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Security Council

Eighty-first year

Provisional

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Thursday, 3 September 2026, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Bonnafont	(France)
Members:	Bahrain	Ms. Nancy Abdulla
	China	Mr. Sun Lei
	Colombia	Mr. Sánchez Niño
	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mrs. Liolocha
	Denmark	Ms. Landi
	Greece	Mrs. Balta
	Latvia	Ms. Pavļuta-Deslandes
	Liberia	Mr. Karyah
	Pakistan	Mr. Jadoon
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Somalia	Mr. Mohamed Yusuf
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Foster
	United States of America	Ms. Bruce

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 27 August 2026 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2026/698)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to Her Excellency Ms. Christina Markus Lassen, the Permanent Representative of Denmark, for her service as President of the Council for the month of August. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Lassen 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 27 August 2026 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2026/698)

The President (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor on a point of order.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to make it clear from the outset that what I am about to say is not directed at our Syrian friends. We would like to place on record our principled disagreement with the procedure for conducting today's meeting.

The French presidency of the Council, despite objections of permanent members and without any consultations, made the unilateral decision to alter the established practice governing the order of speakers at the meeting by giving the floor to the country on the Council's agenda before Council members had the opportunity to speak. We will gladly hear the remarks of our Syrian friends. However, we are not convinced that changing the order of speakers will somehow lend greater weight to the points raised by the country under consideration today.

The voice of our Syrian partners must be heard, and it will be heard regardless of their order on the list of speakers. We do not understand why the Council needs to break with established practice and make an exception. This is not about any particular delegation, but rather about the approach chosen by the presidency.

When the Council's programme of work was under consideration, we heard vague remarks from the presidency suggesting that such a situation might arise with regard to one delegation. The presidency refrained from providing specifics, and the very next day we learned of this decision. The Council does have a practice of giving the floor to a country on the agenda before Council members. However, this procedure was established for specific agenda items and agreed upon by all Council members.

The current meeting is a scheduled one, and Syria is steadily moving towards resolving the issue of its national chemical dossier. It is unclear what is prompting a revision of the rules in this case and how the current meeting differs from previous ones. I would also like to remind the President that, previously, discussions on the Syrian chemical dossier took place exclusively in the form of consultations. At the time, we decided to be accommodating and agreed to move these discussions to the Chamber.

We are puzzled by the President's proposal to grant such preferential treatment only to certain delegations. We fail to grasp the logic behind the claims that this would save time, streamline the discussion or enable the Council to more effectively hear the country on its agenda. The presidency is setting a precedent whereby some delegations

are preferentially granted the right to speak first on the list, while others are denied that same privilege.

One of the key elements of the presidency's working methods is the stated aim of optimizing the use of meeting time. It is unclear how changing the order of speakers will help to achieve that objective. Let us recall that the President of the Council is not the master, but rather a facilitator, whose primary duty is to uphold the Council's procedures, practices and traditions.

This marks France's seventieth presidency of the Security Council over the years, if I am not mistaken. Who better than France should understand this?

As permanent members of the Council, we have a duty to serve as custodians of its traditions and bear a special responsibility in that regard. It was only very recently that we discussed the note by the President of the Security Council on the Council's working methods (S/2024/507) (see S/PV.10210). Barely 10 days have passed, and we are already witnessing its letter and spirit being flagrantly violated by those who are supposed to adhere to it unwaveringly.

The President (*spoke in French*): I take note of the statement made by the representative of the Russian Federation and thank him for it.

I draw the attention of Council members to the note by the President contained in document S/2024/507, to which the representative of the Russian Federation referred and which concerns the Council's working methods. Paragraph 36 of the note provides that "when non-members are invited to speak to the Security Council, those who have a direct interest in the outcome of the matter under consideration may speak prior to Council members, if appropriate". It is important to recall that there are numerous precedents from previous meetings at which States that were not members of the Council but were directly concerned by the matter under consideration spoke before Council members.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2026/698, which contains the text of a letter dated 27 August 2026 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

Mrs. Nakamitsu: I am grateful for the opportunity to brief the Council once again on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Since the previous consideration of this matter by the Council, and consistent with established practice, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been in regular contact with its counterparts in the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on activities related to resolution 2118 (2013). In that regard, I recently met with the new Director-General, Ms. Sabrina Dallafior. I take this opportunity to reaffirm the continued close cooperation between our organizations under her leadership and to express my appreciation for the strong partnership with former Director-General Arias and his team. In addition, regular contact with the Permanent

Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations has continued. I held a meeting most recently with His Excellency Ambassador Olabi on 28 August.

Since the Council's most recent meeting on the matter (see S/PV.10164), the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic have continued to engage on how to eliminate any remnants of the chemical weapons programme developed by the previous Government. Together, they have achieved significant progress.

As previously reported, following the change in authorities in Syria in December 2024, the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the new Government of Syria have attempted to address the outstanding issues related to the initial declaration submitted by the previous Syrian authorities. As the OPCW Technical Secretariat has emphasized, the remaining outstanding issues are of serious concern, as they include potentially large quantities of undeclared and/or unverified chemical warfare agents and chemical munitions.

Since then, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has conducted several visits to locations of interest, carried out interviews and collected numerous samples. Those activities were conducted with the full cooperation of the Syrian Government, which mobilized substantial resources to facilitate and support the deployments of the OPCW. Nearly two years on, collective efforts are yielding tangible results in addressing the remaining issues, declaring any remaining chemical weapons and destroying them under the verification of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, which demonstrates the value of sustained, constructive engagement between the OPCW and the Syrian Government.

Following the OPCW deployment in May, which led to the discovery of previously undeclared chemical weapons, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted amendments to its initial declaration in June. The Syrian Arab Republic declared one additional chemical weapons production facility, a newly discovered chemical used in the production of nerve agents and empty chemical munitions. It also declared two chemical weapons storage facilities where the newly discovered materials were being stored. In August, a team from the OPCW Technical Secretariat deployed to Syria to conduct an initial inspection to verify the declaration amendment related to one of the newly declared chemical weapons storage facilities.

