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Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

9800th meeting
Thursday, 5 December 2024, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Wood	(United States of America)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Gaouaoui
	China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
	Ecuador	Mrs. Barba Bustos
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana	Ms. Parmanand
	Japan	Mr. Umetsu
	Malta	Mr. Camilleri
	Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sierra Leone	Mr. George
	Slovenia	Mrs. Blokar Drobič
	Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Jambert-Gray

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 26 November 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2024/861)

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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 26 November 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2024/861)

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 the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs —

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor on a point of order.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): You did not announce the second briefer, Mr. President, and my point of order is largely dedicated to that, but I am certain that you will do that after I deliver my statement.

Before this meeting is to begin, I wish to once again draw the attention of the Security Council members to the fact that the first week of the United States presidency of the Security Council has been punctuated by such egregious procedural violations and clumsy manipulations that they would suffice for the entire year ahead of us. What is absolutely clear is that the team advancing the interests of the outgoing United States Administration is not even trying to create a semblance of compliance with the rules of the Security Council. They are seeking to advance a single goal: to cement their ideological priorities at the United Nations.

For the sake of this, for the third consecutive day, the Security Council has had heinous briefers from civil society imposed upon it. Not only do they not provide any added value to this discussion, but through their emotionally charged, unsubstantiated monologues, they have transformed meetings of the Security Council into a farce. And that is precisely what the international community observed on Tuesday, during the meeting on the situation in Syria (see S/PV.9798), when well-known fabricators and liars from the White Helmets non-governmental organization (NGO) were invited to participate in the Security Council meeting.

The same egregious situation was repeated yesterday, during the meeting on the issue of children in the context of the Ukrainian crisis (see S/PV.9799), at which fully three representatives of NGOs effectively spoke. We were perfectly aware that the individual seated at the Ukrainian seat was a representative of civil society, and we did not see any confirmation of how that individual was in any way authorized to speak on behalf of a State. It is clear that, in order to avoid awkward questions, the presidency did not deem it necessary, contrary to established practice, to inform members of the Security Council in advance that a permanent representative of a State would not be the one to speak under rule 37. That individual was not on list of speakers that was circulated by the Secretariat either.

There is no doubt that today's civil society briefer will also advance Washington's playbook and adhere to it and will not provide any new perspective for the consideration of the issue on the agenda. What is the point of wasting the Council members' time on this farce? We are very much concerned about all of this, as this undermines the authority of the Security Council. The Council should not become a platform for American inter-party conflict or campaign rallies. If the entire month continues in the same way that this week has unfolded, and if the United States presidency continues to generously provide air time at the Council to myriad propagandists and crooks, as well as "advisors" and "civil society representatives" who engage in self-promotion, then the Security Council will transform, by the month of January, into a cheap talk show. This will have catastrophic consequences, not just for the reputation of the Security Council, but also when it comes to the crises on the ground. We call upon the presidency to give this some thought and for the members of the Security Council not to indulge such behaviour.

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, in addition to Mrs. Nakamitsu, I also invite Mr. Nidal Shikhani, Director General of the Chemical Violations Documentation Center of Syria.

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/2024/861, which contains the text of a letter dated 26 November 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

Mrs. Nakamitsu: 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.

Before I begin my part of the briefing, I wish to state the United Nations concern regarding the deteriorating security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and reiterate the appeal by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Geir Pedersen, in the Council just two days ago (se S/PV.9798) for de-escalation and calm and for all parties to respect their obligations under international law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Since the previous consideration of this matter by the Council (see S/PV.9718), and consistent with established practice, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been in regular contact with its counterparts in the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on activities related to resolution 2118 (2013).

Also since that time, 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. Following the delays reported at the Council's previous meeting on the matter, the twenty-eighth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority was conducted between 10 and 18 September 2024. I am informed that, during that round of consultations, the DAT held technical meetings with experts from the Syrian National Authority, during which the status of outstanding issues was discussed. As of the date of the Director General's most recent monthly report (see S/2024/861), the DAT has been continuing to analyse the information gathered during the twenty-eighth round of consultations from the documents submitted by the Syrian National Authority, interviews and explanations provided by Syrian experts. The DAT has also continued to follow up with the Syrian National Authority with regard to the results of the analysis of the samples collected in May 2024 in order for the DAT to proceed with its assessment of the relevant outstanding issues.

Through a note verbale dated 11 November 2024, the Syrian National Authority provided explanations of the results of the analysis of the samples. The DAT is currently assessing the information provided and will report on the outcome of that assessment in due time. I have also been informed that, through a note verbale dated 1 November 2024, the DAT requested the Syrian National Authority to identify, at the earliest possible time, from among the more than 1,000 pages of information submitted during the twenty-eighth round of consultations, those elements relevant to the explanations it had provided, to progress in resolving outstanding issues. As of the date of the most recent monthly report, the OPCW Technical Secretariat had not received the Syrian National Authority's response to the request.

Therefore, as previously reported, the DAT has raised and reported a total of 26 outstanding issues with regard to the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration, of which 19 remain unresolved. Those include two recently opened outstanding issues related to the potentially undeclared full-scale development and production of chemical weapons at two declared chemical weapons-related facilities that were previously declared as having never been in operation. The OPCW Technical Secretariat reports that, at this stage, the substance of the 19 outstanding issues remains a serious concern, as it involves large quantities of chemical warfare agents and munitions that were reportedly destroyed or otherwise consumed prior to the Syrian Arab Republic's accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the fate of which cannot be fully verified by the OPCW. It also involves potentially large quantities of chemical warfare agents, the production of which has not been declared by the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW Technical Secretariat. I reiterate that that is extremely worrisome.

I have been informed that the eleventh round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) was conducted from 12 to 20 November 2024, having been postponed in September for security reasons. The OPCW Technical Secretariat will report on the outcome

of those inspections in due course and is planning to conduct the twelfth round of inspections before the end of the year. As of the date of the most recent monthly report, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not received any new information that might resolve the issues related to the presence of a Schedule 2 chemical in the sample collected during the November 2018 inspection and to the origin and usage of a chemical of dual-use nature observed by the inspection team during the September 2022 inspection at the SSRC Barzah facilities. The OPCW Technical Secretariat will engage further on those issues with the Syrian National Authority during the next round of SSRC inspections.

As reported previously, 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 of the date of the most recent monthly 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 Convention, decisions by OPCW policymaking organs and Security Council resolutions. However, as has been previously emphasized, the full cooperation of 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 Chemical Weapons Convention. I call upon the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and to respond with urgency to all of its requests.

