



Security Council

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Letter dated 16 December 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and Mr. Fernando Arias, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Niger, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in the Middle East (Syria)” convened on Friday, 11 December 2020. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 (S/2020/372) from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council, which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Jerry Matthews **Matjila**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs,
Izumi Nakamitsu**

I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Council on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. I hope that today's format will enable a substantive, informative and civilized debate on this important international security issue.

It is a pleasure to be joined here today, virtually, by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Mr. Fernando Arias, who will update the Council on the elimination of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme.

Since my last briefing, on 5 November (see S/2020/1088, annex I), the Office for Disarmament Affairs has continued to maintain regular contact with its counterparts at the OPCW on its activities related to this matter. On 2 December, we received information from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic concerning chemical issues for the current period. That information was studied carefully and was also forwarded to the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to affect the OPCW's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. The Technical Secretariat has nonetheless continued with its mandated activities related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with Syria in that regard.

The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) is continuing its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration to the OPCW. As I mentioned in my previous briefing to the Council, the DAT was deployed to Damascus between 22 September and 3 October to conduct the twenty-third round of consultations with the Syrian National Authority. As reported to the Executive Council through an addendum dated 18 November to the note by the Director-General entitled "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team" (EC-95/HP/DG.2), dated 1 October, and through a further note by the Director-General entitled "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team" (EC-95/HP/DG.3), dated 18 November, some progress was made during that round of consultations, with three outstanding issues being closed related to the Syrian National Authority's initial declaration. However, as the Director-General also reported, 19 issues remain outstanding.

It is therefore the continuing assessment of the Technical Secretariat that at this stage, owing to the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete, in accordance with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction. During the September-October deployment, the DAT also collected samples to replace those taken during its previous deployment. I am sure that the Director-General of the OPCW will provide an update on the activities conducted by the Technical Secretariat, including in relation to the seventh round of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre between 8 and 13 November.

Pursuant to OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-43/DEC.1, dated 24 July 2014, the Technical Secretariat has been monitoring and maintaining the remote monitoring systems installed at four sealed underground structures within the

territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. In accordance with the Executive Council's decision, the Technical Secretariat was deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic between 15 and 18 November to conduct its final visit to the underground structures and to observe the removal of the monitoring equipment. I understand that the Syrian Arab Republic was informed by the Technical Secretariat that the underground structures should remain sealed as part of the destruction plan agreed by the Executive Council.

I note that the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission is still in the process of studying all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and is continuing its engagement with the Syrian Government and other States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with regard to a variety of incidents. As previously reported, further deployments of the Fact-Finding Mission will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Investigation and Identification Team is continuing its investigations into incidents in the Syrian Arab Republic in which the Fact-Finding Mission has determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used and will issue further reports in due course. I would like to take this opportunity to once again reiterate my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of the work of the OPCW.

With regard to the implementation of Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2, of 9 July, entitled "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" (see S/2020/724), I look forward to Director-General Arias's update on that matter.

Before concluding, I wish to echo the Secretary-General's message on the Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare, which was commemorated on 30 November:

"The use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances is intolerable and a serious violation of international law.... There can be no justification for the use of these abhorrent weapons. We must remain united and determined in preventing their use or the threat of their use.... It is imperative that those who use or have used chemical weapons are identified and held accountable. That is the only way to meet our moral responsibility to the victims of chemical warfare."

As the Secretary-General urged,

"[L]et us renew our unequivocal commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention and our support to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons."

Annex II**Briefing by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Fernando Arias**

I thank the South African presidency for this opportunity to inform the Security Council about developments at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) since my previous briefing, on 12 May, at the invitation of the Estonian presidency.

At that time, I briefed the Council on the first report issued by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which identified the perpetrators of several cases of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Over the past seven months, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has continued to adapt its activities to the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in order to continue to deliver its services to member States and implement the mandates received. Verification has progressed at chemical-weapon destruction facilities thanks to modifications that ensure the health and safety of inspectors and personnel on site. The Technical Secretariat resumed its industry inspections in mid-September based on an adjusted prioritization plan. Old chemical-weapon inspections were conducted this year at a number of sites.

The OPCW's International Cooperation and Assistance Division was able to deliver 38 online capacity-building events this year, benefiting some 1,400 participants. And on 30 November and 1 December, the first part of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) was held in The Hague. In preparing for the Conference, we took into consideration the COVID-19 situation in The Hague, the guidance of the Dutch authorities and, at the same time, the need to fulfil the Conference's obligations. The Conference concluded with the adoption of the programme and budget for 2021, which are vital to the functioning of the OPCW. The Conference will most likely resume in spring 2021 and will address all of the remaining agenda items.