Further to those developments, during its latest session, held in July, the OPCW Executive Council approved two facility agreements for the storage locations in Qutayfah and Homs where the recently discovered chemical weapons were being stored. The OPCW Executive Council also approved a detailed plan for the verification of the destruction of category 3 chemical weapons at the Qutayfah Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility.

With those recent advances, the Syrian Arab Republic has the necessary agreements and approvals in place to commence destruction activities under the verification of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. As reported by the OPCW Director-General to the members of the OPCW Executive Council yesterday, those activities have started.

In August, the OPCW Technical Secretariat deployed a team to the Syrian Arab Republic to conduct an inspection to verify the destruction of category 3 chemical weapons. During that deployment, an OPCW inspection team conducted verification activities pursuant to article IV of the Chemical Weapons Convention at chemical weapons storage and destruction facilities. The OPCW verified that the inventories matched the recent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic and verified the irreversible destruction of 42 aerial bombs. That significant development means that, for the first time since 2014, the OPCW has verified the destruction of chemical munitions in the Syrian Arab Republic. As reported by the OPCW Director-General, that is the result of close collaboration between the Syrian Government and the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

During its most recent session, held in July 2026, the OPCW Executive Council further recognized the recent progress and decided to reinstate the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The OPCW Executive Council also encouraged the Syrian Arab Republic to continue its positive cooperation with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and to further advance as expeditiously as possible the work towards the identification, declaration and verified destruction of any remaining chemical weapons in its territory.

Last month, we commemorated the victims of the 2013 Ghutah attacks. It was a stark reminder of the need to reaffirm that 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.

As I have previously emphasized, this is a critical opportunity for the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We must continue to deliver tangible results and build on what we have achieved thus far, both for the victims and to preserve our collective security in the years to come. I once again urge the members of the Security Council to unite and show leadership in providing the support that this unprecedented effort requires.

I also take this opportunity to reiterate the support of the United Nations for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of the work of the OPCW. The United Nations stands ready to provide support and will continue to do its part to uphold the norm against the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time.

The President *(spoke in French)*: I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

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

Mr. Olabi (Syrian Arab Republic) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I congratulate you, Mr. President, and your friendly country, France, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We wish you every success. I also thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing and for being with us today. Like Mrs. Nakamitsu, I also take this opportunity to thank Mr. Fernando Arias, former Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), for his leadership of the Organisation's efforts during the most difficult times and amid the historic transformation that has taken place in Syria. Syria also welcomes the vision of Ms. Sabrina Dallafior, new Director-General of the Organisation, in addressing the remnants of the chemical weapons programme of the Al-Assad era. Syria looks forward to cooperating constructively with her and her team.

I would like to announce today a historic moment: the start of the destruction of some of the chemical materials discovered in Syria, in accordance with the verification procedures of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. This is the first destruction operation since Syria's liberation from the former regime. It is also the first destruction of chemical munitions on Syrian territories in more than a decade. This moment truly demonstrates that what for years posed a threat to Syrians and the world can become an example of what diplomacy, combined with determination, sincere resolve and a spirit of international cooperation, can achieve on the ground.

I will not dwell on the progress made on the ground, as detailed in the reports of the Syrian Government and the OPCW. Nor will I reiterate Syria's position on justice: its position on accountability is neither open to interpretation nor subject to compromise. We will continue along that path and look forward to building international partnerships to support the national process of achieving justice.

I wish to focus today on two points.

First, the cooperation that the Council has heard about today goes beyond technical details. It represents a profound political transformation in Syria's approach to rescuing the multilateral action system. That transformation sends a message: a country situated at the heart of a conflict-ridden Middle East is choosing, of its own volition, to return to the international community by acting responsibly and honouring its obligations, at a time when the international system is suffering from weakness and fragmentation.

As the Council has heard, we are safeguarding the international system through actions, not words. Indeed, my colleagues are carrying out this work under extremely complex conditions. The national teams themselves have faced genuine risks in this challenging environment, despite complying with all safety and security standards. We seek to protect the Syrian people by preventing any remnants of those weapons from falling into the wrong hands. But in doing so, we are also protecting the region and the world. With every site secured and every munition identified the threat to the entire world diminishes.

Syria is also working, on behalf of the international system, to hold the first ever trials of those who have used chemical weapons, more than a century after chemical weapons were used in a number of countries around the world. By doing so, it seeks to establish the principle of combating impunity as a cornerstone of efforts to ensure that such incidents never recur anywhere in the world. We will ensure that those trials live up to the historic significance of this undertaking. Accordingly, what we are doing on the ground upholds international law and international institutions and safeguards global security. All of this relates to a matter in which we are the victims, not the perpetrators.

At this very moment, Syria is working to protect the international system and multilateral cooperation. It therefore expects the system, in turn, to play its part in mitigating all the risks that threaten the security of Syria and the region.

That brings me to my second point.

We cannot succeed in this mission, or in our work to deal with nuclear materials and take unprecedented steps in that area — steps through which we protect Syria, the region and the world — while contending with those who seek to undermine our stability and, indeed, the stability of the entire region. As the Council is aware, and as several reports have documented, repeated Israeli attacks have obstructed operations to locate and destroy chemical weapons. At certain stages, those attacks halted operations entirely and caused flights to be cancelled, while also endangering Syrian national teams, OPCW teams and the sites being secured.

We state this clearly and frankly before the Council to emphasize that those actions not only affect Syria's security but also pose risks that extend beyond our borders to the security and stability of the region. It is therefore important that the international community play its part in creating safe conditions for the continuation of this process, which all Council members commend. Let me be clear: we cannot safeguard the security of the region while our own security is threatened by Israel. Nor can we uphold the international system while Israel flouts international law and even refuses to accede to the conventions that we are discussing today or to comply with the standards that safeguard our collective security and on which the entire world, including all members of the Council, has reached consensus.

