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Security Council

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Monday, 4 March 2024, 10.05 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Yamazaki	(Japan)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Koudri
	China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
	Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana	Ms. Persaud
	Malta	Mr. Camilleri
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sierra Leone	Mr. George
	Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
	Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Phipps
	United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 29 January 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2024/111)

Letter dated 26 February 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2024/192)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 29 January 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2024/111)

Letter dated 26 February 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2024/192)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 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 Mr. Adedeji Ebo, Director and Deputy to the High Representative, United Nations Office 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/2024/111, which contains the text of a letter dated 29 January 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council; and document S/2024/192, which contains the text of a letter dated 26 February 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ebo.

Mr. Ebo: I thank Security Council members 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. I am providing this briefing on behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, who is currently away from the office.

Since the most recent consideration of this matter by the Council (see S/PV.9519), and consistent with established practice, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been in regular contact with its counterparts in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Technical Secretariat on activities related to resolution 2118 (2013).

Since the Council's previous meeting on this matter, the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) has continued its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration and subsequent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic. As was reported at the last briefing, consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority resumed in October 2023 after a gap of more than two and a half years. I am also pleased to report that another round of consultations took place from 23 January to 1 February, which is the twenty-sixth round of consultations.

I have been informed that, during the twenty-sixth round of consultations, the DAT conducted technical meetings, revisited the status of outstanding issues, discussed ways to resolve those issues and interviewed seven persons who were involved in the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The DAT also discussed the results of analysis of samples it collected between 2019 and 2023, with a focus on the unexpected presence of indicators of potentially undeclared activities involving research and development on, and the production, storage and/or weaponization of unknown quantities of, chemical weapons. Throughout the technical meetings, the DAT requested and explained to the Syrian National Authority the need for tangible, scientifically plausible and verifiable explanations, amendments and documents to resolve issues.

I have been informed that the Syrian National Authority provided several amendments and explanations regarding research activities at some sites, taking into consideration the DAT's proposals and requests. In addition, following the consultations, on 15 February 2024, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted two notes verbales regarding three outstanding issues and new explanations of the results of the analysis of samples collected by the DAT at one of the declared sites. I have been informed that the DAT is currently analysing the information received and will report the results in due course. I encourage all parties involved to continue that renewed spirit of cooperation so that all outstanding issues regarding the initial and subsequent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic can be resolved.

The outstanding issues include the complete declaration of the activities at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) and the declaration of the quantities of nerve agents produced at one chemical weapons production facility that was declared by the Syrian Arab Republic as never having been used to produce chemical weapons.

With regard to inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the SSRC, I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is planning the next round of inspections in 2024. However, as at the date of this month's report (see S/2024/192), 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 November 2018. In addition, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has advised that it will continue its engagement with the Syrian National Authority concerning the origin and usage of a chemical of dual-use nature observed by the inspection team during the previous round of inspections, in September 2022.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat has also requested information regarding the unauthorized movement of the two cylinders related to the chemical-weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018, which were allegedly destroyed in an attack on a chemical weapons production facility. I have been informed that, as at the date of the most recent report, the Technical Secretariat has not received a response to that request.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat remains fully committed to implementing its mandate aimed at verifying the fulfilment of the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, decisions by the OPCW policy organs and Security Council resolutions. However, as has been previously emphasized, full cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat is essential to closing all outstanding issues. Considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved, at this time the OPCW Technical Secretariat assesses that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention. I call on the Syrian Arab Republic to continue its cooperation with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and to respond with urgency to all of the Technical Secretariat's requests.

Since the previous meeting of the Council on this topic, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) have both released reports under their respective mandates. On 22 February 2024, the OPCW Technical Secretariat issued a report of the Fact-Finding Mission regarding an incident of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in Al-Yarmouk on 22 October 2017. The report concluded that the information obtained and analysed in line with the FFM's mandate was not sufficient to provide reasonable grounds for the FFM to determine that toxic chemicals were used as a weapon in the reported incident. The FFM is currently preparing upcoming deployments and will report to the Executive Council on the results of its work in due course.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat also issued a note on 22 February 2024, entitled "Fourth Report by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team Pursuant to Paragraph 10 of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 'Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use', Marea (Syrian Arab Republic) — 1 September 2015". In the report, the IIT concluded, on the basis of all information obtained and its analysis, that there are reasonable grounds to believe that, on 1 September 2015, during sustained attacks aimed at capturing the town of Marea, units of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) deployed sulphur mustard, using one or more artillery guns. The IIT was able to identify a total of four named individuals as perpetrators, and two further ISIL members were identified as the primary drivers of ISIL's chemical-weapons programme. The Secretary-General has shared the IIT report with Council members, and it will be issued as document S/2024/200. The IIT will continue its investigations and will issue further reports in due course.

As the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs has emphasized on many occasions, any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable. I also echo the Secretary-General's call to end impunity for all those who dare to use such weapons, especially against civilians. The absence of accountability for the use of chemical weapons continues to be a threat to international peace and security and a danger to us all.

In conclusion, I urge the members of the Council to unite on this issue and to show leadership in demonstrating that impunity in the use of chemical weapons will not be tolerated. The United Nations will continue to support all efforts to uphold the norm against chemical weapons and to relegate those dreadful weapons to history. The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever support and assistance it can.