I will refer now to the Syrian chemical weapons dossier. As I mentioned in my briefing to the Council in May, the Technical Secretariat released the first report of the IIT on 8 April. The report concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that individuals belonging to the Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical weapons in Ltamenah on three occasions in March 2017. Sarin was used on two of those occasions and chlorine on one. Following the issuance of the IIT report, the Executive Council of the OPCW adopted a decision in July requesting that the Syrian Arab Republic declare to the Technical Secretariat, within 90 days, the chemical weapons used in the attacks in Ltamenah. Under that decision, Syria was also requested to declare all of the chemical weapons it currently possesses and to resolve all outstanding issues regarding its initial declaration. On 14 October, I reported to the Executive Council and all States parties that the Syrian Arab Republic had not completed any of those requirements. A draft decision was put forward by France on behalf of 46 States parties with a view to further addressing the issue. It will be discussed during the second part of the Conference in spring 2021.

In that context, I should recall that while the Technical Secretariat has had the authority to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria since June 2018, the Technical Secretariat is neither a public prosecutor nor a court of justice. States parties do have tools at their disposal to proceed further on the basis of the information they have received. The same applies to the Security Council and to the United Nations more broadly.

In the meantime, the IIT is continuing its investigations into other incidents falling under its purview. The twenty-third round of consultations between the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian Arab Republic took place in Damascus from 22 September to 3 October. In the course of that deployment, the DAT collected samples, verified the destruction of items previously observed as not destroyed and discussed the current status of all outstanding issues. The activities and outcomes of the DAT's deployment were reported to the Executive Council in October.

During the recent round of consultations, three issues related to the Syrian initial declaration were closed, while 19 issues remain outstanding. One of those 19 issues pertains to a chemical-weapon production facility that the Syrian National Authority declared had never been used for the production of chemical weapons. The review of all the information and other materials gathered by the DAT since 2014, including samples, indicates that the production or weaponization of chemical-warfare nerve agents did take place at that facility. The Technical Secretariat therefore requested that the Syrian Arab Republic declare the exact types and quantities of chemical agents produced or weaponized at the site in question, in line with the relevant provisions of the CWC.

At this point, I would like to recall that the initial declaration of a State party is an important and compulsory step upon joining the Convention. Within 30 days of its accession, each State party has to provide a full declaration of its chemical weapons programme, if any. During the seven years that have elapsed since Syria joined the Convention in 2013, the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW has spared no effort in assessing Syria's initial declaration and assisting the country in completing it. To date, given the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete.

On 2 October, the Technical Secretariat released two reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission regarding the alleged use of chemical weapons in Aleppo in November 2018 and in Saraqib in August 2016. The reports concluded that it was not possible for the Mission to establish whether chemicals were used or likely used as a weapon in those incidents. The Mission is continuing to analyse the information collected from its most recent deployments in eight different cases. I wish to stress here that the Technical Secretariat independently collects its own information. At the same time, it also relies on information given by States parties to the CWC, as requested in the relevant decisions of the Executive Council.

Aside from its Syria-related work, the Technical Secretariat was called on to assist with another incident involving the use of chemical weapons. On 20 August, Alexei Navalny, a Russian citizen and political activist, fell seriously ill while travelling by plane in Russia. Two days later, Mr. Navalny was taken to Germany for medical treatment.

In September, the Technical Secretariat conducted a technical assistance visit in response to a request from Germany under paragraph 38 (e) of article VIII of the CWC. During the visit, a team of experts from the Technical Secretariat collected biomedical samples directly from Mr. Navalny, with his consent, for analysis by OPCW-designated laboratories. The results of the analysis confirmed that traces of a toxic chemical of the Novichok family were found in Mr. Navalny's blood. According to the CWC, the poisoning of an individual through the use of any nerve agent is a use of a chemical weapon, whether or not that chemical is included in the Convention. Upon receipt of the analysis of the samples by the designated laboratories, the Technical Secretariat prepared its report, which was shared with the

German authorities. At Germany's request, the Technical Secretariat subsequently shared the summary of the report with all States parties and made it public.

On 6 October, I received a request from the Russian Federation for a technical assistance visit under paragraph 38 (e) of article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention, concerning the same incident. The Technical Secretariat has since engaged with the Russian Federation to resolve the outstanding legal, technical and operational matters necessary for such a visit to take place. The Technical Secretariat is still awaiting elements in that respect from the Russian Federation before being able to deploy a technical assistance visit to Russia, as was done for Germany. The detailed correspondence exchanged on that issue with the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OPCW will be made available via the OPCW's public website. The Technical Secretariat and its network of designated laboratories look forward to assisting the Russian Federation in its request, as has been done previously with other States parties.