We have inherited a number of serious and complex issues from the former regime and have addressed them with resolve and courage, first and foremost for Syrian men and women, but also for the region and the world. We have adhered to international law and standards that underpin security and stability for us all. We have shouldered that legacy, even though it is not ours. If the world cannot help us directly, it must now at least prevent anything that threatens to destroy our ability to continue this work on its behalf.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Ms. Bruce (United States of America): I thank you, Mr. President, and congratulate you on your presidency of the Council for this month, which will be busy. I look forward to your work and France's leadership. I also thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her informative briefing and Ambassador Olabi for his remarks.

Since our most recent meeting on this topic in June (see S/PV.10164), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council has acknowledged Syria's significant progress in tackling the remnants of the Al-Assad regime's chemical weapons programme.

The United States joined other Executive Council members in approving, by consensus, the historic decision to reinstate Syria's rights and privileges under the Chemical Weapons Convention. These rights had been suspended since 2021, in the context of the former regime's use of chemical weapons.

During the same Executive Council session, we also welcomed Syria's submission of a new amendment to its initial declaration.

As reported by the OPCW Director-General, Syria has declared an additional chemical weapons production facility, a newly discovered chemical used in the production of nerve agents and empty chemical munitions. It has also declared two chemical weapons storage facilities for which the Executive Council approved facility agreements, and where newly discovered materials are stored while awaiting destruction. This progress could not have been achieved without Syria and the OPCW Secretariat deploying significant technical, financial and human resources. They demonstrated unwavering determination in tracking down remnants of the Al-Assad regime's programme, often under challenging conditions.

The United States is grateful to all members of the Syria-led Breath of Freedom task force for supporting this effort. We urge Syria to continue its close coordination with the task force, notably on the technical steps needed for the success of this mission.

The next phase in this process is the verified and complete destruction of the identified remnants. As we speak, OPCW inspectors are deployed to Syria to verify the mechanical destruction of category 3 chemical weapons, namely, empty M4000 aerial bombs and Volcano rockets similar to those used to deliver deadly chemical payloads in Khan Shaykhun in 2017 and Ghutah in 2013, respectively. We look forward to the OPCW reporting on this first destruction operation since the 2013–2014 destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles.

The United States expresses appreciation to all who contributed to the trust fund for Syria missions. According to the OPCW Director-General's August report, the fund now covers expected expenses for 2026 and 2027 operations. We now encourage Member States to consider direct support to the Syrian Government's counter-chemical-weapons efforts, as Syria seeks to build its national capabilities for a future free of chemical weapons.

We also encourage Member States to assist Syria as it brings to justice those responsible for the barbaric use of chemical weapons. As we reflect on Syria's remarkable progress to date, we must also pause to remember the victims and survivors of the Al-Assad regime's chemical attacks, including the victims of the Ghutah attack, the anniversary of which we observed last month.

Our work to eliminate the Al-Assad regime's chemical weapons programme and to promote accountability is not just essential for international peace and security. It is also a way to honour the Syrian men, women and children whose lives were taken. Let

their memory stir us onward as we work towards a Syria and a world finally free of chemical weapons.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mr. President, first of all, we have listened carefully to your explanation in response to our point of order, and I must say frankly that, to put it mildly, we are not convinced by it.

We would like to thank Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing. We welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria and Türkiye in this meeting.

We have carefully taken note of the report by the new Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Sabrina Dallafior (see S/2026/698). We wish her every success in this role. We trust that she will succeed in steering the Organisation's activities back to a depoliticized, strictly technical track, as envisaged by its mandate, including with regard to the Syrian dossier. This will help to restore the OPCW's credibility in the eyes of the international community.

We commend Damascus for its constructive cooperation with the OPCW Technical Secretariat on the Syrian "chemical dossier". We are satisfied with the consensus reached on the OPCW Executive Council's decision in July to restore Syria's rights and privileges under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Russia has consistently advocated for the swift resolution of the outstanding issues concerning Syria's initial declaration under the Convention, which would ultimately facilitate the closure of the Syrian "chemical dossier". All this could have been achieved much earlier had the OPCW Technical Secretariat acted in good faith, as required by its mandate and the provisions of the Convention.

Unfortunately, for more than 10 years, it has been politicizing the issue and artificially delaying the process, keeping it "afloat" as a means of exerting pressure on the Syrian authorities. Regrettably, the Technical Secretariat's activities today are driven by a single objective — the search for "concealed" elements of the Syrian Arab Republic's military chemical programme, with a view to accusing the former Government of chemical crimes.

We remain reasonably sceptical that the "discoveries" cited in the monthly reports of the OPCW Director General are unequivocally attributed to the former Syrian authorities. Any statements must be supported by clear, verifiable evidence. We see no such evidence, which only reinforces the view that the Technical Secretariat's "attribution" functions lack any legitimacy.

We cannot ignore the objective reality that, over the years of the conflict, a significant portion of Syrian territory has repeatedly come under the control of various armed groups. It is worth recalling the numerous documented instances of the use of toxic chemicals and chemical warfare agents by extremist groups and by Da'esh militants themselves. The fact that the latter possess the technical and production capabilities to synthesize chemical formulations prohibited under the Chemical Weapons Convention is evidenced, in particular, by reports of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, as well as by the objective reports of the OPCW fact-finding mission regarding the use of chemical weapons in Syria, specifically with regard to the incidents in the town of Mari‘ on 1 and 3 September 2015.

The hasty decision adopted by the OPCW in October 2025, which called for the expedited on-site destruction of any discovered chemical weapons in Syria, does little to bolster the credibility of these "accusations". We are convinced that it is unacceptable to set dangerous precedents that could lead to a complete disregard for the provisions of the Convention regarding the modalities for the elimination of chemical weapons.

Furthermore, such activities would be conducted not only by the OPCW, whose reputation has already been tarnished, but also under the "oversight" of the so-called "Breath of Freedom" international working group. We maintain that this group operates outside the OPCW framework. It has been assigned no mandate to detect or destroy remnants of Syria's military chemical programme, let alone to hold accountable those involved in illegal chemical activities.

In the current climate, the issue of the Syrian "chemical dossier" — contrary to claims in the OPCW Director-General's reports suggesting a favourable environment for its swift closure — represents a highly complex equation with numerous variables.