The President: I thank Mr. Ebo for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Russia, like a number of other colleagues on the Council, has repeatedly said that considering the subject of the Syrian chemical file once every three months is more than enough. On that subject, we have not seen any developments in the situation on the ground for a long time. That is also confirmed by today's briefing by the Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Adedeji Ebo.

And today on the agenda, we have another copy-paste monthly report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Director General Fernando Arias (see S/2024/111). Of the notable substantive changes, it reflects only the fact that the twenty-sixth round of consultations between the Syrian authorities and the OPCW's initial Declaration Assessment Team was held. Moreover, on 27 February, the OPCW Technical Secretariat notified the Syrian authorities that the three outstanding issues under Syria's initial declaration had been resolved.

Damascus is providing all the necessary assistance to the inspections carried out by that organization's representatives. Constructive cooperation is continuing. We believe that our Syrian colleagues will tell us about that themselves in detail today. However, we have no doubt that those objective facts will do nothing to alter the tone of today's statements by Western delegations, which request these meetings for the sole purpose of trotting out their standard anti-Syrian arguments.

Upon the orders of the West, the OPCW Technical Secretariat continues to rubber-stamp politically biased "pseudo-analyses". Clear evidence of that is the publication last week of the report of the Fact-Finding Mission on the incident in the Yarmouk camp in the suburbs of Damascus on 22 October 2017, and also the report of the so-called Investigation and Identification Team into the incident in Marea on 1 September 2015. Both documents were not only another clear demonstration of the bias of the leadership of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, but also, once again, very clearly demonstrated the ineffectiveness of its work.

With regard to the report of the Fact-Finding Mission, the facts and the timeline of events speak for themselves. The Mission's representatives first visited the scene of the incident in Yarmouk in December 2017, and the samples taken during subsequent visits by the Fact-Finding Mission to that area were given to the OPCW laboratory only in January 2020. The results of the analysis of those samples by the designated laboratories were received by the Technical Secretariat in 2021, but the final report of the Fact-Finding Mission only reached States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) three years later, in February 2024. And that is despite the fact that, according to the provisions of the CWC, the final report on the investigation of cases of the alleged use of chemical weapons, including the results of samples analysis, must be submitted to the States parties to the Convention no later than 30 days after the completion of the work on the ground. We regret that we are forced to remind the OPCW Technical Secretariat of the fundamental principles underlying its activities.

As for the report of the illegitimate Investigation and Identification Team, we do not intend to go into the details of its content. The conclusions about the responsibility of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) for the Marea incident were no surprise to anyone. The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism into the use of chemical weapons in Syria, which investigated similar incidents in that area back in 2016, came to the same conclusion with regard to the act of chemical terrorism carried out on 21 August 2015. In the course of preparing its document, the Investigation and Identification Team once again demonstrated unacceptable working methods that run counter to the CWC's principles of investigating cases of alleged use of chemical weapons, the procedures for preserving evidence, working with witnesses, ensuring visits to the sites of incidents and so on. However, that has long since ceased to surprise us.

Western countries, which forced through the creation of the Investigation and Identification Team in violation of the fundamental principles of the CWC, clearly had no interest in the objective, impartial and high-quality work of this structure. The only aim of its work is to blame Syria at any cost for the use of chemical weapons, in the absence of any convincing evidence whatsoever. In that context, we would like to reiterate the principled position of the Russian Federation. We do not believe that that team is legitimate. For that reason, we fundamentally have no intention of cooperating with the Investigation and Identification Team or to take its findings into account. The Syrian leadership also bears no such obligations.

With regard to the use of chemical weapons by terrorists, let us not forget a simple fact. Back in 2016, the Western "troika" blocked all attempts by Russia

and China to expand the mandate of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism to ISIL-controlled areas of Iraq, where, according to reports by the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL, chemical weapons — including mustard gas — were being produced, and preparations were being made to use them. It is clear that the task of demonizing the Syrian leadership is much more of a priority for the United States and its allies than that of countering the risks of weapons of mass destruction being used by terrorist groups.

The facts that I have mentioned are far from the only examples of the skyrocketing politicization of the OPCW's work. That organization has long since been a platform for Western countries to advance their narrow mercantile interests, and its Technical Secretariat has become an obedient instrument in the service of those interests. That high-handedness is no longer a surprise to anyone. During the previous meeting on the Syrian chemical file in December 2023 (see S/PV.9519), we addressed in detail the adoption, during the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC in The Hague, of the recommendation to introduce collective measures against Damascus in order to prevent the supply of dual-use chemicals, equipment and technologies to Syria. That step contradicts both the CWC and the Charter of the United Nations, not to mention the risks it brings with it in terms of exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation in Syria. However, do the United States of America and its allies think about that? It is rather a rhetorical question. The "rules-based order" is much more important to them than international law is.