All of those developments demonstrate the need for the OPCW to remain capable of professionally and independently addressing all challenges related to chemical weapons. We need to maintain our capacity to render expert assistance to all 193 States parties whenever we are requested. But we also need to be able to accompany and support States parties in increasing their own national capabilities to counter threats of the use of chemical weapons. Plots or attempts to use chemical weapons by non-State actors have been reported in member States across various regions. The risk is real, and the international community needs to tackle it up front.

The project to build a Centre for Chemistry and Technology — the ChemTech Centre — close to the OPCW headquarters in The Hague has made steady progress this year, within the planned timeline and budget. The construction of the facility is scheduled to begin in the summer of next year and to be completed by the end of 2022. The Centre will support international cooperation and capacity-building activities for States parties in order to better protect them against the risk of the use of chemical weapons and to enhance international cooperation on the peaceful uses of chemistry, with the ultimate goal of protecting people and the environment. It will also house a state-of-the-art laboratory. And not least, the Centre will play an important role in ensuring the OPCW's business continuity. That is essential, as the OPCW's headquarters has continued to be subjected to various sorts of cyberattacks throughout the year. The number of those attacks is on the rise, and the level of sophistication is considerable.

The situation regarding the international non-proliferation and disarmament regimes is worrisome. Many of those regimes are under threat, while others continue to lack efficient verification or structured mechanisms capable of ensuring confidence in their implementation. Against that backdrop, the Chemical Weapons Convention embodies a total and verifiable ban on an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. We work for the complete elimination and total destruction of chemical weapons, with zero tolerance. The Convention is a modern and comprehensive international legal instrument.

The OPCW is mandated to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons, and there is no room for complacency, because the goal of destroying all declared stockpiles of chemical weapons, which will be soon accomplished, is only one important milestone in our work. For the past 23 years, the OPCW has delivered concrete results. Over the past seven years, it has been under growing scrutiny. Despite that pressure, the Organization has maintained its professionalism and focused faithfully on its mission. We will continue to stay the course that was assigned to us by the 193 States parties to the Convention. We owe it to the victims of the use of chemical weapons and to future generations.

In conclusion, let me cite four very short sentences.

“The use of chemical weapons ... is intolerable and a serious violation of international law ... There can be no justification for the use of these abhorrent weapons ... We must remain united and determined in preventing their use ... It is imperative that those who use, or have used, chemical weapons are identified and held accountable.”

Those words are not mine. They were part of the message delivered by the Secretary-General a few days ago, on 30 November, on the occasion of the Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare.

Annex III**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations, Karen Van Vlierberge**

[Original: French]

I would like to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Izumi Nakamitsu and the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Mr. Fernando Arias, for their briefings.

Today the Security Council is addressing the subject of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, essentially for the last time during my country's term on the Council. This is an opportune moment to consider how the Syrian dossier has evolved over the past two years.

First, all the member States of the Security Council have repeatedly stated that chemical weapons should never be used under any circumstances. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction is a testament to our collective aversion to the use of such weapons. Its full and unconditional implementation is the only way to guarantee a world without chemical weapons. The Convention is a moral declaration concerning the dignity of humankind as well as a legal instrument.

Since Syria's accession to the Convention in 2013, the OPCW has systematically strengthened its engagement with that country. That has been done in full transparency and in consultation with the Syrian Arab Republic, notably through the creation in 2014 of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission. The Declaration Assessment Team was created in the same year with a view to assisting Syria in resolving the gaps and inconsistencies identified in its initial declaration. Numerous meetings have taken place between the OPCW and the Syrian authorities.

Unfortunately, during the period in which Belgium has been a member of the Security Council, no substantive progress has been made in resolving the gaps and inconsistencies in Syria's declaration. It is not a mere technicality that Syria's declaration remains incomplete. That leads us to the inevitable conclusion that, unlike the OPCW in its work, Syria has not undertaken serious efforts to comply with the demands that it voluntarily accepted when it joined the Convention in 2013. There is no excuse for that. Furthermore, the possibility that additional stockpiles of chemical weapons exist in Syria and might again be used against the Syrian population cannot be denied or ignored.

Secondly, the Fact-Finding Mission concluded that chemical weapons had been used on numerous occasions, and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism attributed responsibility for a number of them to the Syrian regime. Faced with the Security Council's refusal to extend the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) was established as an instrument of the OPCW to continue to investigate the suspected use of chemical weapons. The IIT's April report confirms the use of chemical weapons in Ltamenah in 2017 and exposes a broader pattern of behaviour by the Syrian authorities of violence against their own population, including by using chemical weapons, as an integral part of Syria's military strategy. We fully support the IIT and urge Syria to guarantee access to its territory.

Thirdly, the need for the Security Council to discuss this file on a monthly basis has been questioned as a distraction from more pressing issues. However, this meeting is not conducted simply out of habit. The Security Council adopted resolution 2118 (2013) in 2013. Syria is still not respecting that resolution and therefore remains a continuing threat to international peace and security.

