



**Remarks to the Security Council on the Agenda Item
“The Situation in the Middle East (Syria)”**

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Madam President, distinguished Members of the Security Council,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to brief you on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

As per longstanding practice, I met yesterday with the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic in advance of these consultations. In addition, I remain in regular contact with the Director-General of the OPCW and spoke to him this past Tuesday, 4 September.

Madam President,

As the Council was informed last month, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has verified the destruction of all 27 chemical weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. This is an important step towards the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

Efforts to clarify the outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic are ongoing. As you are aware, on 10 July, the OPCW received a letter from the Syrian Arab Republic in response to questions regarding chemical weapons-related activities conducted at the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre. These questions were attached to a 10 April letter from OPCW Director-General. The OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) is continuing to analyse the answers provided by the Syrian Arab Republic and will report in due course to the OPCW Executive Council.

The Secretary-General continues to urge cooperation by the Government of Syria, with the OPCW, in resolving the outstanding issues related to Syria's declaration. As I have noted on many occasions, the confidence of the international community in the full elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme depends upon the OPCW being able to close these outstanding issues. The complete implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) is critical not only for finding a long-overdue end to the ongoing conflict in Syria but also for stability in the region in the longer-term. In this regard, I welcome the news, conveyed to me by the Director-General of the OPCW, of the renewal of the Tripartite Agreement between

the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW and the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS). This will allow the OPCW to continue its activities in Syria using the same logistics procedures and support as previously.

Madam President,

As previously informed, on 6 July, the OPCW Technical Secretariat issued a note entitled “Interim Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) in Syria Regarding the Incident of Alleged Use of Toxic Chemicals as a Weapon in Douma, Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 April 2018”, which was subsequently circulated to the Security Council, through the Secretary-General. On 7 August, the OPCW received a note verbale from the Syrian Arab Republic that provided comments on the interim report. The FFM continues to collect and analyse information with regard to the alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Douma and will provide a final report on its findings in due course. I reiterate my full support for the integrity and professionalism of the work of the OPCW and its Fact-Finding Mission and look forward to the final report on this incident.

The FFM has also requested, and was provided with, documents pertaining to four reported incidents currently under investigation by the National Authority of the Syrian Arab Republic: two incidents in Kharbit Masasnah on 7 July 2017 and 4 August 2017, respectively, one incident in Al-Salamiyah on 9 August 2017, and another in Souran on 8 November 2017. The FFM is continuing to translate and analyse the information contained in these documents.

Madam President, Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

At its fourth special session last June, the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, *inter alia*, decided that the OPCW Secretariat “shall put in place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic...in those instances in which the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, as well as cases for which the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism had not issued a report”.

On 27 July, the OPCW Director-General provided a report to States Parties and to the Secretary-General on initial implementation of the decision.

The Secretary-General has taken note of the decision adopted at the OPCW Conference of States Parties in June and looks forward to the Director-General's next progress report that will be issued to the OPCW's Executive Council at its Eighty-Ninth Session, next month.

Madam President,

The lack of a mechanism to attribute responsibility to those who have used chemical weapons has been deeply troubling and a missing step on the path towards accountability. The closure of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, which was mandated to identify the perpetrators of such acts, emboldened those who have sought to carry out further attacks. Anyone who uses chemical weapons must be identified and must be held to account.

The Security Council holds the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, which is threatened by the use of weapons of mass destruction. The adoption of the June decision in the OPCW, therefore, does not lessen the need for unity in the Security Council. The Secretary-General has repeatedly expressed his willingness to assist the Council, and I reiterate his calls for the Council to work together to find a common approach to tackle this issue, which has become one of the most critical challenges to the maintenance of international peace and security. Like the Secretary-General, the Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to assist.

I would like to recall the remarks made by the Secretary-General in this chamber, on 14 April of this year. He stated that "any use of chemical weapons is abhorrent. The suffering it causes is horrendous." In that regard, I underline that the use of any toxic chemical, such as chlorine, as a weapon, is totally unacceptable by any party and under any circumstances.

Last week, the Secretary-General expressed his deep concern about "the growing risks of a humanitarian catastrophe in the event of a full-scale military operation in Idlib province." Before concluding, I wish to reiterate that it is of vital importance that humanitarian principles be upheld, all relevant international disarmament and non-proliferation norms - most importantly the Chemical Weapons Convention - are fully respected, and that all sides

work together to avoid further escalation, in Syria including in and around Idlib.

I thank you very much for your attention.