We have no doubt that today's meeting will be nothing more than another reason for Western countries to engage in anti-Syrian rhetoric. Theirs is a show performed with well-rehearsed roles. Then again, the discussion of the Syrian chemical file is already reminiscent not of a play so much as of a tired soap opera, whose directors are unsuccessfully trying to buoy up long-flagging public interest with absurd and unnatural plot twists. We will not be surprised if, in order to keep this soap opera on the air, today we will also hear more anti-Russian tales and absurd accusations. That is part and parcel of the genre thought up and advanced by Washington and its satellites. We do not intend to play into their hands.

Against the backdrop of the tasks the Security Council is faced with, we believe that meetings like today's are an irrational waste of time and resources, particularly in the light of our Western colleagues' reluctance to discuss something that is awkward for their Middle East ally, that is, the subject of Israeli crimes against the civilian population of Gaza. We trust that the delegations that took over the watch in 2024 on the Security Council will also draw the necessary conclusions on this matter after the meeting. We do have work that we need to do together instead of holding pointless meetings to work through the playbook of a small group of countries.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first of all to congratulate Guyana on the excellent work accomplished during the month of February, and to assure you, Mr. President, and your team of our full support for your presidency. I would also like to thank the Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Adedeji Ebo, for his presentation.

For over a decade, obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention have been repeatedly violated in Syria. A year after the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) published a report on the deadly April 2018 attack in Douma, further damning facts are brought to the attention of the Council.

The fourth report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team, published on 22 February, concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Da'esh units used mustard gas in a series of attacks aimed at capturing the northern town of Marea on the morning of 1 September 2015. That chemical weapon, whose use is proscribed by international law, inflicts severe chemical burns to eyes, skin and mucous membranes. At least 11 people are said to have suffered such symptoms in those attacks orchestrated, according to the OPCW report, by Da'esh's highest level of command.

Switzerland has every confidence in the OPCW. It commends the meticulous work, professionalism and integrity of the Investigation and Identification Team. Establishing the facts is crucial to ensuring accountability and preventing future attacks. In this case, the fact that a non-State actor has been designated by the OPCW underlines the need for member States of the Chemical Weapons Convention to take action against the transfer of goods intended for the production of chemical weapons to illegal recipients. Switzerland supported a decision to that effect at the last OPCW Conference of States Parties in November 2023.

We also welcome the recent holding of the twenty-sixth round of consultations between the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian Government. We call on Syria to continue its cooperation with the OPCW. The provision of conclusive answers to the points that remain unresolved in relation to Syria's initial declaration is one of the conditions for it to regain its rights and privileges as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Providing those answers on the basis of verifiable, tangible and scientifically plausible explanations is also an obligation to the Council.

Switzerland condemns the use of chemical weapons and calls on all parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. Adopted 12 years ago, resolution 2118 (2013) reflects the firm conviction of the Security Council and the international community that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria must be held accountable.

In that respect, we welcome the formal cooperation between the OPCW and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. The fight against impunity must contribute to ensuring that chemical weapons are never used again by anyone, at any time and in any circumstances in Syria or anywhere else in the world.

Mr. Phipps (United Kingdom): I thank Director Ebo for his comprehensive briefing this morning.

As we heard from Director Ebo this morning, the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) released its fourth report on 22 February. That most recent report attributed responsibility to Da'esh for a sulphur mustard attack in Marea on 1 September 2015. We commend the continued professionalism and expertise of the IIT, and we condemn that confirmed use of chemical weapons in Syria by Da'esh.

The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the OPCW have now confirmed nine uses of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime and four by Da'esh. Any use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time is unacceptable. And we regret that we cannot exclude the possibility of further use of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime or by non-State actors in Syria.

Syria continues to fail to fulfil its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). As we have said many times in this Chamber, the outstanding issues with Syria's initial chemical weapons declaration, which Director Ebo covered this morning, are not academic. They include the fate of several hundred tons of chemical warfare agents and thousands of chemical munitions.

Instability in the region increases the risk of the proliferation of chemical weapons to non-State actors. We need to remain focused on the risk that non-State actors develop, acquire or use chemical weapons. All States should meet their obligations under resolution 1540 (2004) to ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to counter the spread of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

Syria's obstructive behaviour and failure to declare in full its chemical weapons stockpile gives no grounds for confidence in Syria's handling of the chemicals and precursors that we know it retains. At the Chemical Weapons Convention Conference of States Parties in November 2023, States parties adopted a decision on addressing the threat from chemical weapons use and the threat of future use. Despite the spin that our Russian colleagues attempt to put on that decision, its function was very clear. It recommends that States parties review and enhance domestic measures on the transfers of toxic dual-use chemicals and materials to Syria; and, secondly, it calls on States parties to strengthen cooperation at the OPCW on tackling the threat of chemical weapons use by non-State actors.

In the week in which Russia has called a Security Council meeting on the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia, which took place 25 years ago, it is rich that our Russian colleagues say that these meetings are pointless, because until Syria cooperates constructively and transparently with the OPCW, until Syria grants unfettered access to the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team and until Syria fully declares and destroys its chemical weapons, the Council must remain focused on that clear ongoing threat to international peace and security.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I too thank Director Ebo for his informative briefing. At the outset, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council. You, Sir, can count on our full support during this time. We also thank Guyana for steering the work of the Council in a very effective and smooth manner in the month of February.