Belgium was elected to the Security Council under the maxim “Building consensus, acting for peace”, and it is that approach that we are guided by on this dossier. We will always seek to build consensus and, where possible, to create the conditions for a better understanding among the member States of the OPCW. At the same time, we will always assume our responsibilities in defending our values.

During our tenure on the Council, however, we have seen efforts to promote a false narrative through disinformation with a view to polarizing the Security Council’s discussions. Time and time again, independent surveys have refuted every attempt to create an alternate reality. It is time to recognize that it is not in the Council’s interest to espouse conspiracy theories, which serve only to weaken the role that the Council can play in the maintenance of international peace and security, undermining its authority and, ultimately, its legitimacy. Both permanent and elected members have an interest in preserving the Council’s mandate, as envisioned by the Charter of the United Nations, including when that means opposing and speaking out against specific actors. Failure to do so is a violation of the Charter.

Fourthly, accountability is an important tool in preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons. The fight against impunity has been at the heart of Belgium’s efforts for many years. We welcome the role played by mechanisms and bodies such as 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 the International Criminal Court (ICC). The use of chemical weapons in international conflicts has been a war crime under the Rome Statute of the ICC since its inception. In 2010, Belgium also successfully proposed an amendment to the Statute to make the use of chemical weapons a war crime in non-international armed conflicts. We call on States that have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute and that amendment.

Since our accession to the Security Council, some progress has been made in establishing accountability for the crimes committed in Syria. However, there is still a long way to go. Director-General Arias has a particularly difficult task. Let me assure him of my country’s full commitment to his organization and its goals, and let me also congratulate him on his personal commitment.

Annex IV**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

[Original: English and Chinese]

Before delivering my statement, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome to today's meeting Ambassador Barbara Woodward, the new Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations. I also thank Mrs. Nakamitsu and Mr. Arias for their briefings.

China has always opposed the use of chemical weapons by any country, entity or individual under any circumstances and for any purpose. Allegations of the use of chemical weapons should always be investigated and addressed with impartiality and objectivity, based on facts and guided by the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). Regarding the issue of chemical weapons in Syria, I would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, all parties should encourage the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to maintain good communication and cooperation with the Syrian Government and take an objective view of Syria's efforts. The Syrian Government and the OPCW Technical Secretariat recently held their twenty-third round of technical consultations, during which they discussed all outstanding issues concerning Syria's initial declaration, three of which were closed. Syria once again expressed its readiness to maintain communication and cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. Syria's constructive attitude and the outcomes of those exchanges should be recognized.

China understands that the proposed plan for this dossier has been postponed owing to the coronavirus disease pandemic. We hope that Syria and the Technical Secretariat will resume the relevant deployment and activities when conditions permit, so as to ensure positive progress on the remaining issues. The Permanent Representative of Syria recently wrote to the President of the Security Council to submit detailed information about an Idlib terrorist organization's attempt to carry out a chemical attack, and we hope that the OPCW will give that matter due attention.

Secondly, all parties should approach the issue of chemical weapons in Syria with openness, transparency and inclusiveness, while respecting the facts and the science. In the past few years, the OPCW has released a number of reports on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria. Many independent experts have raised doubts about this from a technical standpoint and highlighted contradictions in the reports, to which the OPCW should provide professional, science-based and convincing responses. China opposes jumping to conclusions or even rushing into action at a time when many question marks still remain. Certain members of the Security Council simply refuse to listen to divergent views and are determined to apply pressure and place attribution. They want to label anyone with a view different from their own as undermining the authority of the OPCW. Such conduct is irresponsible, unconstructive and politically motivated.

Thirdly, all States parties should help to bring the issue of accountability for the use of chemical weapons back within the framework of the CWC and should safeguard the authority and integrity of the Convention. Some nations have weaponized the OPCW in order to undermine and suppress other countries, substituting votes for dialogue, which has led to deep divisions among OPCW States parties. The working methods of the Investigation and Identification Team, which was established by those countries, are opaque, and its reports do not reflect the

integrity of the chain of custody, meaning they are highly controversial. Pending a solution to those problems, at the ninety-fourth session of the Executive Council those countries once again pushed for a vote on a draft decision concerning the Syrian chemical-weapons issue. That approach is not at all constructive, and if it continues, the OPCW's work is bound to become further politicized over time.

China calls on Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat to take steps to conduct their work in an impartial, objective and independent manner, promote dialogue and communication among States parties, return to consensus-based decision-making and truly safeguard the authority of the Convention and the long-term interests of the OPCW.

The statement by the representative of the Russian Federation includes a number of specific questions. We hope that Mr. Arias will provide a timely response to them.

