



**Briefing to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council
resolution 2118 (2013) on the elimination of the chemical weapons
programme of the Syrian Arab Republic**

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Mr. President, distinguished Members of the Security Council,

Thank you once again for the opportunity to brief you on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. As before, I will also provide you with an update on the activities of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). Mr. Mulet, the head of the JIM's Leadership Panel will join me at next month's briefing.

I will first turn to the progress related to resolution 2118 (2013) and the elimination of Syria's declared chemical weapons programme.

Since my last briefing, I was able to meet in person with the Director-General of the OPCW to discuss matters related to this file and to continue the good and constructive engagement that has been established. In addition, the Director-General, Mr. Mulet and I spoke by phone yesterday, in anticipation of this particular briefing.

I have also spoken with the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations and have now met with most Members of the Council. All these discussions have allowed me to deepen my understanding of this complex and challenging portfolio.

Mr. President,

Although there is little new to report since my last briefing on 23 May, there have been small changes and, I'm pleased to note, some progress. The Secretary-General's last letter noted the unchanged situation with regard to remaining declared chemical weapons production facilities. As you recall, one hangar remained to be destroyed and the OPCW Technical Secretariat had yet to verify the condition of two above-ground stationary facilities. The lack of progress in this regard was due to the prevailing security situation, which precluded safe access to the sites.

On 6 June 2017, the remaining aircraft hangar was destroyed. The destruction was observed by an OPCW team. As yet, however, there is no change to the lack of safe access to the sites of the two above-ground stationary facilities.

The longstanding issues related to Syria's declaration and subsequent amendments also remain. Plans for a fourth round of high-level consultations are continuing, but as yet no new dates have been set. The last such consultations took place a year ago, in June 2016. The Secretary-General continues to urge cooperation between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW to resolve these issues, in order that the OPCW is in a position to verify that activities are in accordance with the obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and consistent with the information provided in declarations. This in turn will allow the international community to have full confidence in the same.

In November 2016, an OPCW Executive Council Decision stated that the OPCW shall conduct inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC). The Decision also called upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to provide full and unfettered access to the Centre. The first inspections were duly carried out from 26 February to 5 March 2017. Four samples were taken at the Centre – two from each facility. The results of the sample analysis indicated that there were no unscheduled chemicals present in the samples. The OPCW is planning a second inspection to take place in the second half of this year.

Mr. President,

I am informed by the OPCW that the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria continues its investigation into the allegation of the use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun on 4 April. Last month a status update on this investigation was transmitted by the OPCW Director-General to the Secretary-General and subsequently circulated to the Security Council.

I am further informed that the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission team recently visited Damascus and may do so again. In addition, planning is still underway for the deployment of a team to the site of the incident. As always, any such deployment will depend upon the most stringent security assurances for the OPCW team.

The OPCW was not able to say with certainty when the Fact-Finding Mission team will be able to submit its conclusions on this incident, only that it will do so when it considers that it has sufficient information and evidence.

Mr. President,

With the appointment of Ms. Judy Cheng-Hopkins (Malaysia), the Leadership Panel of the JIM is now complete. Ms. Cheng-Hopkins had a long and distinguished career at the United Nations, including most recently as the head of the Peacebuilding Support Office. She joins Mr. Mulet (Guatemala) and Mr. Stefan Mogl (Switzerland) and will be advising the Panel on political matters.

As stated in the Secretary-General's most recent letter to the Security Council, following its assessment of the report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission, the JIM has started an in-depth investigation into the incident in Um-Hosh of 16 September 2016. You will recall that the OPCW report concluded that blood sample analyses of two female casualties reported to have been involved in the alleged attack indicated exposure to sulfur mustard, as did a munition that was also reported to be connected to the incident.

The JIM is also preliminarily assessing the status update report of the Fact-Finding Mission, and other available material, on the allegations of the use of chemical weapons at Khan

Shaykhun, to which I referred earlier. The Leadership Panel expects to make a decision on conducting an in-depth investigation into this incident upon receipt of the final FFM report.

Mr President, Distinguished Members of the Council,

As I noted at the outset, the smooth working relationship between the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the JIM has continued. The Office for Disarmament Affairs continues to work to support and facilitate the work of the JIM, while fully respecting its independence.

Both Mr. Mulet and I continue to urge the members of the Security Council to avoid politicizing this issue. In addition, as the Secretary-General stated in his most recent letter to the Security Council, the continuing use of chemical weapons in Syria is not only horrific in its own right, but also profoundly damaging to the international community's confidence in its non-proliferation architecture. This is to the detriment of all of us. We have, collectively, worked to create regimes for disarmament and non-proliferation in order that our security will be enhanced. If we, collectively, permit the erosion of these regimes, so too will our security be eroded.

Nearly one hundred years ago, the 1925 Geneva Protocol stated that "the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of all analogous liquids, materials or devices, has been justly condemned by the general opinion of the civilized world." Nearly one hundred years later we must continue not only to speak, but also to act in accordance with that view. We cannot go backwards. The Chemical Weapons Convention calls upon us "to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons". Such use remains wholly indefensible and is a threat to international peace and security. Those responsible for their use must be held accountable. Many things have changed in the years since 1925, but this view of chemical weapons should not be one of them.

Thank you very much for your attention.