We call on the OPCW Technical Secretariat to act professionally. The Organisation's inability to carry out its work at a high standard, as well as the fundamental unwillingness of the leadership of its Technical Secretariat to rectify the methodology it employs, remains a key obstacle to achieving the objectives of resolution 2118 (2013). Until those shortcomings are addressed, it will be impossible to turn the page on this chapter of Syrian history.

Mr. Mohamed Yusuf (Somalia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council (A3), namely the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and my own country, Somalia.

On behalf of the A3 group, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month. We wish you every success. We also thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

We take note of the Secretary-General's letter transmitting the 155th monthly report of the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (S/2026/698). We welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic in today's meeting and thank him for his update.

At the outset, let me reaffirm the A3's unwavering commitment to the full and faithful implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Our condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances is absolute. We believe accountability for such grave violations is not just a legal duty, but a moral obligation.

In this context, allow me to highlight the following four points.

First, we welcome the landmark decision made at the 112th session of the OPCW Executive Council, on 9 July, which reinstates the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention. This important step is a clear signal that genuine political will and meaningful progress have been recognized. We commend the Syrian authorities for the constructive engagement shown in addressing all relevant requirements.

Secondly, the A3 greatly appreciates the Syrian Arab Republic's ongoing cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. We note, with appreciation, Syria's formal amendments to its initial declaration, the disclosure of newly identified materials and facilities, as well as the recent updates regarding site reviews and assessments. We also welcome Syria's continued facilitation of Secretariat teams, particularly the recent deployments in August to verify storage facilities and to oversee destruction activities.

Thirdly, we take note of the approvals granted during the most recent Executive Council session, especially the facility agreements for the storage sites in Qutayfah and Homs, and the detailed plan for verifying the destruction of category 3 chemical weapons at Qutayfah. These measures underscore real progress towards the verified elimination of remaining chemical weapons. That said, we acknowledge that 19 issues related to the initial declaration remain unresolved. Achieving clarity on potentially undeclared agents and munitions is essential to ensuring the integrity of the verification

process. We encourage maintaining robust technical dialogue to resolve these legacy issues and to expedite on-site destruction, as set out in decision EC-110/DEC.1.

Fourthly and finally, we recognize that progress is inevitably shaped by the broader regional security environment. We renew our call for an immediate end to all external military actions against Syrian territory, which threaten both verification efforts and the safety of personnel. Moreover, sufficient resources are equally vital for fulfilling these verification mandates. We recognize the support provided by the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services framework and stress the need for predictable funding, urging the international community to meet the revised requirements of €9.1 million for 2026 and €11.3 million for 2027. This will be crucial not only to sustain ongoing operations, but also to build vital capacity within the Syrian Government.

To conclude, the A3 reaffirms its steadfast support for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. We believe that lasting progress towards eliminating chemical weapons will depend on sustained international engagement, mutual respect and practical cooperation. We encourage Syria and the OPCW to continue building on the momentum achieved, resolve all outstanding matters and bring this important chapter to a close.

Mrs. Balta (Greece) (*spoke in French*): Let me begin by congratulating France on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. I would like to thank the Permanent Representative of Denmark and her team for the way they conducted the Council's work over the past month and for their commitment throughout Denmark's presidency. I thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic in this meeting and thank him for the detailed update.

The Secretary-General's recent visit to Syria marks an important milestone. His presence and discussions there signal the beginning of a new chapter in Syria's relationship with the United Nations and, more broadly, in the country's future. We hope that progress on the political transition will create the conditions for the definitive resolution of the Syrian chemical weapons dossier.

(*spoke in English*)

The recent decision of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council to reinstate Syria's rights and privileges under the Chemical Weapons Convention marks an important milestone and a recognition of the substantive progress achieved by Syria in this regard.

Greece reiterates its unwavering commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention and to the global norm of the absolute prohibition of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. Such use constitutes a grave violation of international law and may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Greece supports Syria's efforts to resolve all outstanding issues related to the Al-Assad regime's chemical weapons programme, and we continue to engage with the competent Syrian authorities, including through the provision of assistance and capacity-building.

We are encouraged by certain positive developments since our previous meeting, in June (see S/PV.10164), as the new Syrian Government works to uncover the remnants of the Al-Assad regime's chemical weapons programme, secure the associated materials and equipment and prevent any potential threat to civilians. Outstanding issues remain, however, and we call for their earliest possible resolution.

First, we welcome the Syrian authorities' submission of further amendments to Syria's initial declaration, including information on one additional chemical weapons production facility, a newly discovered chemical used in the production of nerve agents, two chemical weapons storage facilities and empty chemical munitions. We are further encouraged by the conclusion of the necessary agreements and approvals, between Syria and the OPCW, which will enable the destruction of the declared chemical weapons to begin under the verification of the Technical Secretariat. We encourage the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian authorities to sustain their close engagement and follow up on these discoveries.

Secondly, we note the recent deployment of OPCW teams to Syria to conduct an initial inspection verifying the amendment to Syria's initial declaration on one of the newly declared chemical weapons storage facilities, as well as an inspection to verify the destruction of category 3 chemical weapons. We look forward to the reports of these inspections.

Thirdly, we remain concerned that 19 outstanding issues relating to Syria's initial declaration are still unresolved, particularly given that, according to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's assessment, they include potentially large quantities of undeclared and/or unverified chemical warfare agents and chemical munitions. We encourage the Syrian authorities to sustain constructive cooperation with the OPCW to resolve all outstanding issues and accelerate field visits to suspected sites and destruction operations.

To conclude, Greece reaffirms its full support for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria and a fully inclusive Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition, in line with resolution 2254 (2015). We also renew our call for unity within the Council in upholding resolution 2118 (2013) and the international norm against any use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate Denmark on its responsible and successful leadership during its presidency of the Security Council last month, and we also congratulate France on assuming the responsibility of presiding over the Council for the month of September. We trust it will be successful and offer our wholehearted support. We thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, for her statement. We also acknowledge the presence of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye, who honour us with their participation.