Annex V**Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic to the United Nations**

[Original: Spanish]

First of all, we are grateful to Director-General Fernando Arias for his presence at today's meeting, and we thank him for his valuable contributions and leadership. We are also grateful for the briefing delivered by High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu and would like to take this opportunity to highlight the professional performance of the members of her team and the support they have provided in the two years of our Security Council membership.

We welcome the recent holding of the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, as well as the considerable efforts made by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to fulfil its mandate, despite the challenges and limitations caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic.

The Dominican Republic reiterates its unwavering commitment to non-proliferation and the total and irreversible destruction of chemical weapons. We also reaffirm our full support for the OPCW and our confidence in the professional, impartial and objective work that it has been doing since its foundation in order to prevent the development of chemical weapons and eradicate their use throughout the world. In that regard, we commend the efforts made by the OPCW and the member States that have demonstrated a firm commitment to implementing the provisions outlined in the Convention and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

With regard to the updates contained in the eighty-sixth monthly report of the OPCW (see S/2020/1152), we are pleased to note that the information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic during the twenty-third round of technical consultations led to the closing of three outstanding issues related to its initial declaration. In that respect, we encourage the Syrian authorities to continue those technical consultations in order to strengthen collaboration with the OPCW and provide the required information to resolve the remaining outstanding issues.

We continue to emphasize that the good-faith collaboration of the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW is an essential element in reaching a final solution on this dossier. In that regard, we believe that the misinformation, persistent questioning and discrediting of the work carried out by various OPCW investigation teams are strategies that are detrimental to the overarching goal of this file.

Despite the momentous achievements of the OPCW in destroying Syria's declared chemical stockpiles and production facilities, numerous chemical-weapon attacks have been documented by various OPCW investigation teams, proving the existence of toxic chemical agents in Syrian territory. It is also regrettable that the Syrian Arab Republic has not fully complied with the measures contained in the Executive Council decision of 9 July, which was based on the findings of the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team. It is therefore urgent that the parties show firm signs of political will reflecting significant changes regarding the total elimination of chemical weapons and guaranteeing full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and accountability for the heinous crimes that have been perpetrated against men, women and children. The Dominican Republic strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, as a threat to international peace and security and a flagrant violation of international law and the Convention.

In conclusion, we believe that greater efforts must be made to ensure that actions carried out in total disregard of international law do not go unpunished. We therefore reiterate our call for unity in the Security Council, which is vital if we are to move in that direction.

Annex VI**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Gert Auväärt**

I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and Mr. Fernando Arias, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), for their briefings. We very much appreciate that Mr. Arias was able to join us today.

The regular sharing of information with the Security Council on the OPCW's activities and investigations is very valuable. We were grateful that during Estonia's presidency of the Security Council in May, Mr. Arias and Mr. Santiago Oñate, the Coordinator of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), were able to brief the Council regarding the findings of the first IIT report and shed further light on that important investigation. Given that the OPCW and the Security Council share the same objectives of upholding the prohibition of the use of chemical weapons and supporting chemical disarmament, we need to ensure close collaboration in order to move things forward on this file.

Let me start by reiterating Estonia's support for the professional and impartial work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We have full confidence in the technical expertise and independence of its investigative mechanisms. It is extremely regrettable that there are countries that deliberately work to undermine the OPCW, thereby threatening to weaken the international architecture combating the use of chemical weapons. That is unacceptable and deeply worrying.

We cannot allow the norm against chemical weapons to be eroded and the use of such weapons to become a normality. The use of Novichok against the Skripals in the United Kingdom in 2018 and this year in Russia against opposition politician Alexei Navalny is a very concerning development. We urge Russia to conduct a thorough and transparent investigation and hold accountable those responsible for these crimes. We also urge Russia to conclude the necessary agreements with the OPCW for the swift deployment of the technical assistance mission.

Turning now to the eighty-sixth monthly report of the OPCW Director-General (see S/2020/1152), we note with regret that outstanding issues persist relating to Syria's chemical weapons declaration. While we welcome the fact that another round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian authorities enabled three outstanding issues related to the declaration to be closed, there are still 19 remaining — 19 outstanding issues, after six years and 23 rounds of consultations. The fact is that after signing up to the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2013 and taking on the responsibility to declare all of its chemical-weapon stockpiles and facilities, the Syrian regime has failed to do so. It has deliberately concealed its production facilities and used those horrendous weapons on multiple occasions against its own people. Independent United Nations and OPCW investigative mechanisms have found the Syrian regime to be responsible in seven cases.

Estonia strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force, as the first report of the IIT, issued on 8 April, concluded. Using chlorine and sarin, the Syrian Air Force conducted three chemical attacks in Ltamenah in 2017 in order to suppress the opposition and terrorize its people, with a blatant disregard for human lives and suffering.