I have been advised that the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission continues to study all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and will issue further reports in due course. The Investigation and Identification Team also continues its investigations into incidents in which the Fact-Finding Mission has determined that chemical weapons were used or were probably used in the Syrian Arab Republic, and the Team will issue further reports in due course.

Last week, the world observed the Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare. In his message to mark that occasion and to pay tribute to all those who have been killed or injured by such horrific weapons, the Secretary-General called upon the global community to reaffirm its commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention, end impunity and live up to the pledge of the Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution 79/1) for a world free of such weapons. I urge the members of the Council to unite and show leadership in demonstrating that any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable. The United Nations will continue to do its part to support all efforts to uphold the norm against the use of chemical weapons anywhere or at any time.

The President: I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Shikhani.

Mr. Shikhani (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to the friends of Syria and to the United States delegation for their valuable and thoughtful invitation, which has given us an opportunity to shed light on this thorny and sensitive dossier.

Syria has seen one of the most terrible chapters in the history of our region unfold as a result of the use of chemical weapons, which have made a hell of the lives of Syrians, pushed the entire world into a political and legal struggle and prevented the complete elimination of Syria's chemical arsenal, which still poses a serious threat to international security and to peace in the region. According to documentation by the Chemical Violations Documentation Centre of Syria, chemical weapons have been used 262 times, resulting in 3,423 deaths and injuries to approximately 14,000 civilians. Their use has also led to various kinds of birth defects in children and psychological trauma for victims, in addition to the death of animals and the destruction of soil.

Our units have worked from the beginning to provide full support to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and to the international investigative teams in all the tasks assigned to them, including the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission, the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism, the

OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team and the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism. In that regard, we commend the important efforts that the OPCW has made since the start of its work by establishing accountability tools to ensure a world free of chemical weapons. We have supported most international investigations and collected thousands of items of documented evidence that cannot be challenged. The aim was to prove that chemical weapons were used for hostile purposes and to identify those involved, including the chain of command. That documentation has contributed both to ensuring the rights of victims and to strengthening the ability of States parties to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention, which should in turn deepen understanding of the provisions of the Convention and the various declarations under it, including that of Syria.

Following the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), which called for the elimination of Syria's chemical arsenal and the destruction of its stockpile by the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team, violations continued through the use of chlorine on a number of occasions and in multiple locations over five years, beginning in 2014. Sarin was also used in Khan Shaykhun and Lataminah in 2017. Investigations proved that the sarin used in both incidents matched that in the previously declared Syrian stockpile. Such violations demonstrate the ongoing manipulation occurring in the interactions between the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW. The OPCW reports mention outstanding issues, including undeclared activities. The Syrian Arab Republic appears to be adopting a policy of procrastination and failure to fulfil its obligations under the Convention and Security Council resolutions. Given the unresolved gaps and contradictions, the Syrian declaration cannot be considered accurate or complete.

The considerable efforts of the Fact-Finding Mission between 2014 and the present day to document the use of chemical material as a weapon of war in Syria have contributed to promoting the objectives of the Chemical Weapons Convention and to protecting the rights of its States parties. They have also helped to establish cases where there were mandates to identify those responsible for such crimes. The reports of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Investigation and Identification Team have proved that the Syrian Air Force and the organization Da'esh have made systematic use of chemical weapons numerous times, which constitutes a flagrant challenge to the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, a violation of the rights of CWC States parties and a threat to international peace and security.

Chemical-weapon issues, including those related to Syria's opaque stockpile, require urgent and firm international action. We must think outside the box and adopt new strategies that can help ensure a world free of weapons of mass destruction and hold the users of such weapons accountable, whoever they are. Beyond that, the States supporting the Syrian regime must stop protecting it and the terrorist chemical-weapon machine that has killed Syrians and violated international conventions. They should instead support accountability mechanisms and maintain respect for the rights of States parties and their obligations.

Syria's failure to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court represents a major challenge with regard to many issues. We believe that the establishment of an independent judicial entity with a global mandate to hold those involved accountable and ensure that they do not enjoy impunity has therefore become a necessity. Such a body would enhance the purposes of the Chemical Weapons Convention and help to deter the use of such weapons in future.

In conclusion, keeping silent in the face of the use of chemical weapons in the twenty-first century is a stain on humankind. It is also a permanent threat that must be seriously and firmly addressed to ensure a world free of weapons of mass destruction and to achieve the objectives for which the Security Council and other United Nations entities were established.

The President: I thank Mr. Shikhani 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*): We thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

We heard nothing fundamentally new today. The Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) continues to obediently carry out Western orders to denigrate both Syria and its allies. The usual tired narratives about Syria's alleged failure to comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) are trotted out. At the same time, they ignore the assistance

provided by Damascus to the staff of the Syria initial Declaration Assessment Team, as well as the fact that the Syrians have in general continued to cooperate with the OPCW in good faith, which they could have refused to do after the decision that the West pushed through in order to limit Damascus's rights and privileges under the CWC.

Any unbiased observer or expert — our Western colleagues, of course, cannot be characterized as such — would not deny that the Syrian authorities have shown the greatest possible responsibility in providing documentation with the aim of closing outstanding issues regarding their initial declaration. In general, Syria continues to be subject to the greatest scrutiny of any State party to the CWC. Over the past 11 years, 150 technical meetings have been held, 45 site visits carried out, 180 samples collected and thousands of pages of documents received. Despite that, ever more numerous far-fetched charges are being brought against Damascus. Suffice it to recall the absurd story about the cylinders linked to the 2018 incident in Douma, which were destroyed as a result of an Israeli missile strike. Syria's Western detractors are well aware of that, but they continue to raise this topic, including in the Security Council Chamber.

We do not see any point in dwelling on the technical details of the Syrian chemical weapons dossier today. We are well aware that during our meeting there will be significant criticisms of Syria, and possibly of Russia, and some new allegations will probably be introduced. We would simply like to note the general trend of all of our meetings on the Syrian chemical weapons dossier. Whatever Syria may declare, it is not accepted by the West. Whatever Syria may do — including any steps it may take in good faith — it is never enough, according to the West's version of events. Everything else is mere nuance, which is meaningless and does not alter that trend in any way.

Instead of a technical discussion, we will attempt to take stock of the four years of work on the Syrian chemical weapons dossier carried out by our American colleagues — those lame ducks who, as we can all see, are striving to implement all the priorities of the outgoing Biden Administration, including the most radical and absurd anti-Syrian policies, during this month's presidency. Apart from the fact that, given the factors I mentioned, discussing the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) is entirely pointless, it is important to note that international cooperation on the implementation of the CWC as a whole has been fatally undermined. Our sly Western colleagues are playing a game of condemning and accusing Syria and Russia in defiance of the facts and of common sense in two forums — New York and The Hague — simultaneously.

