

Secretary-General's press encounter on Syria

 un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2013-04-29/secretary-generals-press-encounter-syria

New York

29 April 2013

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome Dr. Åke Sellström, who I appointed last month to lead the fact-finding mission of the United Nations into allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

He is an accomplished scientist with a solid background in disarmament and international security. I met Dr. Sellström for the first time in The Hague last month on the occasion of my participation in the Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This is my second time [to see him], but first time in New York. I'd like to welcome him.

Dr. Sellström and his team of experts remain ready to deploy to Syria within 24 to 48 hours. An advance team is in position in Cyprus as you know. I have complete confidence in the integrity, independence and professionalism of Dr. Åke Sellström and his team of experts.

Even while waiting for Syrian consent to enter the country, they have been doing what they have to do and what they can to gather and analyze available information. These activities include possible visits to relevant capitals.

This is a crucial moment in our efforts to get the team on the ground to carry out its important task. I take seriously the recent intelligence report of the United States about the use of chemical weapons in Syria. On-site activities are essential if the United Nations is to be able to establish the facts and clear up all the doubts surrounding this issue.

A credible and comprehensive inquiry requires full access to the sites where chemical weapons are alleged to have been used. I again urge the Syrian authorities to allow the investigation to proceed without delay and without any conditions.

Today, 29 April, is the annual Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Chemical Warfare. As we address these allegations, I encourage all involved to uphold their responsibilities in enabling us to properly police these heinous weapons of massive destruction.

Thank you.