Estonia welcomed the Executive Council decision of 9 July setting out clear and verifiable parameters for the actions that the Syrian Arab Republic needs to take in order to return to full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

It is very unfortunate and worrisome that Syria has failed to take the required steps. We hope that once the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention resumes in April, it will take appropriate action regarding Syria's non-compliance with the Executive Council decision and address Syria's complete lack of cooperation with the OPCW. We also hope that the Security Council will not stand by in the face of clear evidence that chemical weapons have been used by the Syrian regime and that it will take action to uphold its resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations.

Annex VII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: French]

I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu and Mr. Arias for their briefings.

The presence among us of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) gives me an opportunity to remind him of France's full support for the Organization and to thank him for his commitment to our collective security. As long as the re-emergence of chemical weapons remains a major threat, the role of the OPCW is essential. We must support it and defend it against false accusations that question its impartiality and credibility. Under Mr. Arias's leadership, the Organization has maintained the required level of professionalism and impartiality. I would like to commend once again the remarkable work carried out by the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team, resulting in the publication in April of a report establishing the Syrian regime's responsibility for chemical-weapon attacks in Ltamenah in March 2017.

As we have seen month after month, the Syrian regime continues to ignore its obligation to cooperate. Its lack of clarity on the status of its stockpiles is unacceptable and contravenes the provisions of resolution 2118 (2013), adopted more than seven years ago. The draft decision submitted by France on behalf of 40 delegations and adopted in July at the ninety-fourth session of the OPCW Executive Council was quite clear as to the Syrian regime's obligations in terms of cooperation with the Organization. In view of the fact that the Syrian regime continues to flout those obligations, on 24 November, on behalf of 46 delegations from four geographical groups, France officially submitted to the OPCW Technical Secretariat a draft decision with a view to taking the necessary collective measures. That draft decision will be on the agenda of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction when it convenes again in April 2021. We call on States parties to learn from the report of 16 October by the Director-General of the OPCW (see S/2020/1033, annex), which leaves no room for doubt.

The fight against impunity and a total ban on the use of chemical weapons remain our priorities for the Syrian dossier. They are essential and necessary pillars for achieving a political solution that will enable lasting peace in Syria. That fight is also the basis for ensuring the effectiveness and credibility of the prohibition regime. Together with its partners, France will remain fully mobilized to counter the threat that chemical weapons pose to our global security. That is why we remain mobilized in support of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which we launched with our partners in 2018.

Annex VIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, Christoph Heusgen**

When I was preparing for today's meeting, I was looking through the press clippings and saw one published today about two Russian diplomats who were expelled from the Netherlands yesterday. They worked for Russian spy agencies and were caught stealing high-tech information from the Netherlands. The article mentioned the four Russian spies who were caught red-handed two years ago when they parked their truck outside the building of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and tried to hack the OPCW. The Russian Ambassador has a very long statement this morning, but he does not mention anything about Russia's hacking.

Germany has been on the Security Council for two years, and in all of the meetings on this topic during that time, Russia has undermined the OPCW. Today is another example of that. I find it very treacherous that the Russian Ambassador takes offence at the understanding that questions on this issue should be dealt with in closed consultations and that we expected only statements to be made today. I would like to thank Director-General Arias for his statement, and I assume that Russia's statement is an attempt at intimidation, to try to catch him off guard.

If Russia were genuinely interested in the substance on this issue, it would not have obstructed all of the efforts made over the years to gather evidence. It would not have blocked the OPCW verification mission. It would not have blocked the attribution of accountability. After two years on the Security Council, we have to say that the Russian efforts to undermine the OPCW have failed. The OPCW remains a very strong and respected organization. It has functioned well, despite the constant efforts to undermine it, or, to quote the Russian Ambassador, despite the smear campaign that is being led against it.

Under difficult circumstances, Mr. Arias has done a very good job. On behalf of the German Government, I would like to thank him for his personal commitment and that of the Technical Secretariat in all of their efforts to uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention. My thanks also go to Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu. I have a lot of admiration for her and the way in which she always upholds her unwavering position in defending the global norm of the non-use of chemical weapons.

After seven years and 86 progress reports, few advances have been made on the Syrian chemical-weapon file. For seven years, the Syrian regime has stalled and obstructed the investigations. The regime has failed to make any declaration concerning its chemical weapons programme and arsenal that can hold up to scrutiny. We heard from the briefers today that 19 questions remain unanswered. Among those are questions relating to a chemical-weapon production facility, and we must not take that lightly. The regime has refused to cooperate with the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team. It has chosen to ignore the decisions adopted by the OPCW's Executive Council. Worse still, despite the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), the Syrian regime has continued to use chemical weapons against its own people in their country, in Khan Shaykhun and Ltamenah, as we have heard today.

