



**High Representative's briefing to the Security Council on the implementation of
Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) on the elimination of the chemical weapons
programme of the Syrian Arab Republic**

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Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

I thank Council members for the opportunity to brief you 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 last Security Council meeting on resolution 2118, held on 2 September 2021, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been in regular contact with its counterparts at the Organisation 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 1 October 2021, to receive an update and ascertain his views.

As I have previously informed the Council, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the OPCW Technical Secretariat's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. Nevertheless, the Secretariat maintains its readiness for deployments. Despite continued travel restrictions, the OPCW Technical Secretariat continues to undertake its mandated activities related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in this regard.

Efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) are still ongoing to clarify all the outstanding issues related to the initial declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW. In this context, the OPCW Technical Secretariat remains of the position that the Syrian Arab Republic must declare all chemical warfare agents produced and/or weaponised at the former chemical weapons production facility (CWPF) that was declared by the Syrian Arab Republic as never having been used to produce and/or weaponize chemical weapons.

I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not received yet a response from the Syrian National Authority on the request for information and documentation regarding the damage caused to the declared former chemical weapons production facility (CWPF) during the attack on 8 June 2021, reported by the Syrian National Authority. I urge the Syrian Arab Republic to respond to the OPCW Technical Secretariat as soon as possible,

given that the damage caused to this facility is related to one outstanding issue recently opened by the DAT.

As I have previously informed the Council, the Syrian National Authority also reported the destruction, in the attack to the CWPF, of two chlorine cylinders that were related to the chemical weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018. The OPCW Technical Secretariat additionally requested the Syrian Arab Republic to provide information regarding the unauthorised movement of the two cylinders and any remains of their destruction. The Secretariat is still awaiting a response from the Syrian Arab Republic on this matter.

Mr. President,

I note that on 16 August 2021, the Syrian National Authority responded to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's request to schedule the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority. I understand the Syrian National Authority confirmed its readiness to hold the consultations from 11 to 27 October 2021. The OPCW Secretariat informed the Syrian National Authority, on 25 August 2021, that the DAT was prepared to deploy in October 2021. It also expressed concern about how delays in the conduct of the consultations could impact Syria's compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the implementation of the OPCW Secretariat's mandate.

Unfortunately, on 23 September 2021, the Syrian Arab Republic re-confirmed to the OPCW Technical Secretariat its refusal to issue an entry visa to one member of the DAT for the upcoming deployment. In its response, the OPCW Technical Secretariat recalled that the DAT expert had deployed to Syria on multiple occasions over the past seven years and further referred to the applicable legal framework, which does not entitle the Syrian Arab Republic to select experts on behalf of the Secretariat. Given this regrettable situation, the Technical Secretariat confirmed that it would not deploy the DAT to the Syrian Arab Republic at this time.

I have been informed that, with the aim of advancing the implementation of the Syrian Arab Republic's obligations and the OPCW Technical Secretariat's mandate, the Secretariat has invited Syria to send a delegation for a meeting in the second half of this month with the

DAT at the OPCW's Headquarters in The Hague. The OPCW Technical Secretariat has underscored that such a meeting cannot replace full-fledged deployments to the Syrian Arab Republic.

As a result of the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the OPCW Technical Secretariat continues to assess that, at this stage, the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate arrangements for the deployment of the DAT as soon as possible. As has been stressed on numerous occasions, it is only through complete cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat that all outstanding issues related to the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration can be closed. As noted at many prior Council meetings, the confidence of the international community in the complete elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme depends upon these issues being finalized.

Mr. President,

The OPCW Technical Secretariat still plans to conduct two rounds of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in 2021. The inspections of these facilities remain subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I have been advised that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the OPCW Technical Secretariat to close the issue related to the detection of a Schedule 2 chemical at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC in 2018.

With regard to the in-person meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, I note that the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic have appointed officials in charge of preparations. I hope that the proposed meeting will be an opportunity to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between both parties.

Mr. President,

The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) remains in the process of studying all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and continues to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic and other States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with regard to, and I quote, “a variety of incidents”. As previously reported, further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I understand that, following the issuance of its second report in April 2021, the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues with its investigations into incidents in which the FFM has determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic. The IIT will issue further reports in due course, subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. I take this opportunity to once again state my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity, and independence of the work of the OPCW.

Mr. President,

On 21 April 2021, at its twenty-fifth session the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention adopted decision C-25/DEC.9 entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic”, suspending the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention. According to paragraph 8 of this decision, the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic will be reinstated by the Conference of the States Parties once the OPCW Director-General has reported to the Executive Council that the Syrian Arab Republic has completed all of the measures contained in paragraph 5 of Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2. I have been advised that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to complete all of these measures. I therefore reiterate once again my call to the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in this regard.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

It cannot be repeated often enough: there is no justification for the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. There are no excuses for an inexcusable act. We must remain united and determined in preventing their use, or the threat of their use. Those who have used chemical weapons must be identified and held to account. It is an obligation on all of us. It is my sincere hope that members of this Council will unite on this issue.

Before closing, I wish to echo the Secretary-General's remarks to the General Assembly presenting "Our Common Agenda" on 10 September 2021, and I quote "when we work together, there is no limit to what we can achieve".

I thank you very much for your attention.