During that time, we have witnessed unprecedented fabrications and the most brazen lies, in which the OPCW Technical Secretariat has unfortunately become complicit. Indeed, Director General Fernando Arias has actively involved himself in those fabrications, forgetting his obligation to act impartially and objectively. Let me recall how we attempted to take advantage of his presence here in 2021 to burnish the reputation of the Technical Secretariat (see S/PV.8785). On that occasion, all that was required was to provide honest answers to specific questions, related primarily to the report of the Fact-Finding Mission on the incident in Douma. We had — and have — no doubts about the staged nature of that incident, with the involvement of professional actors and falsifiers from the pseudo-humanitarian organization known as the White Helmets. No one with common sense and any modicum of a conscience would have any such doubts.

There were a number of reasonable and conscientious inspectors who pointed out and refuted the fabrications in the final report of the Fact-Finding Mission on the incident in Douma and the conclusions contained therein, with which they did not agree. Those persons did not wish to lie in violation of the commitments they had undertaken and cannot be classified as sympathizers of Syria or Russia. But how did our Western colleagues and Mr. Arias — who serves to advance their interests — react to that? Did they give them the floor and organize a fair and impartial investigation in the spirit of the principle of the freedom of speech championed by the West? No — they were subjected to shameful harassment. There were attempts to tarnish their reputations and compromise them so that not a word of truth could leak through the thick web of lies that shrouded the Douma production. That appeared to many people at the time to be an isolated incident, but it was in fact a pattern of behaviour that had been previously developed following the poisoning of the Skripals in the United Kingdom in March 2018. It was also the basis for the outrageous staging of the incident in Bucha in 2022, which has nothing to do with the purview of the CWC but clearly dovetails with the policy of blaming everything on the Russian Federation. What those two episodes have in common

is that we cannot obtain either the most basic evidence or any response to even one of our numerous questions in relation to them.

Instead of establishing the truth about the Douma incident and thereby restoring the shattered credibility of the West as to its true motives and objectives in working on the Syrian chemical weapons file, the West has continued to lie, allowing its mass of lies to snowball. Instead of a frank and objective investigation, the OPCW illegitimately created a team of professional fabricators known as the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The IIT, which shies away from nothing and violates the fundamental principles of the OPCW — in particular the chain-of-custody methodology provided for by the CWC — has begun rubber-stamping reports on new investigations into incidents, without making any effort to visit the locations where those incidents supposedly occurred. Of course, as we have repeatedly stated, we categorically reject any previous and future reports by those armchair experts. And how should we approach the fact that, in April 2018, proxies of the United States, the United Kingdom and France, in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, fired more than 100 missiles, as well as guided bombs, targeting sites in Syria that they alleged were facilities linked to that country's chemical weapons programme? In other words, instead of dispatching OPCW inspectors there — which the Syrians were willing to accept — Western countries simply destroyed any possible evidence by unilaterally issuing a verdict and executing the sentence. Where is the logic or common sense in that?

The result of all those years of effort is clear — the extraordinary politicization of what was once a purely technical organization, one of the priority tasks of which was to facilitate economic and technological development and help build specialized industrial capabilities in developing countries. In addition, damage is clearly being done to the chemical weapons prohibition regime as a whole. The OPCW's ability to respond to the real threats facing the international community in the field of chemical weapons is being undermined, as is the non-proliferation of chemical weapons in general.

It is in that context that the West demands that Russia and Syria cooperate and trust in its new findings and accusations, while continuing to manipulate and fabricate and display reprehensible double standards. After all, only a blind man could fail to notice the evident use of prohibited chemical substances by the Kyiv regime. We have regularly informed the OPCW in The Hague of that fact, as well as the Security Council and the General Assembly. Instead, we are once again being accused of that same crime, despite the total lack of evidence and clear indications that the incidents we are being blamed for were staged.

In the light of all that I have stated, I do not think it will come as a surprise to you, Mr. President, when I say that we will consider everything that you and your satellites say at today's meeting as elements of an unfounded smear campaign against Syria and Russia. We have no reason to attach any significance to those fabrications, and we categorically reject in advance all the accusations that you and your colleagues will raise against us. I would like to advise you that we also reject any possible reports of any new staged incidents that may have been organized during the new attack by Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham terrorists on Syrian territory.

We have no faith in you, Mr. President, or your colleagues, and any actions in that regard will only result in the further undermining of cooperation within the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention, with all the attendant consequences. We call upon you, Mr. President, to finally give thought to that.

Mrs. Barba Bustos (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing. I listened carefully to the statement made by the representative of civil society.

My delegation has noted with concern the lack of significant progress on addressing this issue in the two years since Ecuador began its membership in the Council. For that reason, I would like to share my thoughts on the following three points.

First, Ecuador recognizes and values the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, as well as that organization's contribution to the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular, resolution 2118 (2013). It is regrettable that, more than a decade after the adoption of that resolution, key issues related to the Syrian Arab Republic's declarations under the Convention remain unresolved.

Ecuador urges the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully and effectively with the OPCW technical teams, providing the necessary information to ensure appropriate and complete monitoring. That step is key, not only for accountability, but also to restore confidence in the commitments undertaken under the Convention.

Secondly, I welcome the efforts of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian authorities to restore and facilitate the rounds of consultations. I underscore that transparent dialogue and good-faith cooperation are the most effective tools with which to address challenges pertaining to the issue of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Thirdly, there can be no impunity for the use of weapons of mass destruction. I therefore reiterate my delegation's concern about the findings of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team that are indicative of the use of chemical weapons by State and non-State actors. Ecuador strongly condemns those horrifying acts and stresses the need for thorough and impartial investigations in order to ensure that the perpetrators face the consequences of their actions. The international community faces a challenge in its mission of ensuring that chemical weapons are never used again. Ecuador calls on the Council to remain united on this issue. The total elimination of these weapons is not only an ethical imperative, but also an indispensable requirement for preserving global peace and security.

In conclusion, I reiterate my country's unwavering support for the impartial and independent work of the OPCW and for all efforts aimed at building a world free of chemical weapons.

Mr. Gaouaoui (Algeria): I have the honour to deliver this joint statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council plus (A3+), namely, Guyana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and my own country, Algeria.

We thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for the briefing, and we listened carefully to the representative of civil society. We welcome the participation in this meeting of the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Türkiye.