Germany calls on the members of the Security Council and those soon to begin their term on the Council to continue to stand up for international law and the Chemical Weapons Convention. I implore them not to succumb to the war of attrition that is being waged here. Germany will continue from outside the Council to support the OPCW and strive for accountability. We will support the OPCW's attribution mechanism, which we believe is key.

In his statement, the OPCW Director-General confirmed that the use of nerve agents constitutes a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. That re-emergence, as we have seen in Syria and in the terrible cases of the Skripals and Mr. Navalny, must not be tolerated. There can be just and lasting peace in Syria only if the perpetrators of those most heinous crimes are identified and brought to justice. National jurisdictions in Germany and elsewhere are starting to fill the current void. The Office of the Federal Public Prosecutor General in Germany is collecting information on the use of chemical weapons, and just recently civil-society organizations filed charges concerning the chemical-weapon attacks in Ghouta and Khan Shaykhun in Syria. There is a ray of hope.

Annex IX**Statement by the First Secretary of Indonesia to the United Nations,
Yvonne Mewengkang**

We thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu and Director-General Arias for their briefings.

We appreciate the Director General's eighty-sixth monthly report on the progress made in eliminating the Syrian chemical-weapons programme (see S/2020/1152, annex). My delegation is also pleased that Director-General Arias is here with us, virtually, today. Indonesia wishes to highlight the following points.

First, regarding the early resolution of all outstanding issues, we are all aware that that is possible only through continued and enhanced cooperation between the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian Arab Republic, with the necessary support of all relevant parties, including the Security Council.

Since its first Security Council meeting on this dossier (see S/PV.8659), Indonesia has consistently emphasized the importance of constructive and substantive engagement on the part of both parties. We sincerely hope that today's meeting will serve as one of the ways in which we can further discuss developments that could lead to future progress on this issue. In that context, we are pleased to note that three of the outstanding issues related to the Syrian National Authority's initial declaration were closed during the recent round of consultations. We commend the commitment of both the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic to closing those issues and encourage them to continue to review and discuss the remaining outstanding issues.

Secondly, my delegation notes that the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), as a non-judicial investigative body, is continuing its investigations. We want to reiterate that the IIT must function in a balanced, impartial and transparent manner, in accordance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Any divergences on this particular topic should be discussed in a comprehensive and constructive manner, free from any kind of politicization. That also applies to the processes undertaken by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission.

Thirdly, we appreciate the OPCW Technical Secretariat's readiness for deployment, despite the ongoing challenge of the coronavirus disease pandemic. It is important that the OPCW-mandated activities continue while at the same time the health, safety and security of all its personnel is maintained. This unprecedented situation requires some adjustments on the ground. We encourage the OPCW to carefully plan its future site inspections and deployments, taking into account the development of the pandemic.

As the Director-General's latest report makes clear, there are gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved. We therefore once again encourage the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure that the necessary consultations are being held regularly. Moving forward based on good faith should be everyone's main goal. My delegation believes that any provocative rhetoric or actions would only exacerbate this already complex and sensitive issue.

As this is Indonesia's last meeting on this specific dossier, I would like to reiterate the importance of our collective endeavour to prevent the recurrence of the use of chemical weapons or toxic chemicals as weapons, and the importance of unity in the Security Council in that regard. Indonesia strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time and by any country, organization, group

or person, under any circumstances. No one should ever be a victim of chemical weapons, and together we can accomplish that goal.

Annex X**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Niandou Aougi**

[Original: French]

I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu and Mr. Fernando Arias for their briefings.

Let me begin by reiterating my delegation's consistent position that chemical weapons constitute a threat to international peace and security and that their use cannot be tolerated anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances. Any such use is an act that we strongly condemn and that is in total contradiction of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law. We therefore support the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and commend its efforts to shed light on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

My delegation reiterates its call to members of the Security Council to avoid any politicization of this topic and to work to create an environment conducive to a calm and technical analysis of the results of the OPCW investigations. The lack of consensus on how to deal with the issue of the use of chemical weapons in Syria is the main obstacle to holding the true culprits accountable, which in turn is likely to prolong the finalization of the investigations and delay the holding of the perpetrators of those acts to account. The same also applies to the composition of any team tasked with investigating the alleged incidents, which must be inclusive and participatory so as to avoid the outcomes suffering the same fate as previous findings.

We will not cease to reiterate that our common and collective efforts in the face of the coronavirus disease pandemic must not distract us from the fight against terrorism. All allegations of the possession and stockpiling of chemical agents by armed terrorist groups in Syria must also be a focus of the OPCW's attention, since if substantiated they would be very dangerous, not just for Syria but for the entire region.