Malta continues to support the holding of regular meetings on this file, as mandated by resolution 2118 (2013). That resolution, adopted unanimously, established that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable. That is not only a question of justice, but also one of prevention. Effective accountability is necessary to make sure that chemical weapons will never be used again.

The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and completely contrary to the legal norms and standards of the international community. In view of the recent issuance of the fourth report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, while expressing our continuous support for the IIT's key role in identifying perpetrators, it is crucial for the international community to reiterate its condemnation of chemical weapons use and to ensure that adequate measures are taken.

We take note of the holding of the twenty-sixth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian national authorities last month. While that is a positive step, it is not enough to meet the obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). In that regard, we look forward to the outcome of those engagements, including the assessment by the Technical Secretariat of the responses of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the samples collected by the DAT during its deployment in the country.

The most recent OPCW report (see S/2024/192) clearly states that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention and with resolution 2118 (2013). That is regrettable. We urge the Syrian authorities to provide explanations and documents to resolve outstanding issues, including scientifically plausible and verifiable explanations regarding research and development at certain sites. The Syrian Arab Republic has used chemical weapons against its population at least nine times, as demonstrated by independent OPCW and joint United Nations-OPCW investigations. Yet, more than 10 years after its accession to the Convention and the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), it has failed to declare and destroy all its stockpiles. That is deeply troubling. Malta also condemns Da'esh's reprehensible deployment of sulphur mustard during its siege to capture Marea in September 2015. The development of that unlawful chemical warfare agent and a delivery system by a terrorist group is concerning.

In conclusion, we reiterate our strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor, under any circumstances. Furthermore, we reaffirm our full support for the OPCW and its technical teams. They carry out their mandate independently and impartially and in accordance with international standards. The Council should be united in recognizing that and refrain from casting any doubt on their work.

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to start by congratulating Japan on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also thank Guyana for steering the Council to a successful conclusion last month.

China's position on chemical weapons-related issues is consistent: we strongly object to the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances or for any purpose. We hope our world will soon become one that is free of chemical weapons.

I would like to share two observations on the Syrian chemical weapons issue.

First, dialogue and negotiation offer the only solution to the issue. We welcome the two recent rounds of technical consultations between the Syrian Government and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as well as the positive progress achieved on outstanding issues related to the initial declaration. We look forward to continuous constructive cooperation between the Technical Secretariat and the Government on the basis of mutual respect and cooperation on an equal footing to create conditions for the settlement of the Syrian chemical weapons issue.

Secondly, upholding the authority of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a fundamental guarantee for the settlement of the issue. It is imperative that the OPCW strictly comply with the requirements of the CWC and its verification annexes and adhere to the principles of procedural compliance, reliable evidence and credible conclusions in investigating and pursuing accountability for the alleged use of chemical weapons.

A scant few countries, without prior consultations, forced through a vote on and adoption of a new decision on the Syrian chemical weapons issue at the most recent session of the Conference of the States Parties to

the CWC. China finds that deeply concerning. We call on all parties to return to the tradition of consensus-building in order to genuinely maintain the authority and effectiveness of the Convention.

We also hope that the Director General and the Technical Secretariat can make tangible efforts to preserve the technical nature of the OPCW.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): Korea joins others in commending Guyana for its successful presidency and would like to express our full support and cooperation for the success of the Japanese presidency. I would also like to thank Mr. Adedeji Ebo, Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his informative briefing on the issue.

The Council has made the realization of a world free of chemical weapons a priority, and the Republic of Korea strongly supports the continuous efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to achieve that end. In that regard, the Republic of Korea welcomes the publication of the fourth report by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team and commends its impartial and independent work.

The Republic of Korea expresses grave concern over team's findings that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Da'esh deployed sulphur mustard — a chemical weapon — in artillery attacks against the town of Marea on 1 September 2015. Faced with another case of the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria, we reiterate our position that all those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

More than a decade has passed since resolution 2118 (2013) was adopted unanimously in the wake of the use of chemical weapons in Ghouta, Syria. However, we are deeply concerned that the issue has shown limited advancement over the past years. Although we welcome the recent twenty-sixth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and Syria, those consultations must move beyond mere routine meetings and yield tangible outcomes. For that, Syria must take full responsibility and provide the OPCW with a scientifically plausible and verifiable explanation.

Two weeks ago, we received the latest report of the Director General of the OPCW on progress in the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria, with the explanation and amendments of the Syrian Government on the issue (see S/2024/192). However, it is regrettable that there remain inconsistencies and discrepancies that need to be addressed. We therefore call on Syria to fully cooperate with the OPCW and provide all the requested and necessary information to the Technical Secretariat.

The use of chemical weapons can never be tolerated anywhere, at any time or under any circumstances. In that light, the Security Council must act resolutely against any further use of chemical weapons by ensuring the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, which includes the complete destruction of chemical weapons in Syria.