When addressing the Syrian chemical weapons file, we must not lose sight of the fact that behind every munition, every sample and every facility there is a human dimension. A few days ago, we marked the thirteenth anniversary of the chemical attack on Ghutah. The consequences of that attack continue to affect survivors and the families of the victims, who still face health, psychological and social repercussions. For Panama, this human dimension must stay at the centre of our efforts. Eliminating chemical weapons inherited from the previous regime and clarifying their consequences are not merely technical or legal matters. They also represent a responsibility towards the victims and a necessary condition for preventing these weapons from being used again.

In this regard, we believe that it is important to preserve the relevant evidence and strengthen coordination between the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and international investigative mechanisms, in accordance with their respective mandates. This would enable accountability and justice to move forward, as they should, on the basis of credible procedures, verifiable evidence and respect for international law. We therefore welcome the efforts to integrate the chemical weapons file into the broader processes of justice and reconciliation in Syria, in accordance with the relevant mechanisms. The progress made in recent months hints at a turning point

in the Syrian chemical weapons file. For the first time in years, international efforts are beginning to translate into concrete action for the elimination of the identified stockpiles and their verification on the ground.

Cooperation between the Syrian authorities and the OPCW has made it possible to advance on Syria's declaration of new materials and facilities, establish verification mechanisms, submit amendments to the initial declaration and facilitate the Technical Secretariat's activities. We also welcome the progress made towards the destruction of recently identified chemical weapons, including the agreements on the verification of storage facilities in Qutayfah and Homs, and the preparations for the destruction of category 3 aerial bombs. Furthermore, we believe that it is essential that verification activities can be carried out in appropriate security conditions. We therefore reiterate the importance of Syria being able to continue along the path of peace and stay out of regional tensions as a necessary condition for this important work to continue.

The complete and verifiable elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme must remain a shared objective of the international community. Panama encourages maintaining this cooperation momentum and harnessing it to resolve outstanding issues, build trust and lay the foundations for a future in which chemical weapons are never again part of the reality faced by the Syrian people or any other people.

Ms. Landi (Denmark): Allow me first to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency, and on behalf of the whole of team Denmark, I thank you for the kind words. I assure you of Denmark's full support during this month. I would also thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her informative briefing and to welcome the Syrian Permanent Representative to this meeting. We appreciated hearing from him early in the meeting.

Since the Council last addressed the situation in Syria just last week (see S/PV.10215), the Danish Foreign Minister travelled to Damascus and reopened our Embassy after 14 years of closure. We look forward to enhancing our cooperation with Syria on many important areas, including on the chemical weapons file.

Thirteen years ago, the international community was shocked as rockets filled with deadly Sarin killed more than 1,000 innocent civilians, including many children, in Ghutah. The images of this appalling attack, of children, the elderly and entire families killed by an illegal nerve agent, stand clear in memory to this day. We reiterate that there has to be accountability for these heinous crimes. Today, 13 years later, this Council must stay united. We must strictly enforce the prohibition on chemical weapons and stand firm in upholding international law and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

While the road ahead remains challenging, there is cause for optimism. Over the past 18 months, substantial progress has been achieved. This would not have been possible without the sustained commitment and efforts of the Government of Syria. The reactivation of Syria's rights and privileges at the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in July marks an important milestone for the cooperation between Syria and the OPCW, and we welcome this development. We also commend the enhanced cooperation between Syria and the International Atomic Energy Agency on outstanding safeguards issues in the nuclear field.

Since our last meeting in June, the Syrian military has also uncovered more of the Al-Assad regime's hidden chemical weapons programme and has found chemical precursors and materials. All material and facilities must be identified, registered and destroyed in accordance with international standards. We also welcome that the process of the destruction of some materials has now begun, as we heard from Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu and the Permanent Representative of Syria. We commend Syria for working in accordance with OPCW safeguards and working towards closing the file and the remaining 19 outstanding issues.

In closing, Denmark fully supports the closure of the remaining 19 outstanding issues on this file as soon as possible. However, doing so will require continued and strong international support. Accountability must be ensured, and all perpetrators responsible for chemical attacks must be brought to justice. Denmark will continue to work within the Council, with international partners, including the Syrian-led Breath of Freedom coalition, and the Syrian authorities to build a future Syria free from the scourge of chemical weapons.

Ms. Nancy Abdulla (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the French Republic's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September and to wish you every success in your endeavours. I also extend my thanks to Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her important briefing on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and the representative of the Republic of Türkiye in today's meeting.

The Kingdom of Bahrain welcomes the positive and tangible developments set out in the latest report of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on addressing the chemical weapons file in the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic. We express our appreciation for the cooperation and coordination between the Syrian Government and the OPCW's Technical Secretariat and the significant progress recently achieved. In this connection, the Kingdom commends the steps taken to update the initial declaration, disclose additional facilities, materials and munitions, facilitate inspection and verification and provide information and documentation related to these weapons. We likewise welcome the progress made towards commencing the destruction of declared chemical aerial bombs with the OPCW's oversight and verification and through arrangements concerning the storage facilities in Qutayfah and Homs. Furthermore, the Kingdom welcomes the decision of the OPCW's Executive Council to reinstate the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic. This decision reflects international recognition of the progress made and the constructive cooperation between the new Syrian Government and the OPCW — a positive step that will support the continuation of this positive trajectory.

The Kingdom of Bahrain reaffirms its full support for the Chemical Weapons Convention and its categorical rejection of the use of these weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. We underscore the importance of accountability and the principle of no impunity. The Kingdom also supports building on this positive momentum and continuing cooperation with the OPCW to resolve outstanding issues related to the Syrian declaration on a technical, professional and objective basis with a view to making further progress towards a comprehensive and definitive resolution of this issue. In this regard, the Kingdom welcomes the information and facilities provided to the OPCW's teams to access sites and the relevant witnesses.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Bahrain affirms that the progress achieved and the responsible and constructive cooperation between the Syrian Government and the OPCW represent a genuine opportunity to resolve this file once and for all. We call on the international community to continue supporting the sisterly Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW in their joint efforts, which are strengthening security and stability in Syria and the region.