The A3+ reiterates its firm belief that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances must be condemned. We remain committed to ensuring accountability under international law for such actions. We have carefully reviewed the contents of the 134th monthly report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), covering the period from 24 October to 23 November 2024 (see S/2024/861). We also acknowledge the submission of the 132nd monthly report, dated 15 November, on progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in the destruction of its chemical weapons.

Regarding the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the A3+ notes with satisfaction that, in terms of the overall figure of destruction, as of 7 July 2023, 100 per cent of declared chemical weapons had been destroyed. In that regard, we welcome the completion of the destruction of chemical-weapons stockpiles, including those declared by the Syrian Arab Republic.

While recalling the decision of the Executive Council with respect to the elimination and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and the destruction of Syrian chemical-weapons production facilities, the A3+ commends the substantive efforts made and the significant progress achieved in that regard. We also welcome the OPCW Director General's report on the completion of the destruction of all chemical weapons and chemical-weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. The A3+ acknowledges the ongoing collaboration between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Technical Secretariat, particularly the twenty-eighth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority in Damascus. We know that the DAT is currently analysing information gathered during that consultation, including documents, interviews and explanations from Syrian experts. We also note that Syria recently provided explanations regarding sample analysis results on 11 November 2024. Those results are currently being assessed by the DAT.

The A3+ takes note of the completion of the eleventh round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre from 12 to 20 November 2024. We note that an agreement on the six-month extension of the tripartite agreement between the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Syrian Arab Republic is being finalized. We remain 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.

The A3+ reaffirms its continuing support for resolution 2118 (2013) and underscores the importance of the full implementation thereof. The A3+ looks forward to the continuation of the existing, successful cooperation between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic on all issues, in order to close this file permanently. We believe that through sustained dialogue and mutual understanding, further progress can be achieved on addressing the remaining concerns.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing. We also take note of the briefing by Mr. Nidal Shikhani, Director General of the Chemical Violations Documentation Center of Syria.

On 5 January 2023, Switzerland participated in its first Council meeting for this term, concerning chemical weapons in Syria (see S/PV.9235). Since then, throughout its mandate, Switzerland has consistently insisted on three specific priorities in this file.

First, Switzerland has always called for cooperation between the Syrian Government and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We encouraged a series of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian Government. In that regard, in our previous statement (see S/PV.9718), we expressed our expectations leading up to the DAT's visit to Syria in mid-September, the conclusions of which have yet to be communicated. However, Switzerland finds it very regrettable and worrisome that the Secretary-General's most recent monthly report (see S/2024/861) still lists 19 outstanding issues. When we joined the Council in January 2023, the 112th monthly report of the Director General of the OPCW (see S/2023/69) mentioned 20 outstanding issues. The flagrant lack of progress is all the more unacceptable as those points concern potentially large quantities of munitions and chemical agents, whose production has never been declared and whose destruction could never be formally attested to by the OPCW. Verifiable and scientifically plausible answers must be provided by Syria so that it can regain its rights and privileges as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and fulfil its obligations pursuant to the Council's resolutions. Until such answers are provided, Syria will be in violation of its obligations under the CWC and the Council's resolutions.

Resolution 2118 (2013) stipulates that those responsible for any use of chemical weapons in Syria must be held accountable. Therefore, in order to ensure compliance with that provision and with international law, the fight against impunity was Switzerland's second priority during its presidency of the Council. Those who manufacture, possess and even use such weapons must not go unpunished. In that vein, we once again 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 and hope that their cooperation will continue in that direction.

In terms of its third priority, Switzerland has consistently reiterated its support for, and confidence in, the OPCW as well as all its missions, while emphasizing its professionalism and integrity. In that regard, we welcome the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of States Parties to the CWC, held at the end of November in The Hague, at which Switzerland rejected any attempt to discredit the work of the OPCW. To that end, we supported the conclusions of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team in early 2023, which asserted that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the perpetrators of the attack in Douma in April 2018 were part of the Syrian Air Force. We also supported the March 2024 findings that a chemical-weapon attack was carried out by the Islamic State in Marea in 2015.

In conclusion, the end of Switzerland's term on the Security Council does not mean that it will no longer remain involved in the issue of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere. To the contrary, Switzerland will continue to call for strengthening multilateralism in the area of chemical weapons and will support all international initiatives to counter the use and proliferation of chemical weapons under any circumstances. Five days after the Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare, the Council and the international community must speak with one voice and reaffirm their commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention in order to end impunity and implement the Pact for the Future (General Assembly resolution 79/1) to achieve a world free of those weapons.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu and Mr. Shikhani for their briefings.

The latest report (see S/2024/861) of the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) attests once again to the lack of real progress towards the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme. Syria joined the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) more than 11 years ago. As such, it is obliged to abandon the use of those weapons and proceed with the total destruction of its stockpiles. Yet independent international investigations have documented at least nine cases in which the Syrian regime used chemical weapons since it joined the Convention. Moreover, despite 28 rounds of consultations, OPCW teams have yet to obtain satisfactory answers on the status of Syria's chemical programme. The same observation has been made month after month in OPCW reports. The declaration of the Syrian authorities cannot be considered accurate and complete with regard to the requirements of the Convention. The Declaration Assessment Team indicates that 19 issues remain outstanding. Let us be clear. Those issues do not concern points of form or procedure — they concern stockpiles of military chemical agents whose destruction could not be verified with certainty.

Two new outstanding issues were also opened this year, concerning potentially undeclared chemical weapons activities. The OPCW itself stresses that those issues are of serious concern. We therefore call on the Syrian regime to finally engage in good faith in cooperation with the OPCW teams, uphold its obligations and refrain from any use of chemical weapons in the context of ongoing military developments in north-western Syria. That is the only way it can regain its rights and privileges as a State party to the Convention. We have not overlooked the threat posed by chemical terrorism, as demonstrated by the attacks committed by Da'esh in Syria. Any use of chemical weapons, by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances, must be condemned. That underpins the commitment made by France and its partners in the framework of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

France reiterates its support for the work of the OPCW and its teams. We support and co-sponsor the biennial resolution on cooperation between the OPCW and the United Nations, the most recent iteration of which will shortly be submitted to the General Assembly. We remain fully committed to ensuring that the norm prohibiting chemical weapons is respected and that their use does not go unpunished.

Mr. Umetsu (Japan): First, I would like to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her detailed and objective briefing. I also take note of the statement made by Mr. Nidal Shikhani, Director General of the Chemical Violations Documentation Center of Syria.