In that regard, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its steadfast commitment to upholding obligations under Security Council resolutions, as well as the Chemical Weapons Convention, and stands ready to work with all Council members to address the Syrian issue.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin by expressing our congratulations to the delegation of Guyana for the excellent work carried out during February and by assuring you, Mr. President, and your delegation of Ecuador's support in conducting the Council's activities for the month of March. My delegation also appreciates the briefing by Mr. Adedeji Ebo, Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Ecuador recognizes the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and, in that regard, I welcome the carrying out of the twenty-sixth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian National Authority, held from 23 January to 1 February 2024. That type of cooperation is the best way to obtain positive results, accountability and proper fulfilment of obligations under international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council on the Syrian chemical weapons file. Therefore, I encourage the Syrian authorities to continue collaborating in an open and transparent manner under a framework of common understanding through dialogue.

Of concern are the conclusions of the fourth report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team, which establishes that there are sufficient reasons to ensure that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant used a mustard agent during attacks to capture the city of Marea on 1 September 2015. That event must be condemned, and there must be no impunity for those responsible. Furthermore, acts of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, together with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, constitute threats to international peace and security.

As stated in resolution 1540 (2004), States must adopt and implement the necessary means to prevent non-State actors from accessing, manufacturing, possessing, developing, transporting, transferring or using weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, in particular for the purposes of terrorism. The threat of non-State actors, including those with terrorist aims, of acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction recognizes no borders. For that reason, I reiterate the need to comply with all of the obligations established in resolution 1540 (2004).

To conclude, by recognizing the work of the OPCW and the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of its technical teams, Ecuador reiterates once again its rejection of the production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and condemns in the strongest terms their use by anyone, against anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I have the honour to deliver this joint statement on behalf of the on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Algeria, Sierra Leone, Mozambique — as well as Guyana (A3+).

On behalf of the A3+, we wish to convey our warmest congratulations to you, Mr. President, and to your country, Japan, for assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of March. We pledge our full support in the discharge of your heavy responsibilities. We pay tribute to Her Excellency Ambassador Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett and the entire team of Guyana for the outstanding presidency of the Council in February.

We thank Mr. Adedeji Ebo, Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his briefing. We welcome the participation in this meeting of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Türkiye.

We take note of the contents of the 125th monthly report (see S/2024/192) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), covering the period from 24 January to 23 February. We also acknowledge the submission of the 123rd monthly report, dated 15 February, on progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the destruction of its chemical weapons.

The A3+ encourages the Technical Secretariat to continue its efforts to clarify the Syrian Arab Republic's declarations by addressing the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved. Additionally, we urge the Syrian Arab Republic to continue its cooperation by submitting the relevant explanations, documents and amendments to the outstanding issues, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

We note with appreciation the collaboration of the Syrian Arab Republic with the Technical Secretariat, particularly for allowing the conduct of the twenty-sixth round of consultations in Damascus in January and for submitting explanations of the results of the analysis of samples collected by the Declaration Assessment Team at one of the declared sites.

Notwithstanding the recent encouraging developments, the A3+ remains concerned about the slow pace of progress in efforts to close the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical-weapons programme. We reiterate our firm believe that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances must be condemned. Impunity for such a heinous crime under international law is not acceptable.

The recent findings in the report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (S/2024/200) indicate that there are reasonable grounds to believe that, on 1 September 2015, during sustained attacks aimed at capturing the town of Marea, units of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) deployed sulphur mustard using one or more artillery guns. Those findings suggest that, henceforth, the Syrian chemical weapons programme will be seen from a different perspective. The A3+ expresses its grave concern about threats posed by acts of terrorism using chemical weapons, in the light of ISIL's deployment of such weapons.

In that regard, we urge the focal points of the two sides to expedite arrangements for a high-level meeting aimed at addressing the Syrian chemical weapons file based on the new findings from Marea. That would foster the needed momentum for the conclusive resolution on the outstanding issues and to ultimately speed up the process.

The A3+ calls upon the Syrian Arab Republic to continue its collaboration with the OPCW obligations, in line with resolution 2118 (2013) and the CWC, in order to help in resolving protracted issues — to declare all chemical weapons and their production facilities in its possession, to organize the next round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team and to solve the outstanding issues in order to definitively close this file.

The A3+ remains committed to the imperative against the use of chemical weapons and to all efforts aimed at prohibiting their development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use. We reaffirm our continuing support for resolution 2118 (2013) and wish to underscore the need for a definite closure of the issues pertaining to the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): At the outset, let me congratulate you, Mr. President, and Japan on assuming the presidency of the Council and assure you of our full support during your presidency. Let me also thank Guyana for its conduct of a very calm presidency during the month of February.

I would like to thank Deputy to the High Representative Ebo for his briefing.

Let me begin with a general message: the use of chemical weapons in the twenty-first century is unacceptable. To us it feels almost anachronistic. Chemical weapons were used on the territory of Slovenia during the First World War, and we were, unfortunately, able to learn early on about their abhorrent effects.

More concretely, the long-standing prohibition of chemical weapons has been challenged in recent years by their repeated use in the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere. Slovenia condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons by anyone. Such acts have devastating impacts on civilians and the environment and constitute a serious violation of international law. Those responsible for the use of such weapons should be held accountable.

In that respect, Slovenia welcomes the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic and Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). We are pleased with the diligent work of the IIT, which, most recently, brought clarity to the circumstances surrounding chemical weapons use by forces of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in the Syrian town of Marea in September 2015.