Ms. Foster (United Kingdom): Let me start by congratulating France on assuming the presidency for the month of September. I also thank the delegation of Denmark for its excellent stewardship of the Council for the month of August. I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing and also welcome the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye to this meeting. Echoing others, I also thank the outgoing Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

(OPCW), Fernando Arias, for his leadership over the past eight years. The United Kingdom warmly welcomes his successor, Sabrina Dallafior and looks forward to working closely with her.

Syria has made important progress in dismantling the Al-Assad regime's chemical weapons programme. But we must begin by remembering why this work matters. Last month marked the anniversary of the 2013 Ghouta attack. We remember and honour the more than 1,400 men, women and children killed when the Al-Assad regime used sarin nerve agent against its own people. The use of these weapons was a grave violation of international law and one of the darkest chapters of the Syrian conflict. The United Kingdom will continue to support efforts to secure accountability and bring the perpetrators to justice.

In recent months, Syria has made further progress. Working with the OPCW, it has taken steps to identify and declare legacy munitions and materials. In July, the OPCW's Executive Council restored Syria's rights and privileges under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The United Kingdom was proud to co-sponsor this important decision. It reflects the international confidence in Syria's renewed cooperation. But this was an important step, not the end of the task. We will continue to work with Syria towards the complete and verified destruction of the remaining Al-Assad-era chemical weapons and the full implementation of its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. We also welcome yesterday's announcement by the OPCW of the verified mechanical destruction of chemical munitions in Syria — the first since 2014. The United Kingdom is proud to play a leading role in these efforts. Since December 2024, we have contributed more than $4.7 million to the OPCW's Syria trust fund. We have also committed nearly $9.5 million in additional bilateral funding for Syrian-led destruction efforts. We remain committed to the Syrian-led Breath of Freedom Task Force. By bringing together Syria, international partners and the OPCW, the Task Force is sustaining momentum, mobilizing technical expertise and driving practical progress towards eradicating chemical weapons from Syria.

Progress on destruction must be matched by progress on accountability. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting the OPCW's investigative mechanisms. Those responsible for the Al-Assad regime's use of chemical weapons must be identified and held accountable. The victims and survivors of these attacks, including in Ghouta, deserve truth, justice and accountability.

Syria's progress deserves recognition and continued international support. That progress must lead to the complete and verified destruction of the Al-Assad regime's chemical weapons programme. It must be accompanied by truth, justice and accountability for its victims. Chemical weapons have no place in Syria or anywhere in the world.

Mr. Sun Lei (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I congratulate France on assuming the presidency of the Council this month. The Chinese delegation will cooperate fully with you, Mr. President, and your colleagues. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend Denmark for its work during its presidency last month. I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing, and I welcome the Permanent Representative of Syria and the representative of Türkiye to this meeting.

China notes that for some time now, the Syrian transitional Government has been fulfilling its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, establishing the Syrian National Authority, increasing its staffing and actively cooperating with the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Since October last year, Syria has resumed submitting monthly reports and recently submitted amendments to its declaration. China welcomes this development. China understands Syria's desire for its rights under the Convention to be reinstated and

has joined the consensus on the relevant decisions of the OPCW Executive Council at its one hundred and twelfth session. China encourages Syria to seize this opportunity to further strengthen dialogue and cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, strictly implement the Convention, promptly inventory any remaining sensitive chemical substances in Syria and destroy them, promptly report to States' parties on progress, ensure that the destruction meets verifiability and irreversibility standards and reach conclusions that can stand the test of time.

The accountability functions of the Investigation and Identification Team and the Office of Special Missions exceed the mandates under the Convention, and their establishment is highly controversial. The accountability mechanisms pertaining to Syria's chemical weapons have further politicized the OPCW, seriously undermining its authority and effectiveness.

Restoring the OPCW's technical nature is a key condition for resolving the issue of Syria's chemical weapons. Upon completion of the Syria-related mandate, the mechanisms should be terminated accordingly. Their accountability mandate must not be entrenched or expanded, so as to avoid further division and confrontation. The Technical Secretariat must strictly adhere to the mandate under the Convention, uphold an objective and impartial position, proceed from facts and address allegations of chemical weapons use, in strict accordance with the Convention. The Technical Secretariat must effectively implement the spirit and requirements of the UN80 Initiative on improving quality and efficiency, enhance the quality and relevance of its monthly reports, avoid repeating previous content and increase the transparency of its work.

The issue of Syria's chemical weapons has been under discussion for more than a decade, and its early closure is the shared aspiration of all parties. China supports Syria in advancing a broad and inclusive political transition based on the principle of Syrian leadership and ownership, eliminating the root causes of conflict, promoting internal reconciliation, focusing its valuable resources on development and opening a new chapter in national reconstruction at an early date.

Under the Convention and its annexes, States parties have a responsibility to take protective measures for suspected chemical weapons discovered within their territories to prevent the risk of proliferation. The Syrian transitional Government should draw full lessons from the incident involving the unauthorized destruction of steel cylinders suspected of being chemical weapons, strengthen institutional development, personnel training, supervision and management and, in particular, establish an internal firewall mechanism to prevent unrelated government personnel from accessing suspected hazardous chemicals, thereby avoiding the recurrence of similar incidents. Given the ongoing terrorist activities within Syria, the Syrian transitional Government should remain vigilant, take effective measures and resolutely combat all international terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council, including the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, and resolutely prevent terrorists from acquiring hazardous chemicals, chemical weapons and sensitive technologies.

Finally, China reiterates its support for safeguarding Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. We firmly oppose the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances and for any purpose. Whoever uses chemical weapons should be universally condemned.

Ms. Pavļuta-Deslandes (Latvia) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by warmly congratulating France on assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of September. My delegation wishes you every success, Mr. President, and you can count on our support.

(*spoke in English*)

I will also take this opportunity to thank Denmark for its dedicated, professional and exemplary presidency of the Council's work last month. I thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her informative briefing and the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for the report. I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic in this meeting, and I thank him for the update.