The use of chemical weapons should never be tolerated anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstance. Japan commends the professional and impartial work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Japan strongly opposes any attempts to undermine its authority and invaluable work. It is truly regrettable that we have not witnessed tangible progress on the Syria chemical weapons file since our previous meeting (see S/PV.9718). The OPCW Director General's recent monthly reports have once again highlighted concerns regarding Syria's actions. Notably, there remain 19 outstanding issues that require resolution. We emphasize the urgency of addressing those matters and call on Syria to engage sincerely in resolving them.

According to the recent monthly reports of the OPCW, the outstanding issues involve large quantities of chemical warfare agents and munitions. Due to the shortcomings of the declaration by Syria, the OPCW cannot fully verify Syria's past activities. Once again, we express our deep concern about the persistent contradictions, gaps and inconsistencies in Syria's initial and subsequent declarations. Those concerns have been reaffirmed in the latest report of the OPCW Director General (see S/2024/861). In that regard, Syria must comply and faithfully fulfil its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013).

Japan firmly believes that preventing the recurrence of the use of chemical weapons in Syria must remain a priority for the Security Council. We would like to emphasize that addressing those issues step by step is crucial for maintaining and strengthening the norms against the possession and the use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu and Mr. Shikhani for their briefings. It is important that the Security Council continue to hold periodic discussions on this specific matter. I also express our sincere appreciation for the Organization

for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the work of its technical teams. They carry out their mandate impartially, professionally and in adherence to the highest international standards.

The work of the OPCW is crucial to upholding the international prohibition of chemical weapons. Over the past two years we have continued to call out any attempt to undermine its credibility and authority, including within the Security Council. Malta has repeatedly condemned in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, in any circumstances. Their use is unconscionable and completely contrary to the international standard. The Council should be united in condemning any use of chemical weapons and in urging Syria to make progress towards the total elimination of its chemical-weapon stockpile.

Regrettably, during our two years on the Security Council, no substantial progress has been made on this file. On the contrary, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has assessed that undeclared chemical-warfare agents are present in Syria. That is unacceptable. Syria has continued to obstruct the work of the OPCW, including by denying access to some of its personnel and by delaying the process, in violation of resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Furthermore, it has failed to provide the Technical Secretariat with all the information requested on its undeclared stockpile, which has resulted in the opening of two additional outstanding issues. In the latest OPCW report (see S/2024/861), the Technical Secretariat noted that the substance of the remaining outstanding issues involves "potentially large quantities of chemical warfare agents, the production of which has not been declared by the Syrian Arab Republic". The Technical Secretariat also expressed serious concerns about the issue, since the chemical-warfare agents and munitions were "reportedly destroyed or otherwise consumed" before Syria's accession to the Convention.

While acknowledging some progress made by Syria, including through the holding of new rounds of consultations, as well as the closing of some outstanding issues, we regret its continued delays. The Syrian Government has yet to provide the Technical Secretariat with plausible and unequivocal explanations of its undeclared stockpile of chemical-warfare agents. In the light of all of this, as well as other persistent gaps and inconsistencies, the Technical Secretariat continues to assess that Syria's initial declaration cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention or with resolution 2118 (2013).

In conclusion, we urge the Syrian Arab Republic to make progress towards the complete and verifiable elimination of all its chemical-weapon stockpiles without delay. We hope that the Council will be able to uphold the resolution that it adopted unanimously more than 10 years ago.

Ms. Jambert-Gray (United Kingdom): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu and Director General Shikhani for their insightful briefings.

I would like to note that the United Kingdom will continue to defend the right of competent representatives of civil society to participate in the Security Council's meetings, as enshrined in rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure.

In the past week, we have seen a significant escalation of violence spreading across north-western Syria. The United Kingdom repeats its call for de-escalation, the protection of civilians and the provision of humanitarian aid. We underscore the need for a Syrian-led political solution and renewed negotiations. We call on all parties to respect international law, including the Chemical Weapons Convention. Any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable.

On 30 November we marked the International Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare. Let us take a moment to recall the appalling human cost of previous chemical-weapon attacks in Syria. The Al-Assad regime's sarin nerve agent attack in Ghouta in 2013 killed more than 1,400 civilians, including hundreds of women and children. When the attack came in the small hours of the morning, families fled to their basements to seek safety. However, the sarin gas was heavier than air and sank down, trapping and killing them indiscriminately. In the face of international condemnation, Syria became a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention that year. But the attacks continued, with another sarin attack in April 2017, chlorine gas in Douma in 2018 and many more. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic has found that Syria has used chemical weapons on no fewer than 38 occasions since 2013. The Al-Assad regime has repeatedly shown us that it is willing to use chemical weapons against Syrian families in their homes. Independent international investigations have confirmed it.

Under Al-Assad, Syria has ignored its obligation under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013) to cooperate fully with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Syria continues to hide its chemical-weapon programme. Thousands of munitions and hundreds of tons of chemical agents remained unaccounted for. We are therefore concerned about the fact that the Russians seems to be able to predict the future and tell us that any reports of future use of chemical weapons in north-west Syria are untrue. At a time when tensions remain high in the Middle East, Syria's undeclared chemical weapons are an unacceptable risk. It is past time for the regime to comply with its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013), cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and fully declare its chemical-weapon programme. Only then can we consign Syrian chemical weapons to history. There is no time-out on the use of chemical weapons. The international community will not forget. Perpetrators must be held to account, no matter how long it takes.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I too would like to express gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her informative briefing. I also thank Director General Shikhani for his briefing.

The recent escalation in Syria serves as a stark reminder of the grave risk that chemical weapons that are unaccounted for may fall into the wrong hands. Let me underscore the following in that regard. The Republic of Korea reiterates its profound concern regarding the outstanding issues surrounding Syria's compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). Despite the fact that Syria joined the CWC more than a decade ago, its declaration has yet to be fully verified. That situation leaves substantial quantities of chemical weapons unaccounted for, posing a significant threat to regional and global security as territorial losses in Syria are rapidly worsening the power vacuum there. We take note of the recent visit of the Declaration Assessment Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in Barzah and Jamrayah. We look forward to the forthcoming analysis in that regard, and strongly urge Syria to provide comprehensive and accurate information to the OPCW Technical Secretariat to address all remaining discrepancies.