We remain concerned about the many unanswered questions regarding chemical weapons in Syria. There are reasonable grounds to believe that despite verified destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles and production facilities, Syria has retained part of its chemical weapons programme, in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

What is more, international investigation bodies have confirmed the use of chemical weapons by Syrian forces in nine instances since Syria's accession to the Convention. This is unacceptable. We call on Syria to comply with its obligations under the Convention, declare all its chemical weapons production and research activities, destroy any remaining secret caches and fully cooperate with the OPCW, including by providing unfettered access to sites, documents and people needed to resolve all outstanding issues.

I cannot emphasize enough the need to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, and the attention of the Security Council is only logical. Slovenia believes only a multilateral approach, with the CWC, OPCW and international humanitarian law at its centre, can pave the way to a world free of chemical weapons.

We take note of the position of the Russian Federation. The Security Council should use its time and resources wisely. Since the Russian Federation does not want to be labelled as having double standards, we will remind them of this position, as needed.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Let me first congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation. I also thank Deputy Ebo for his briefing and continued attention to this important issue.

For 10 years, the United States, alongside most of the international community, has called out the Al-Assad regime's repeated and ongoing violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and resolution 2118 (2013). We have condemned the regime's multiple, independently confirmed uses of chemical weapons against the Syrian people and the regime's failure to fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons and production facilities. We will continue to pursue accountability for all who use chemical weapons.

Recent reports by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) are alarming. I urge all members of the Council to read the September 2023 OPCW Technical Secretariat note, entitled "Accession of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Chemical Weapons Convention: Ten Years On". That document provides a factual accounting of Syria's record of non-compliance with the CWC. The Director General's report on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme (see S/2024/192) is equally concerning.

Director General Arias' report comes on the heels of the decision taken by the OPCW Conference of the States Parties this past fall, which, for the first time, invoked article XII, paragraph 3, of the CWC and recommended that States parties take certain "collective measures" to prevent the transfer to Syria of dual-use chemicals and equipment. States parties must act to prevent such items from falling into the hands of the Al-Assad regime and non-State actors, particularly terrorist groups.

The United States fully supports the robust implementation of this decision. We will be working towards that end and fully support a Security Council meeting this year to discuss its implementation. As is well documented in these OPCW reports, the Syrian regime continues to obfuscate and impede the work of the OPCW and its various technical teams that seek to fully engage with Syria in carrying out their mandates. Rather than address discrepancies in its own declaration or providing the OPCW with full, substantive cooperation, Syria continues to delay and deflect, and Syria's friends are politicizing the technical work of the organization.

The recent findings by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team heighten our concern that the Syrian regime retains a residual chemical weapons capability. We note with equal concern the 22 February report by the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that on 1 September 2015, during sustained attacks aimed at capturing the town of Marea, Da'esh terrorists deployed sulphur mustard. The report finds that at least 11 individuals encountered liquid substances from projectiles fired by Da'esh and experienced symptoms consistent with exposure to sulphur mustard. These findings are in line with the United States' own assessment of the attack.

In finding Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant responsible for these attacks, this report demonstrates that the IIT is reporting on where the facts lead them, notwithstanding baseless claims of bias by members of the Council and the Syrian regime. As the IIT itself noted, it applied the same methodologies and standards for this investigation as it has in all of its prior reports. We commend the independent, impartial and expert work of the OPCW staff, and condemn the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances.

The report further illustrates the need for the OPCW to retain the IIT's unique investigative expertise, which plays a crucial role in upholding the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. The United States encourages the international community to strengthen cooperation in preventing the acquisition of chemical weapons by terrorists and make clear that there can be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons by anyone.

The threat posed to Syrians and the international community by Syria's continuing non-compliance with the CWC and Council resolutions is alarming. We welcome the ongoing work of the OPCW, as well as its report. We are committed to working with the Council, in other multilateral forums and with partner countries to address this threat and ensure the Al-Assad regime never again terrorizes the people of Syria with chemical weapons.

Finally, let me say a few words in response to attacks that have been made by some on the professionalism and rigour of the investigative teams. We commend the OPCW's investigations of chemical weapons use in Syria. We continue to be impressed by the rigour the OPCW brings to each of its investigative efforts, meticulously collecting and analysing evidence from a multitude of sources to reach irrefutable conclusions. This important work is necessary so that those responsible for these attacks can be held to account. There can be no — I repeat, no — impunity for chemical weapons use.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ebo for his briefing.

The proliferation of chemical weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security, which continues to require vigilance on the part of the Council. Over the past 10 years, we have witnessed a worrisome re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons, in particular in Syria. France firmly supports the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in striving to eliminate these weapons, document their use, identify perpetrators and allow for accountability.

France welcomes the most recent report of the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team, which concludes that Da'esh was responsible for the chemical attack perpetrated in Marea on 1 September 2015. The mustard gas dispersed on that day affected at least 11 people. That report, which was the result of considerable investigative work carried out independently and

impartially, determined for the first time-chemical weapon use by a non-State actor. France will continue to support the OPCW in its efforts to combat chemical terrorism. In that regard, the existence of a framework for discussions on chemical terrorism within the OPCW is a useful platform for preparing all States to respond to attacks of that kind.

