nature of the establishment of what is called

the Investigation and Identification Team, given that the Chemical Weapons Convention did not confer upon the OPCW Technical Secretariat a mandate for determining responsibility in the case of the use of chemical weapons. That means that there has been manipulation of the text of the Convention, with the aim of conferring upon the Team an illegal mandate. Thus, Syria does not recognize any conclusion of that illegal Team.

Regarding developments in the cooperation between Syria and the OPCW, I would like to draw the attention of those present to the following. Syria offered access to all facilities to ensure the success of the visit undertaken by the FFM team in November 2022. We reiterated our appeal to ensure that the team publish its report on the five incidents that were reported by Syria. We called on the team to abide by the working document that was agreed upon and to respect the provisions of the Convention to uphold the principles of professionalism and independence in its work, in particular as regards maintaining the chain of custody for samples, holding interviews with witnesses, examining documents and registers and not relying on open sources.

The report of the eighth round of inspections by the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre welcomed the significant cooperation and the access to facilities granted by Syria to the inspection team during that round and confirmed the absence of any prohibited activities, in line with the Convention.

The Syrian Arab Republic submitted its 109th report, dated 14 December 2022, which included the activities mentioned regarding the destruction of chemical weapons and their production facilities.

Syria welcomed the request of the Technical Secretariat for a reduced group from the DAT to visit the country and carry out limited activities during this month. That shows the commitment and determination by Syria to cooperating with the DAT. We look forward to that visit, and we do hope that it will yield successful results.

In conclusion, Syria reiterates its commitment to ongoing cooperation with the OPCW to close this dossier. We call on the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to demonstrate professionalism and neutrality. We also call on Member States to deal with this dossier in line with its technical nature, to refrain from its politicization and to not jump to premature conclusions. Syria also underscores the fact that its responsible

behaviour and its dealing in good faith prove that it has nothing to hide. Suspicion and denial by some Western countries that are seeking to promote their well-known political agendas will not lead to anything other than more complications with the aim of obstructing the closure of this dossier.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mrs. Özgür (Türkiye): At the outset, let me join other delegations in congratulating Japan, as well as Ecuador, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland, on beginning their terms as non-permanent members of the Security Council. We thank the Deputy High Representative, Mr. Ebo, for his briefing. We also commend the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Technical Secretariat for upholding its independence, impartiality and professionalism.

The latest report of the OPCW Director-General (see S/2022/1016) shows that the outstanding issues around the Syrian regime's initial and subsequent declarations persist. Owing to the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that have been identified and remain unresolved, the OPCW Technical Secretariat still cannot consider Syria's declaration accurate and complete. Moreover, the Technical Secretariat's efforts to organize the next round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team either in Syria or Beirut have so far been unsuccessful. Furthermore, the Technical Secretariat is still waiting for responses to its inquiries regarding the regime's chemical-weapons production facilities and the unauthorized movement of chlorine cylinders related to the 2018 Douma attack. We look forward to receiving information at the next Council meeting on the results of the limited in-country activities to be carried out from 17 to 22 January in Syria by a reduced team from the Technical Secretariat. We call on the Syrian regime to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat and to provide the necessary information, as it is obligated to do under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The work of the Fact-Finding Mission and the current investigations by the Investigation and Identification Team are critical if we are to establish the truth about the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We therefore look forward to the completion of the ongoing study and investigations by the Fact-Finding Mission

and the Investigation and Identification Team, as well as their next reports.

The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable under any circumstances. It is our collective responsibility to ensure accountability for that egregious crime and to honour the hundreds of innocent lives lost to the chemical-weapon attacks in Syria. Finally, as a neighbour of Syria, we believe that the Council's continued regular consideration of Syria's chemical-weapons programme is a necessary and crucial item on the monthly calendar.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Jalil Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I congratulate you, Mr. President, both on Japan's election as a new member of the Security Council and on taking over the Council presidency this month. I also want to congratulate the other newly elected Council members, Ecuador, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland. We also acknowledge India, one of the outgoing members, for effectively and successfully completing its presidency in December. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the outgoing elected members for their diligent and commendable work over the course of their two-year terms as Council members.

There have been no new developments since the previous meeting held on this issue (see S/PV.9207). Neither did Mr. Ebo's briefing today include any new points about the situation. Today's meeting once again makes it clear that the lack of progress and developments revealed in the regular monthly repetitions on this matter are wasting United Nations resources and Council members' time.

Iran supports the resolution of the open issues on their own technical track in the OPCW through dialogue and constructive cooperation between Syria and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In order to achieve that, any investigation must be impartial, professional, credible and objective and fully compliant with the requirements and procedures of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We strongly reject all efforts to undermine the Convention and the authority of the OPCW and call for a balanced, full and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention. We continue to believe that politicizing the Convention's application and exploiting the OPCW for political reasons jeopardizes the credibility of both the OPCW and the Convention.

We commend the Syrian Arab Republic for its positive engagement with the OPCW and believe that it merits acknowledgement. It is also essential to address the Government of Syria's legitimate concerns, including its position on the illegality of the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team, which was given an unlawful mandate. Syria has regularly submitted its monthly reports to the OPCW Director-General, most recently its report of 15 December 2022, which included a thorough account of its efforts to destroy chemical weapons and their manufacturing facilities. We hope that the high-level meeting between the Director-General of the OPCW and the Foreign Minister of Syria takes place and that it will pave the way for the parties to settle the unresolved issues.

The meeting rose at 11:15 a.m.