Furthermore, we urge the Syrian Arab Republic to demonstrate meaningful cooperation with the OPCW. Unfortunately, Syria's track record in that regard remains inadequate, which significantly hinders the OPCW's ability to fulfil its mission effectively and exacerbates the unresolved issues surrounding Syria's compliance. The recent OPCW report (see S/2024/861) suggests that Syria has continued to fall short of meaningful cooperation with the organization. Despite submitting voluminous amounts of information this year, Syria has yet to clarify key discrepancies, further delaying the resolution of the outstanding issues and raising concerns about its commitment to transparency and accountability. Those actions undermine the effectiveness of the OPCW's efforts to resolve 19 outstanding issues. In view of that, the Republic of Korea strongly calls on Syria to demonstrate greater transparency and cooperation in order to fully comply with its international obligations, ensuring that no Syrians, regardless of politics, sect or region, ever suffer from the horrors of chemical weapons again.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea urges all the parties to fully adhere to their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the relevant Security Council resolutions, adherence that is essential for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Mrs. Blokar Drobič (Slovenia): I would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu and Director General Shikhani for their informative briefings.

Let me begin by stressing that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable. We condemn in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons by anyone, be it a State or a non-State actor. Their repeated use in recent years in the Syrian Arab Republic and elsewhere is indicative of the threat's continued relevance to international peace and security. As events rapidly unfold in and around Aleppo, our concern is increasing. Chemical weapons have been used in that city before. The world is watching and so should the Council.

Slovenia would like to express its unwavering support for the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and to thank its Director General for his regular reporting to the Council. We reiterate that the efforts of the Organization are pivotal to ensuring Syria's compliance with its obligations deriving from the Chemical Weapons Convention. Slovenia remains concerned about the fact that, a decade after Syria submitted its initial declaration, 19 issues remain outstanding. What is more, two new outstanding issues have cropped up,

which is an obvious step in the wrong direction. We urge Syria to comply with its obligations under the Convention, implement the relevant Security Council resolutions and fully cooperate with the OPCW by providing the necessary information in order to resolve the outstanding issues and ensuring the unfettered access of the OPCW to relevant sites.

Slovenia remains fully committed to preventing the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons and ensuring the accountability of the perpetrators of attacks using chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere. In that regard, we are confident that a multilateral approach, with the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW as its fundamental pillars, can deliver a world without chemical weapons.

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

China's position on the issue of chemical weapons remains consistent. We firmly oppose the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstance, and we hope to see a world free from all chemical weapons as soon as possible. China maintains that dialogue and consultation are the only correct approaches to resolving the issues related to chemical weapons in Syria.

We welcome the twenty-eighth round of technical consultations held between the Syrian Government and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in mid-September. We encourage the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Government to strengthen communication and meet each other halfway, based on mutual respect and cooperation and on an equal footing, with a view to resolving outstanding issues as soon as possible. The OPCW's investigation and accountability work on the alleged use of chemical weapons should be carried out in strict accordance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and its verification annex in order to ensure compliance with the established procedure, the reliability of evidence and the credibility of its conclusions. We hope that the parties will work together to safeguard the technical nature of the OPCW and avoid politicizing relevant issues.

Recently, terrorist forces, including Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, launched massive military operations in north-west Syria, leading to a drastic deterioration of the security situation. China supports Syria in taking measures to safeguard national security and stability. We hope that all relevant international parties respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and uphold a uniform and zero-tolerance attitude towards terrorism when it comes to counter-terrorism efforts.

In conclusion, we would also like to express our concern about the participation of a second briefer in today's meeting. We hope that going forward, the rotating presidency will engage and consult with Security Council members beforehand and make consensus-based arrangements.

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

Let me first thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her briefing. I also thank Mr. Shikhani, whose testimony highlights the gravity of the situation facing the Syrian people.

Allow me to say very briefly that a very small group of States present in the Chamber would obviously prefer to hide the truth about the Al-Assad regime's repeated use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people. The truth cannot be hidden. The perpetrators of those acts will not be able to hide. They will be held accountable, and I thank Mr. Shikhani for his contribution to that effort.

Let me add one other thing before I begin my statement. The Russian statement this morning was a sad moment for the Security Council. We heard nothing but lies, pathological provocation and personal attacks. The statement was right out of the Russian playbook — blame others, ridicule the professionalism of the international mechanisms and their employees, claim that the findings of those international bodies are illegitimate and then state that any future evidence of chemical weapons use is not to be trusted because of its political nature.

The United States is closely monitoring the situation in Aleppo and Idlib and is in contact with partners on the ground. We have seen some reports of human rights abuses, and we hope to see those who are now in control of Aleppo and Idlib hold accountable those who have perpetrated those abuses and promote fair and equal rights and access to resources. The litmus test for any Government is the way its most vulnerable populations are treated.

The events currently unfolding in Syria are a reminder of the relevance of the Council's regular meetings on Syrian chemical weapons and the

continued applicability of resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2254 (2015). Indeed, it is in situations such as the one we face today, when the Al-Assad regime feels most at risk — and this is important — that the regime has previously unleashed chemical weapons on its own people. Over the years, the Al-Assad regime and its backers have attempted to distort the truth through lies and elaborate campaigns of misinformation about the chemical-weapons attacks and those who have documented them. The facts are obvious, and no one should be fooled by these cheap tricks.

Investigations by the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism impartially and independently confirmed that the Syrian regime was responsible for nine chemical-weapons attacks. The Director General of the OPCW is clear on the fact that to this day, the Syrian regime has not declared all elements of its chemical weapons programme, as it is required to do by the Chemical Weapons Convention. Those elements include large quantities of chemical warfare agents and munitions, but the OPCW cannot verify what happened to them because Syria refuses to answer inspectors' questions. Equally concerning is the fact that according to the OPCW Director General, the Syrian Arab Republic failed to sufficiently explain traces of undeclared chemical warfare agents in samples collected in 2020, 2023 and 2024. Consequently, the OPCW Director General has concluded that "despite more than a decade of intensive work, the Syrian Arab Republic chemical weapons dossier still cannot be closed". As we said last week at the OPCW's twenty-ninth Conference of States Parties to the Convention, if Syria had the capacity to produce chemical weapons, then it has the capacity to tell the world what happened to them.

At this moment, when we see the regime and its backers ramping up attacks on civilians in Aleppo and Idlib, our message is simple: the eyes of the international community are on them and will remain on them until justice and accountability are reached. The United States firmly believes that the Security Council must remain seized of the Syrian chemical weapons dossier. Syria's chemical weapons programme is not a relic of the past, it is a threat to international peace and security. Let us not ignore the facts uncovered at great cost by organizations such as the White Helmets and independently and impartially confirmed by the OPCW and the United Nations. Let us not forget that resolution 2118 (2013) includes decisions that all Member States must carry out and establishes obligations on the Syrian regime that are still valid today. And let us not forget resolution 2118 (2013)'s call for those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria to be held to account.