France also reaffirms its support for resolution 1540 (2004), and we will mark the twentieth anniversary of its adoption next month. That resolution is an essential instrument for preventing non-State actors from gaining access to weapons of mass destruction.

France condemns the use of chemical weapons at any time, anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances, whether the perpetrators are terrorist groups or States violating their international commitments.

In that regard, let us recall that the three previous reports of the Investigative Team demonstrated that the Syrian regime was responsible for the chemical attacks committed in Al-Lataminah in 2017 and in Saraqib and Douma in 2018. The Syrian regime has used chemical weapons against its own population, including after it joined the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2013, and after the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013). Since then, the Syrian regime should have abandoned the use of those weapons and completely destroyed its stockpiles. Syria has not answered the remaining questions on the status of its chemical weapons stockpiles. In his latest report (see S/2024/192), the Director General of the OPCW once again points out that the declaration by the Syrian authorities still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the requirements of the Convention. France once again calls on Syria to cooperate fully with the OPCW and to comply with its obligations under the Convention. That is a prerequisite for Syria to regain its rights and privileges as a State party, which were suspended in 2021. France remains fully committed to achieving the complete elimination of chemical weapons. It will continue to work with its partners and the OPCW to ensure that the use of those inhumane weapons does not go unpunished.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Japan.

I thank Mr. Ebo for his informative briefing.

I would like to begin by reiterating Japan's principles on the chemical weapons file. Any use of chemical weapons, anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable, and those responsible for their use must be held accountable. To that end, we commend and strongly support the professional, impartial and independent work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and reaffirm the importance of the ongoing work of its Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) in establishing the truth regarding the alleged incidents of the use of chemical weapons and identifying the perpetrators. The latest report of the IIT concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant perpetrated chemical-weapon attacks in Marea in September 2015. Japan condemns such use of chemical weapons, as concluded by the report. Together with the cases in which the IIT identified the perpetrators in their three previous reports, it is our shared responsibility to hold accountable those who have used chemical weapons and bring justice to the victims. We strongly oppose any attempt to undermine the invaluable work of the IIT.

With regard to the most recent OPCW monthly report (see S/2024/192), Japan deeply regrets that the report once again confirms that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete, violating its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). While we take note of the outcome of the recent rounds of consultations, Syria must continue its engagement and cooperation in good faith with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). We also urge Syria to provide tangible, scientifically plausible and verifiable explanations and documents to resolve all outstanding issues, as requested by the DAT in the twenty-sixth round of consultations. Preventing the recurrence of the use of chemical weapons in Syria must continue to be the Council's priority. We call on all Council members to join us in urging the Syrian Government to fully comply with its obligations under the CWC and resolution 2118 (2013) and eliminate its entire chemical weapons programme. Japan believes that the Council should remain regularly seized of this matter.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of

the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to thank Guyana for the successful conduct of the work of the Council over the month of February.

Once again, the Security Council is meeting to discuss what is called the chemical file of the Syrian Arab Republic. Today's session highlights two fundamental issues — first, the persistence of three permanent Western Member States in their approach, which uses that file as a political tool to bring pressure to bear on the Syrian Government, and secondly, the implementation of double standards by turning a blind eye to the actual and real threat facing the Middle East region emanating from the Israeli occupation entity's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, whether nuclear, chemical or biological. That was especially evident recently in the serious threats to use nuclear weapons against the Palestinian people. We have also witnessed documented uses of prohibited weapons, including white phosphorus, by the Israeli occupation forces in the occupied Palestinian territories and southern Lebanon.

The Syrian Arab Republic continues to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in line with its approach adopted in 2013 when it took a strategic and voluntary decision to abandon its chemical programme and join the Chemical Weapons Convention. In that context, I would like to point to the following.

First, the Syrian National Authority submitted its 122nd and 123rd monthly reports, which cover the activities carried out in Syria during the recent period.

Secondly, the Syrian National Authority facilitated the convening of the twenty-sixth round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team. It provided all the necessary facilities to ensure the success of the Team's mission. The Authority was keen to make tangible progress to resolve several issues. A number of steps were agreed upon and implemented by Syria, given its belief in the importance of the rounds of consultations to be objective and positive.

Thirdly, on 27 February, the OPCW Technical Secretariat informed the Syrian National Authority that three outstanding issues related to Syria's initial declaration had been resolved and that there were other issues that could be resolved shortly. That confirms the validity of our continued call to some countries to stop making false accusations and not to prejudge the results of the consultations.

Fourthly, the Syrian National Authority facilitated the tenth round of inspections of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre, which took place in December 2023. In that context, I will quote what was stated in the reports of the Technical Secretariat on that round of inspection:

> "The inspection team was able to implement the objectives entrusted to it. During the tenth round of inspections, the inspection team did not observe any activities inconsistent with the obligations of the inspected State party, whether under the CWC or under any decisions issued by the decision-making organs of the OPCW and relevant Security Council resolutions. With regard to the cooperation of the inspected State party, it provided assistance, support and access, including on administrative and logistical matters, upon the request of the inspection team. There were no delays during the inspection period."

