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Letter dated 26 February 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the 125th monthly report of the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex).

The report provides information on the activities of OPCW in implementing Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and the relevant provisions of the OPCW Executive Council decisions in relation to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. It covers the period from 24 January to 23 February 2024.

As I have stated previously, the use of chemical weapons anywhere by anyone, and under any circumstances, is intolerable. Impunity for their use is equally unacceptable. It is imperative that those who have used chemical weapons be identified and held accountable. Unity in the Security Council is essential to achieve this urgent objective.

I should be grateful if you would bring this matter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

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Annex

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

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled “Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme”, prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 of the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 24 January to 23 February 2024 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(*Signed*) Fernando **Arias**
Director General of the
Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Enclosure

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

Report by the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (the Council) at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat) is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.

2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities" (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation "in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1".

3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled "Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015), noting the Director-General's intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM), along with information on the Council's discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled "Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director-General's intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.

4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled "OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall "regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1".

5. The Council, at its Ninety-Fourth Session, adopted a decision entitled "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" (EC-94/DEC.2, dated 9 July 2020). In paragraph 12 of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall "regularly report to the Council on the implementation of this decision and decide[d] also that the Director-General shall provide a copy of this decision and its associated reports by the Secretariat to all States Parties and to the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly through the United Nations Secretary-General".

6. The Conference of the States Parties (the Conference), at its Twenty-Fifth Session, adopted a decision entitled "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" (C-25/DEC.9, dated 21 April 2021). In

paragraph 8 of this decision, the Conference decided that the Director-General shall regularly report to the Council and States Parties on whether the Syrian Arab Republic has completed all of the measures contained in paragraph 5 of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2.

7. This, the 125th monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council and Conference decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 24 January to 23 February 2024.

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

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

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

(b) On 14 February 2024, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its 123rd monthly report (EC-105/P/NAT.5, dated 15 February 2024) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

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

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

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

10. The Secretariat, through the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), continues its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial and subsequent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention), paragraph 1 of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1, paragraph 3 of Council decision EC-81/DEC.4, paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, and paragraph 5 of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2.

11. As previously reported, the Syrian National Authority welcomed the Secretariat's proposal to conduct the twenty-sixth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority in Damascus in January 2024. Accordingly, the DAT was deployed to Damascus between 23 January and 1 February 2024.

12. During the twenty-sixth round of consultations, the DAT conducted technical meetings with experts from the Syrian National Authority, revisited the status of outstanding issues, discussed ways to resolve them, interviewed seven persons who were involved in the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and discussed the results of the analysis of samples collected by the DAT between 2019 and 2023, with a focus on the unexpected presence of indicators of potentially undeclared activities involving research and development, production, storage, and/or the weaponisation of unknown quantities of chemical weapons.

13. Throughout the technical meetings, the DAT requested and explained to the Syrian National Authority the need for tangible, scientifically plausible, and verifiable explanations, amendments, and documents to resolve issues. The Syrian National Authority provided several amendments and explanations regarding research and development activities at some sites, taking into consideration the DAT's proposals and requests. At the same time, the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to submit explanations, documents, and amendments to a number of outstanding issues.

Moreover, the inconsistencies that were noted in the course of the interviews conducted during recent DAT deployments should be addressed and clarified after the DAT finalises its ongoing analysis.

14. Following the technical discussions held during the twenty-sixth round of consultations, on 15 February 2024 the Syrian Arab Republic submitted two notes verbales regarding three outstanding issues and new explanations of the results of the analysis of samples collected by the DAT at one of the declared sites. The DAT is currently analysing the information received and will report the result of its analysis in due course.

15. The outcomes of the twenty-sixth round of consultations will be reported to the Council in due course.

16. The Secretariat remains fully committed to implementing its mandate aimed at verifying the fulfilment of the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration obligations under the Convention, decisions of the policy-making organs, and relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

17. Considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the Secretariat assesses that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention, Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1, EC-81/DEC.4, EC-83/DEC.5, and EC-94/DEC.2, as well as Conference decisions C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018) and C-25/DEC.9, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

18. In accordance with paragraph 10 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat is continuing to assess conditions for the conduct of inspections at the sites identified by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in its third and fourth reports.