The United States therefore calls on all Member States to implement without delay the recommended collective measures called for in the decision taken by the OPCW Conference of the States Parties in 2023, including those aimed at preventing the transfer to Syria of certain dual-use chemicals and equipment. And we call on Member States to join us in seeking justice for those injured and killed in chemical weapons attacks in Syria. There must be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I listened with interest to your emotionally charged statement, Mr. President. I will not comment, Sir, on your inappropriate and undiplomatic characterizations of our statement. I would just like to make a few points.

First of all, you have completely misrepresented the reason for what is currently happening in Syria, where internationally recognized terrorists attacked a sovereign State. That did not happen because the Syrian Government is not implementing certain resolutions, but because the United States, instead of combating terrorism, is encouraging it and for years has been covering up and whitewashing Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham terrorists and is now actively taking steps to reclassify those thugs as some kind of rebels. We have been observing that, and we are all very ashamed of it.

Furthermore, you mentioned some sort of evidence that is available about the Syrian chemical weapons programme. I would like to remind you that when a representative of the United States talks about certain evidence, the whole world has a picture in their minds of a former United States Secretary of State in this Chamber showing a vial of some substance and talking about the irrefutable evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq (see S/PV.4701).

You, Mr. President, also spoke about the need for accountability and justice, as you like to say. I would also like to remind you, Sir, that, for the entire world, the United States' style of justice now is associated with the situation in which the United States President — who is only in power for a few more months, or rather days — abusing his position, has pushed for a pardon for his son, who is a criminal, even though it was stated by everyone that he would never do so. Therefore, before you make such hawkish statements, Mr. President, please keep in mind how they are perceived around the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons at anytime, anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances. We reiterate our commitment to continue our cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its Technical Secretariat.

Two days ago, we heard a warning in the Security Council Chamber from the Director of the so-called White Helmets about the possibility of the use of chemical weapons (see S/PV.9798). Given the history of that organization in spreading false allegations and fabricating information about the alleged use of chemical weapons and material while fabricating evidence, we warn that the terrorist organization Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham/Al-Nusra Front, which is on the Security Council's list of terrorist entities, and the so-called Turkistan Islamic Party, a terrorist party, could fabricate incidents of chemical weapons use and attribute them to the Syrian Arab Army.

With regard to the briefers, we recall our position, which we have repeatedly expressed, in particular during the most recent two meetings of the Security Council on this topic, and we also recall that the same Western countries that invite the briefers are the ones that prevented and voted against the participation of the first OPCW Director General, Mr. José Bustani, in a Council meeting held on 5 October 2020 (see S/PV.8764). Council members can verify that in the records of the Security Council. The reason we had asked Mr. Bustani to brief the Council had been to present his observations on the so-called Syrian chemical file. However, some Western countries requested that Council members vote on Mr. Bustani's participation, claiming that he did not have sufficient information or experience to do so. As a result, they prevented him from participating in a formal meeting of the Security Council, so he provided his briefing during an Arria Formula meeting instead. We and the friendly Russian Federation delegation have spoken in the Council about parts of that briefing. Those Western countries prevented some OPCW inspectors who had been present at the sites of some alleged incidents, including in Douma, from briefing the Security Council, not to mention the inspector who was prevented from participating in a formal Council meeting, resulting in his delivering his briefing during an informal Council meeting. That issue regarding participation was not limited to those two incidents, as Western countries prevented the participation of experts and representatives of specialized research centres that have documented what has happened and have exposed the lies that have long dominated the Syrian chemical file, including a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor who was a specialist on the matter.

The reason those experts were excluded was to promote a selective and politicized perspective and to level accusations against my country for well-known reasons, which we mentioned during the most recent two Security Council meetings on this subject. We have repeatedly stated that we are not against the participation of representatives of so-called civil society in those meetings, but we do not want the meetings to be misused for the purpose of undermining and making accusations against a Member State, which are in violation of the ethics and the conduct of the Council and its Member States.

My country, Syria, continues to cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat, as evidenced in the previous period, as follows.

First, the Syrian National Authority submitted three monthly reports covering the activities conducted in Syria during the past three months, the most recent of which was the 132nd monthly report, submitted on 15 November.

Secondly, the twenty-eighth round of consultations between the Syrian side and the Declaration Assessment Team was held from 10 to 18 September, during which the Syrian National Authority submitted the required information, documents and clarifications with regard to several of the issues on the agenda.

Thirdly, the Syrian National Authority provided the Technical Secretariat of the Organization with

documented scientific explanations in response to all its requests regarding the results of the analysis of the samples collected by the Declaration Assessment Team in May. The Syrian National Authority looks forward to the Technical Secretariat handling in a professional manner the submitted explanations.

Fourthly, in the period from 12 to 19 November, the eleventh round of inspections was conducted at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre. During that round, the Syrian side provided all the necessary facilitation and logistical support to the inspection team, allowing it to access all requested sites, and provided the team with the necessary information and documents. The Syrian side had agreed to the Technical Secretariat's request, at an earlier date, to postpone that round, even though the new date was not suitable for the Syrian side. However, the postponement was made at the request of the Technical Secretariat as a result of the Israeli aggression against the countries of the region.

Fifthly, the Syrian National Authority agreed to extend the tripartite agreement between Syria, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services for an additional six months, starting on 31 December 2024, in order to facilitate the tasks and activities of the OPCW in Syria.

My country, Syria, once again calls for not prejudging the results of the ongoing consultations between experts of the Syrian National Authority and the Declaration Assessment Team. We regret that the OPCW's monthly reports continue to promote politicized accusations against my country, in full harmony with allegations and claims that some Western countries are promoting. It has become clear that the aim of those accusations is to fabricate pretexts against Syria and to find justifications for the illegal steps within the OPCW that some Western countries have been rallying around and pushing for. Ignoring the constructive and ongoing cooperation of the Syrian side and insisting on an accusatory and hostile approach that has no scientific or technical basis is a departure from the principles of neutrality, impartiality and professionalism stipulated by the provisions of the Convention. It is an unjustified prejudice against a State party that has fulfilled all its obligations under the Convention.

The special nature of Syria's case in the OPCW in no way warrants justifying the politicization of its Technical Secretariat against Syria. In that regard, we stress that such an approach will only further complicate and undermine the credibility of the OPCW and divert it from the true aims and purposes of the Convention. It is regrettable that the OPCW's Technical Secretariat not only disregarded Syria's cooperation, but also rushed, without any justification, to raise two new issues in July. In that context, we emphasize that it is not permissible, from a scientific and technical point of view, to use the term "pending matters" regarding results of samples that are still being technically evaluated and require further scientific and technical discussions between experts of the two sides.