The political transition in Syria has been truly impressive. Perhaps the most striking illustration of this positive reversal has been in the chemical weapons track. An area in which Syria, under the brutal Al-Assad regime, had long been the worst example globally, has transformed into an example of transparent and constructive cooperation with the international community in efforts to rid the country of any remnants of chemical weapons, paving the way for accountability for those responsible. The pursuit of justice for the victims and survivors of these crimes is an integral part of Syria's transition and recovery, as highlighted a couple of weeks ago during the commemoration of the atrocious chemical attack against Syrian civilians — men, women and children — in Ghutah.

Syria's commitment is demonstrated by numerous investigations, both nationally and in cooperation with international partners, such as the United Nations and the OPCW. The important work being done by the OPCW on the ground through its Technical Secretariat, in cooperation with the Syrian authorities, cannot be overstated. We have already seen significant results, with new findings of previously undeclared chemical weapons and facilities, along with a wealth of information for further analysis. We therefore welcome continued submissions of amendments to Syria's initial declaration and further deployments of the Technical Secretariat. These efforts are yielding progress, but further regional and international support is needed to fully eliminate any trace of the Al-Assad-era chemical weapons programme. The Breath of Freedom Task Force is an important platform for achieving exactly this, and we applaud Syria's leadership in coordinating these efforts.

The recent decision of the OPCW Executive Council to reinstate the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Chemical Weapons Convention is a well-deserved success of the Syrian authorities and serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of compliance with international norms. States parties to the Convention must uphold the essential norm of a complete and total ban on chemical weapons and recognize that the use of chemical weapons is completely unacceptable. Other important decisions relating to Syria were also taken by the Executive Council, including on the agreed plan for the destruction of category 3 chemical weapons. This is a strong vote of confidence in the growing capabilities of the Syrian authorities.

The practical efforts undertaken by Syrian experts on the ground are being matched by the country's international outreach. The request to join the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons is the latest meaningful step. We also welcome the determined compliance of the Syrian authorities with non-proliferation norms beyond the Chemical Weapons Convention. In an age of renewed threats to nuclear non-proliferation, Syria has volunteered information on nuclear material that was previously undeclared under the Al-Assad regime. Immediate cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency followed, and we are pleased to note an agreement on practical steps to bring this material under the safeguards of the Agency, in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons safeguards agreement. We look forward to further developments in this regard.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate Latvia's full support for our common goal: a Syria free of chemical weapons and the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and at any time.

Mr. Jadoon (Pakistan): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency. Please be assured of our full support and cooperation. We also express our deep appreciation to Denmark on the remarkable conduct of the presidency last month. I thank Under-Secretary-General Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. We welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria and Türkiye in today's meeting.

We took careful note of the remarks shared by the Permanent Representative of Syria and welcome the continued positive momentum in addressing the Syrian chemical weapons file. The constructive approach demonstrated by the new Syrian Government and its sustained engagement with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Technical Secretariat have created a genuine opportunity to make progress on issues that have remained unresolved for many years.

Developments during the reporting period are encouraging. We take positive note of the two communications transmitted by the Syrian Arab Republic, including its review of locations that may have been associated with chemical weapons activities, as previously shared by the Technical Secretariat, and its initial assessment of the two newly declared storage facilities. These steps demonstrate the continued commitment of the Syrian authorities to engage substantively with the Technical Secretariat. We also welcome the most recent monthly report submitted by the Syrian National Authority concerning activities on its territory related to the destruction of chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities. This demonstrates the dedication of the Syrian Government to addressing an issue that has haunted the conscience of the global community for years.

As reported, 19 of the 26 outstanding issues concerning Syria's initial declaration have yet to be resolved. Many of these are complex and long-standing matters. We are encouraged that the present cooperation between the Syrian Government and the Technical Secretariat offers an environment that is more conducive to addressing them. We are confident that this engagement will continue to yield concrete progress. As this work advances, adequate international support remains important. The Syrian authorities continue to face technical, institutional and capacity constraints in dealing with a highly complex legacy file. The international community should complement Syria's efforts and cooperation with the necessary technical assistance and capacity-building so that the process can move forward effectively.

Equally important is an environment in which this technical work can proceed safely and without disruption. Continued instability, as well as the occupation of Syrian territory and military strikes against Syrian sites and facilities, complicates the work of both the Syrian Government and the OPCW. Pakistan reiterates its firm support for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria.

Pakistan remains unequivocally opposed to the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. We attach great importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention as a cornerstone of the global disarmament architecture and support its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. The progress achieved under the new Syrian Government deserves recognition and encouragement. The way forward lies in reinforcing the present atmosphere of cooperation and trust between Syria and the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

We remain hopeful that sustained engagement, international support and independent technical verification will enable the remaining issues to be progressively resolved and bring us to the eventual closure of the Syrian chemical weapons file.

Mr. Sánchez Niño (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, to wish you every success and to reaffirm our commitment to supporting you in your role during this period. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge Denmark's stewardship

during the month of August and to thank its delegation for its leadership. Colombia would like to thank High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. I would also like to welcome the Permanent Representatives who are with us today.

In view of the information presented, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, Colombia welcomes the progress outlined in the report of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2026/698) and highlights the transitional Government's willingness to cooperate with the Organisation, which has enabled the inclusion of new information in the Syrian declaration, the verification of newly identified facilities and — in a development we wish to highlight — progress in preparations for the destruction of chemical materials under international supervision. These steps represent an important opportunity to definitively clarify the scope of the chemical programme developed under the previous regime and to strengthen compliance with the obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. In this context, we encourage the continuation of an open and sustained dialogue between Syria and the OPCW. Furthermore, we consider it essential for the international community to maintain the necessary financial, technical and logistical support to enable the Organisation to fully carry out its mandates for verification, inspection and assistance on the ground.

Secondly, my country notes that significant challenges requiring urgent attention remain. Colombia underscores the importance of adequately preserving the sites, materials and information relevant to the ongoing investigations. Efforts aimed at identifying, declaring and eliminating any remaining chemical weapons are essential for preventing future risks, strengthening international confidence and supporting the country's stabilization process.