19. With regard to the inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) as mandated by paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat is planning the next round of inspections at the SSRC in 2024.

20. As previously reported, during the third round of inspections at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC in November 2018, a Schedule 2.B.04 chemical was detected. The Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the Secretariat to close this issue.

21. Concerning the origin and usage of a chemical of a dual-use nature observed by the inspection team during the previous round of inspections in September 2022, the Secretariat will continue its engagement with the Syrian National Authority on this matter.

22. With regard to the plan for the construction of an incineration unit for the destruction of chemical wastes at the SSRC, as previously reported, the Syrian National Authority informed the Secretariat that the project is on hold as a result of cost increases.

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

23. In a note verbale to the Secretariat dated 9 July 2021, the Syrian National Authority also reported the destruction in an attack on a former CWPF of, inter alia, two chlorine cylinders used in the chemical weapons incident that took place in Douma, the Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 April 2018. In its reply dated 15 July 2021, the Secretariat requested the Syrian Arab Republic to, inter alia, provide all relevant information regarding the unauthorised movement of the two cylinders from the site

where they had been stored and inspected in November 2020, 60 kilometres away from the site where the cylinders had allegedly been destroyed. As at the date of this report, the Secretariat had not received a response to this request. The Secretariat will keep the Council informed of further developments on this matter.

24. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) continues to provide support to the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement concluded between the OPCW, UNOPS, and the Syrian Arab Republic. This Agreement facilitates the Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and to any subsequent decision or resolution of the relevant organs of the OPCW or the United Nations, as well as any bilateral agreements concluded between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic. The current extension of the Tripartite Agreement remains in force up to and including 30 June 2024.

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

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

26. The FFM continues to fulfil its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic and other States Parties with regard to a number of incidents.

27. The FFM is preparing upcoming deployments and will report to the Council on the results of its work in due course.

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

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

29. On 22 February 2024, the Secretariat issued a report by the IIT entitled "Fourth Report by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team Pursuant to Paragraph 10 of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use", Marea (Syrian Arab Republic) – 1 September 2015" (S/2255/2024).

30. In this fourth report of the IIT, on the basis of all the information obtained and its analysis, the IIT concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that, on 1 September 2015, between 9:00 and 12:00 (UTC+3), during sustained attacks aimed at capturing the town of Marea, units of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) deployed sulfur mustard, using one or more artillery guns.

31. The IIT identified several impact locations across the town of Marea, with no discernible targeting pattern. All of the remnants and munitions observed at these sites were conventional artillery projectiles, of a 122-mm calibre, modified to disperse a liquid payload. Upon impact, at least six projectiles leaked a black, viscous substance with a "pungent" and "garlic-like" smell. At least 11 named individuals who came into contact with the liquid substance experienced symptoms consistent with exposure to sulfur mustard.

32. The IIT established that the chemical payload was deployed by artillery from areas under the control of ISIL, and that no entity other than ISIL possessed the means, motives, and capabilities to deploy sulfur mustard as part of an attack in Marea on 1 September 2015.

33. The IIT was able to reconstruct to the organisational structure and chain of command that led to the use of chemical weapons by the Islamic State in Marea on 1 September 2015. Strategic military operations such as the attack carried out in Marea, involving the large-scale deployment of chemical weapons, would only have occurred pursuant to direct orders from ISIL's Executive Branch, i.e., the Delegated Committee, operating directly under ISIL's so-called "Caliph". The IIT was further able to link additional organisational structures and individuals to the use and deployment of chemical weapons by the Islamic State, including ISIL's Diwan Al-Jund (Department of Soldiery) and the Committee for Military Development and Manufacturing, identifying a total of four named individuals as perpetrators. Two further ISIL members were identified as the primary drivers of ISIL's chemical weapons programme.