That is a further evidence of Syria's serious cooperation with the Technical Secretariat.

Syria regrets that certain Western countries sought to adopt a controversial and politicized resolution during the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of States Parties to the CWC. Syria reiterates that the resolution adopted is an attempt to give legitimacy to the unilateral coercive measures imposed on the Syrian people. The United Nations has repeatedly confirmed that those measures are illegal, violate human rights, including the right to development, and cause further damage to the economic sector and vital industries, including the pharmaceutical industry. That it occurring at a time when the Syrian Government is making every possible effort to improve humanitarian conditions and provide basic services for its citizens.

In conclusion, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, at any time, anywhere and under any circumstances. Syria confirms that it has fulfilled all its obligations under the CWC, has destroyed its entire chemical stockpile and looks forward to moving ahead in its existing cooperation with the OPCW's Technical Secretariat to resolve all outstanding issues, leading to the final closure of that file. In that regard, my country's delegation stresses the necessity of maintaining the technical nature of that file, away from

the politicization that has overwhelmed the work of the OPCW and caused severe damage to its credibility, professionalism and impartiality.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I congratulate Japan on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month, and I acknowledge Guyana for its successful conclusion of the presidency in February. We welcome the presence of Mr. Ebo, Deputy to the High Representative of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, at today's briefing.

Iran once again condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, at any time and under any circumstances. We underscore once more that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, professional, credible and objective and must fully comply with the requirements and procedures of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Equally crucially, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) must be able to perform its duties in an impartial, professional and objective manner to establish facts and develop evidence-based conclusions. We reiterate our call for the Convention to be implemented fully, effectively and without discrimination. We believe that politicizing the application of the Convention and exploiting the OPCW for political reasons endangers the credibility of both the OPCW and the Convention.

As a committed party to the Convention, the Syrian Arab Republic continues to uphold its commitments and cooperate closely with the OPCW. The Syrian National Authority not only submitted monthly reports detailing activities within Syria, but also actively facilitated the twenty-sixth round of consultations for the Declaration Assessment Team by providing the necessary facilities to enable the Team's mission to succeed. In addition, the Syrian National Authority facilitated the tenth round of inspections of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in December 2023. The reports of the Technical Secretariat confirm that Syria provided the required assistance, access and support, including with regard to administrative and logistical matters, as requested by the Inspection Team to allow it to reach its objectives. That is another piece of evidence that underscores Syria's ongoing cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. Therefore, on 27 February, the OPCW Technical Secretariat informed the Syrian National Authority about the closing of three outstanding issues concerning Syria's initial declaration and the remaining issues that could be closed. This significant development underlines the importance of keeping a non-political approach to this matter. We call on certain countries to refrain from making baseless political accusations against Syria or premature judgments before the conclusion of such consultations.

We support continuing the constructive dialogue between Syria and the OPCW to address any remaining issues and bring the file to a final and conclusive resolution. That approach is pivotal to ensuring transparency, accountability and the satisfactory resolution of all outstanding issues. We regret that certain Western countries pursued the adoption of a contentious and politicized resolution during the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention. The resolution unfortunately seeks to further the political agenda of certain States and comes at a crucial juncture, when the Syrian Government is diligently working towards improving humanitarian conditions and the provision of essential services. We call on the Security Council to make constructive efforts and expect Council members to play a positive role.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mrs. Özgür (Türkiye): We also thank Mr. Ebo for his briefing.

This month marks the thirteenth year of the conflict in Syria — thirteen long years of killing, gross human rights violations, deprivation, forced displacement and an unabated humanitarian crisis of catastrophic proportions, and a whole generation living in despair and hopelessness. Chemical weapons attacks are among the most brutal and despicable crimes out of all those to which the Syrian people have been subjected. The destruction and suffering caused by the repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria remain vivid in the international community's collective memory and conscience. In that respect, we must continue to pursue, with determination, two fundamental objectives. First, we must prevent the recurrence of chemical weapons attacks in the future. Secondly, we must ensure accountability for past uses of chemical weapons. And those two objectives are interlinked. Fighting impunity and establishing accountability are essential if we are to effectively prevent recurrence.

Whether by the Syrian regime or the terrorist organization Da'esh, the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable under any circumstances. All perpetrators must be held accountable. Since the beginning of the conflict, Türkiye has supported efforts by the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons use in Syria and to ensure accountability for such use. We will continue to provide the necessary and appropriate contributions to that end.

The complete elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme requires that the OPCW Technical Secretariat's efforts to clarify all outstanding issues are duly reciprocated. We call on the Syrian regime to comply with its obligations and to fully cooperate with the OPCW in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). Developments also reveal the dangers of chemical weapons falling into the hands of non-State actors or irresponsible States and the danger posed by terrorist organizations developing the capacity to produce chemical agents. Especially now, under current conditions, in which the situation on the ground is becoming increasingly complicated in Syria, effective cooperation with the OPCW is even more critical.

Finally, as demonstrated by the OPCW Director General's periodic reporting and the recent reports of the Investigation and Identification Team and Fact-Finding Mission, there are significant developments on Syria's chemical weapons file that require the Council's continued and regular consideration.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.