Thirdly, my delegation takes note of the 154th and 155th reports (see S/2026/625 and S/2026/698), which indicate that security conditions continue to hinder some of the OPCW's operational activities. The postponement of certain visits and investigations highlights the need for a more favourable environment for the verification and fact-finding work envisaged by the Organisation. In this regard, we call on all relevant parties to ensure adequate security conditions and timely, safe and unhindered access for OPCW personnel, in order to facilitate the full fulfilment of the Organisation's mandate.

In conclusion, my country expresses its appreciation for the Organisation's work and reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor under any circumstances. The complete and verifiable elimination of such arsenals, together with the clarification of their past use, remains essential to consolidating Syria's efforts to contribute actively to international peace and security.

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

I would like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing. I also welcome the participation of Syria's Permanent Representative in this meeting and thank him for his statement.

A few days ago, on 21 August, we commemorated the thirteenth anniversary of the eastern Ghutah massacre, in which the Bashar Al-Assad regime used sarin gas against its own people. The fight against chemical weapons is a duty we owe to the victims of these inhumane weapons, as well as a matter of international order.

France stands alongside the new Syrian authorities and the Syrian people in their efforts to bring about a political transition towards a free, stable and sovereign Syria. The President of the Republic affirmed this on 6 and 7 July, during his visit to Syria, which opened a new chapter in Franco-Syrian relations.

Among the priorities of this new chapter is the commitment of both our countries to fighting impunity for those who have perpetrated the use of chemical weapons and to working towards the complete elimination of those weapons and programmes.

In this regard, we support the request submitted by Syria to join the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. We also support Syria in its cooperation with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Over the past few months, Syria and the OPCW have made progress in identifying the remnants of the chemical programme from the Al-Assad era and in preparing for their safe and verified destruction. We particularly welcome Syria's submission of amendments to update its national declaration regarding its chemical programme; the recent deployment of OPCW teams to visit newly discovered and declared sites; and the finalization of a plan to destroy chemical aerial bombs. Each discovery underscores the extent of the Al-Assad regime's violations of treaties banning weapons of mass destruction and illustrates the need for the effort undertaken, with the full support of the Syrian authorities, to eliminate those programmes.

These are concrete steps forward that demonstrate Syria's willingness to comply with its obligations. This progress prompted the OPCW Executive Council to restore Syria's rights and privileges as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. France co-sponsored that decision and welcomes its adoption. We encourage Syria to continue to cooperate fully with the OPCW, which is an essential prerequisite for the complete and verifiable elimination of its chemical weapons programme.

Achieving this goal requires immense effort, as highlighted in the OPCW Director-General's most recent report (see S/2026/698). As the French Minister for Foreign Affairs indicated to the Director-General when he met with her last week, France remains committed to providing the OPCW and Syria with the political, technical and financial support needed for their work.

The successful implementation of the elimination programme forms part of Syria's reintegration into its regional environment and the international community — a priority for the new Syrian authorities that the Council, all countries in the region and the international community must continue to actively support.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mr. Yıldız (Türkiye): Allow me to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council. I wish you every success during your term. I would also like to thank High Representative Mrs. Nakamitsu for her comprehensive briefing.

The chemical weapons file in Syria remains one of the gravest legacies of the Al-Assad era. At the same time, there is now genuine cause for optimism. The Syrian Government has demonstrated its determination to address this legacy in close cooperation with the international community in a transparent manner.

In this regard, we welcome the decision adopted by the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in July to restore Syria's rights and privileges within the Organisation. That important decision was made possible by the Syrian Government's commitment to fulfilling its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the concrete steps it has taken to cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

We congratulate the Syrian Government and would particularly like to recognize the efforts of Ambassador Olabi, who played an instrumental role in making that breakthrough possible. We firmly believe that sustainable progress on the chemical weapons file can best be achieved through practical, gradual and well-coordinated

cooperation with Syria, taking into account the realities on the ground. In this spirit, we continue to contribute to the Breath of Freedom task force, supporting the Syrian Government in strengthening its technical and logistical capacities.

We are encouraged to see Syria moving steadily forward along that path and commend the professionalism, dedication and tireless efforts of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its teams on the ground. In that context, we welcome the agreement reached between the Syrian authorities and the Technical Secretariat on a detailed plan for the verification of the destruction of category 3 chemical weapons at the Qutayfah Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility and the approval of that plan by the OPCW Executive Council.

We also welcome the two separate facility agreements providing for the systematic verification of the Qutayfah and Homs chemical weapons storage facilities. Likewise, we welcome the deployment of a Technical Secretariat team to Syria to conduct an inspection aimed at verifying the destruction of category 3 chemical weapons and look forward to its report on the outcome of the inspection.

We should also recognize the considerable challenges associated with identifying, consolidating, securing and preparing chemical materials for destruction. The time required for that process is partly a consequence of the clandestine nature of the former regime's chemical weapons programme and the resulting difficulties in establishing a comprehensive picture of its scope. Those challenges have been further compounded by Israeli airstrikes targeting potential chemical weapons-related sites following the fall of the former regime. Such actions carry serious risks. They may cause the release of hazardous materials and endanger civilian populations in surrounding areas. They may also result in the destruction of evidence that could prove indispensable for establishing the facts and ensuring accountability for past chemical weapons attacks that the President mentioned in his statement.

Despite those challenges, Türkiye will continue to contribute to efforts aimed at strengthening Syria's preparedness, readiness and technical capacity to address the matter in accordance with OPCW standards. In that spirit, we look forward to the upcoming meeting of the Breath of Freedom task force in The Hague next week.

Building on the progress made on the chemical weapons file, we are pleased to see Syria also developing cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency on the nuclear file. Those developments show that Syria is increasingly willing to go further in fulfilling its international obligations in non-proliferation matters. They also demonstrate that constructive engagement and sustained international support can produce tangible results. Such support should therefore continue.

In closing, we reiterate our strong support for Syrian-led and Syrian-owned efforts to address the chemical weapons file and encourage all Member States to extend their full support. Our collective objective should remain clear: to conclusively close this dark chapter and achieve a Syria that is permanently free of chemical weapons.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.