34. The IIT reached its conclusions on the basis of the degree of certainty of "reasonable grounds", which is the standard of proof consistently adopted by international fact-finding bodies and commissions of inquiry. In reaching its conclusions, the IIT carefully assessed the information obtained from the FFM, States Parties, and other entities, coupled with interviews conducted by the IIT and analyses of samples, computer modelling, satellite imagery, front-line maps, authenticated videos and photographs, primary documentation, as well as advice from experts, specialists, and forensic institutes, together with other relevant materials and sources. The IIT reviewed 20,492 files, amounting to 1 terabyte, obtained and assessed 29 witness statements, and considered data related to 30 samples. The conclusions in this report are based on the combination, consistency, and corroboration of all of the information gathered as a whole.

35. As per paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat provided its report on the IIT investigations to the OPCW Council and to the United Nations Secretary-General for their consideration. As per paragraph 12, the Secretariat will continue to preserve and provide information to the mechanism established by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 71/248 (2016), as well as to any relevant investigatory entities established under the auspices of the United Nations.

36. The IIT is continuing its investigations in accordance with the Note entitled "Work of the Investigation and Identification Team Established by Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (Dated 27 June 2018)" (EC-91/S/3, dated 28 June 2019) and will issue further reports in due course.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2

37. In paragraph 5 of decision EC-94/DEC.2, the Council decided:

> to request, pursuant to paragraph 36 of Article VIII of the Convention, that the Syrian Arab Republic complete all of the following measures within 90 days of this decision in order to redress the situation:
>
> (a) declare to the Secretariat the facilities where the chemical weapons, including precursors, munitions, and devices, used in the 24, 25, and 30 March 2017 attacks were developed, produced, stockpiled, and operationally stored for delivery;
>
> (b) declare to the Secretariat all of the chemical weapons it currently possesses, including sarin, sarin precursors, and chlorine that is not intended for

purposes not prohibited under the Convention, as well as chemical weapons production facilities and other related facilities; and

(c) resolve all of the outstanding issues regarding its initial declaration of its chemical weapons stockpile and programme.

38. At the end of the 90 days, the Syrian Arab Republic had not completed any of these measures.

39. With regard to the inspections mandated by paragraph 8 of EC-94/DEC.2, the Secretariat is monitoring the current security situation and will inform the Syrian Arab Republic when it is prepared to deploy for this purpose.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Conference of the States Parties decision C-25/DEC.9

40. In paragraph 7 of decision C-25/DEC.9, the Conference decided, after careful review, and without prejudice to the Syrian Arab Republic's obligations under the Convention, pursuant to subparagraph 21(k) of Article VIII and paragraph 2 of Article XII of the Convention, to suspend several rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention.

41. In paragraph 8 of the decision, the Conference decided, inter alia, that the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic suspended in accordance with paragraph 7 of decision C-25/DEC.9 are reinstated by the Conference once the Director-General has reported to the Council that the Syrian Arab Republic has completed all of the measures stipulated in paragraph 5 of EC-94/DEC.2. As at the date of this report, the Syrian Arab Republic had not completed any of these measures.

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

Decision on addressing the threat from chemical weapons use and the threat of future use

43. As previously reported, at its Twenty-Eighth Session, the Conference adopted a decision entitled "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use and the Threat of Future Use" (C-28/DEC.12, dated 30 November 2023). In accordance with paragraph 9 of the decision, a copy was provided to the United Nations Secretary-General in order to bring the matter to the attention of the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Security Council. The Secretariat is considering how to incorporate reporting on the elements in the decision concerning the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons dossier into its existing reporting obligations.

Supplementary resources

44. The Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the FFM and other remaining activities, which presently include the work of the DAT and the IIT, as well as the biannual inspections of the SSRC and the two sites identified in paragraph 8 of EC-94/DEC.2. As at the cutoff date of this report, total contributions and pledges to this fund stood at EUR 41.9 million. Contribution agreements had been concluded with Australia, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

Conclusion

45. The future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will focus on the work of the FFM; the implementation of Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1, EC-81/DEC.4, and EC-83/DEC.5, including declaration related issues; inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah sites of the SSRC; the implementation of Conference decision C-SS-4/DEC.3; the implementation of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2; the implementation of Conference decision C-25/DEC.9; and the implementation of Conference decision C-28/DEC.12.