While some Western countries are dedicated to targeting the Syrian State, including through the use of OPCW mechanisms, those same countries continue to ignore the request made by the State of Palestine to the OPCW to investigate incidents of the Israeli occupation entity's use of chemical weapons during its ongoing aggression against the Palestinian people — despite the fact that a large number of countries made the same request, including Syria. The OPCW was asked to take action in response to that request in order to fulfil its mandate. That conduct shows the hypocrisy, politicization and lack of credibility of countries that disregard the real threat to regional peace and security and to the non-proliferation regime, namely, the Israeli occupation entity's stockpile of weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Those same countries go even further by supporting the occupation's malicious efforts to develop such weapons and to remain a non-signatory party to the international legal instruments prohibiting such weapons. That is also evident in the fact that those countries obstruct our efforts to establish a Middle East zone free of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction. The conduct of those States and their selective approach — and I am referring to one party, in particular — has plunged the OPCW into a maze of politicization and polarization, thereby gravely undermining its credibility.

Syria has fulfilled all its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. It completely destroyed all its stockpiles and production facilities. Syria no longer has any such weapons. Any narrative to the contrary promoted by the United States and its Western allies is cheap political attempt to manipulate this dossier through unprofessional and biased reports issued using a stick-and-carrot approach, prepared on the basis of open sources and allegations made by terrorist groups, their affiliates and the intelligence agencies of Western

countries, without any consideration for the standards of investigation stipulated by the Convention.

My country, Syria, reiterates its call upon the Technical Secretariat to adopt an approach based on impartiality, objectivity and professionalism, in accordance with its mandate under the Chemical Weapons Convention, in order to resolve all pending matters as soon as possible, to stop the political exploitation of this file and to close it once and for all.

One must always remember that political disagreement with any country does not mean that the Al-Nusra Front terrorist organization or its leader, Abu Mohammad Al-Jawlani, should control the city of Aleppo, which is rich in cultural heritage and religious, doctrinal and racial diversity, causing suffering to its people and transforming the city into a model of other cities under the control of terrorist organizations affiliated with Al-Qaida. That is essential and must be always remembered.

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

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): We welcome the presence of Mrs. Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, at today's briefing.

I wish to make three points on this agenda item.

First, as a responsible State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and as a nation that has suffered deeply from chemical weapons, the Islamic Republic of Iran unequivocally condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. As an active member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Iran underlines the central importance of ensuring the independent, impartial and professional work of the OPCW. We call for the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention. Iran will spare no effort to realize the objectives of this vital instrument.

Secondly, the Syrian Arab Republic has complied with its obligations under the Convention, having destroyed its chemical-weapon stockpiles and production facilities. It also continues its constructive engagement with the OPCW, which demonstrates its steadfast dedication to transparency and full compliance with its responsibilities.

In that context, the Syrian National Authority has submitted three comprehensive reports over the past three months. It participated in the twenty-eighth round of the consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team and provided the requested information, documents and clarifications to facilitate the resolution of outstanding issues. Syria also submitted scientifically documented explanations to the Technical Secretariat in response to inquiries regarding the results of the analyses of samples collected in May 2024. Syria hosted the eleventh inspection round at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre, granted access to the requested sites and provided full logistical support. Syria has extended the tripartite agreement with the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services for an additional six months.

It is essential to recognize the significant progress in Syrian cooperation with the OPCW and to ensure that such developments are evaluated fairly and without politicization or bias. The OPCW must operate with strict neutrality, professionalism and evidence-based consistency to establish facts and draw credible conclusions. We support continued constructive dialogue between Syria and the OPCW to address any outstanding issues and achieve their comprehensive resolution. That process must be guided by transparency, accountability and impartiality.

Thirdly, we express our concerns about the use of phosphorus bombs by the Israeli regime against the civilian population in Gaza and southern Lebanon, which was confirmed by credible reports. Those abhorrent acts represent a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and a grave affront to the principles of humanity. The use of white phosphorus — a weapon known for its indiscriminate and devastating effects — constitutes a war crime. Those criminal actions by the Israeli regime demand unequivocal condemnation from the Council and a thorough international investigation by the OPCW.

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

Mr. Çetin (Türkiye): I would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu and Mr. Shikhani for their comprehensive and informative briefings.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria has deepened the tragedy of the civil war and represented a grave violation of international law and human dignity. It has also prevented the prospects of moving closer to a

genuine political solution to the Syrian conflict based on resolution 2254 (2015). It is imperative that those heinous weapons are comprehensively eradicated under the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention and in line with resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2235 (2015). The use of such weapons, no matter where it occurs, represents a serious threat to global peace and security. The spread of chemical weapons to non-State actors and terrorist organizations would be a grave threat, not only to Syria but also to the entire region and beyond.

We have a shared responsibility to take decisive action to prevent the use of chemical weapons and ensure accountability. The United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have been at the forefront of investigating those attacks and holding those responsible for them accountable. Yet despite those efforts, much remains to be done, as Damascus continues to fail to provide a full and transparent account of its chemical weapons programme. All information related to its chemical weapons stockpiles, production facilities and past use of those weapons should be provided to the OPCW. Regular reports by the OPCW on Syria's chemical weapons declarations show that gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies persist. Syria continues to obstruct the work of the Declaration Assessment Team, in contravention of the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). That remains a matter of serious concern.

Therefore, the international community should maintain its pressure on Damascus to fully comply with its obligations under the Convention and cooperate unconditionally with the OPCW. To that end, Türkiye has supported and co-sponsored the decision on Syria taken at the twenty-eighth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention. My country deeply condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances, and remains committed to providing the necessary support to the United Nations and the OPCW to advance the efforts on the prohibition of such weapons. We should ensure the complete elimination of such weapons from the region and strive for a world free of chemical weapons.

The elimination of chemical weapons must be accompanied by a genuine commitment to advancing a serious political process. The unfolding developments once again demonstrate the urgent need for revitalizing the political process. National reconciliation built on justice and inclusivity is critical to ending the cycle of violence and restoring trust among all Syrians. The relevant actors must intensify efforts to support a credible political solution, as outlined in resolution 2254 (2015), without further delay. Only through a coordinated approach, combining the elimination of chemical weapons, accountability and political process can we hope to achieve lasting peace and stability in Syria. My country stands ready to contribute to that effort.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.