In conclusion, my delegation encourages the OPCW and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to pursue and strengthen cooperation in order to reach an agreement on the issues outstanding with regard to Syria's initial declaration, and thereby advance the work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). In that regard, we were pleased to note in the Director-General's report (see S/2020/1152, annex) that the twenty-third round of consultations held in Damascus between the DAT and the Syrian authorities facilitated the settlement of three outstanding issues concerning the Syrian authorities' initial declaration.

Annex XI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

[Original: English and Russian]

I would like to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. I hope I can count on her understanding, as my statement will focus on the remarks made by the other briefer at today's meeting, whose appearance before the Security Council has been highly anticipated and whose very participation has been the subject of intense discussion among the members of the Council.

I would like to welcome Mr. Fernando Arias, the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and to take this opportunity to ask him a number of questions concerning the approach that the OPCW is pursuing with regard to the Syrian chemical dossier.

With your permission, Mr. President, I will now switch to English to ensure that it is easier for Mr. Arias to understand my questions without the possibility of anything being lost in translation.

We all remember when, with our encouragement, Syria joined the OPCW, made its initial declaration and subsequently got rid of its stockpiles of chemical weapons, a fact that the OPCW has confirmed on numerous occasions. That development led to hopes that the allegations that Damascus had used chemical weapons against its own population would become a thing of the past.

However, the situation gradually changed. Our Western colleagues consistently increased the pressure on the Syrian authorities, trying in vain to topple the Government with the help of the armed opposition groups that they supported. I will not dwell on the details. To cut a long story short, Western countries made a number of serious accusations against Damascus, mostly on the basis of video footage from social media and questionable testimonies by witnesses on the ground, relayed through foreign-based Syrian opposition and non-governmental organizations such as the White Helmets, which formed the basis for the reports of the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The West has maintained its anti-Syrian narrative despite all the apparent discrepancies and evidence to the contrary put forward by Syria, Russia and independent experts, and Western countries continue to exploit the allegations as part of their political crusade against the Al-Assad Government.

There can be no doubt that the OPCW, under the leadership of Mr. Arias, plays an important role in that process and is actively used by our Western colleagues to support their claims that Syria has used chemical weapons on several occasions. However, the conclusions of the OPCW have been repeatedly called into question, not only by external experts but also by those from inside the Organization who participated in the investigative activities. In general, the public has a lot of questions for the OPCW. We believe that those questions need to be addressed in order to uphold the credibility of the OPCW. That is why we insisted on inviting Mr. Arias to Security Council meetings and believe that he should be welcome to address the Council regularly.

Russia attaches great importance to the OPCW and strongly condemns all instances of the use of chemical weapons, no matter who the perpetrators. However, we reject speculation and political smear campaigns, which, unfortunately, are poisoning the OPCW on an increasingly frequent basis. In order to facilitate the Director-General's work, we have prepared a series of questions.

First, while investigating the incident in Aleppo in November 2018, the OPCW Technical Secretariat received exhaustive evidence from the Syrian authorities, including information from Russian military experts, showing that the opposition was responsible for that chemical attack. However, the latest report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission claims that the available evidence is not sufficient to conclude that chemical weapons were used in that attack. In contrast, during the investigations into the incidents in Douma and Khan Shaykhun, the evidence provided by notorious non-governmental organizations such as the White Helmets was accepted readily and without hesitation by the Technical Secretariat. What comments does the Director-General have regarding that clear example of double standards?

Second, almost every Technical Secretariat report is based on the notion of “highly likely”, with evidence provided by sources whose reputation is questionable at best. Rather than collecting samples on-site, the Technical Secretariat is conducting its investigations remotely, relying on information from external and open sources. Meanwhile, States members of the OPCW are expected to be satisfied with those investigations. Does the Director-General accept that such practices violate the basic requirements of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), in particular with regard to preserving the chain of custody? What measures does he plan to implement in order to bring the working methods of the OPCW Technical Secretariat into compliance with the CWC?

Third, at one point in time the OPCW Technical Secretariat offered to help Syria in submitting its initial declaration, which was prepared within a limited time frame and amid an ongoing military conflict on Syrian territory. It is evident, even to external observers, that the Syrian authorities are willing to cooperate with a view to closing all outstanding issues. However, the same does not appear to be the case for the OPCW Technical Secretariat. There are indications that it is deliberately stalling the process by inventing further pretexts with a view to keeping the Syrian file open. In particular, Mr. Ian Henderson, a former OPCW inspector, who has first-hand experience of the situation, claims that several States had issues and gaps similar to the Syrian Arab Republic related to their initial declarations. Yet none of those countries have ever faced the same level of criticism as Syria. He described the Technical Secretariat’s approach to Syria’s initial declaration as “keep the file open” and “keep the pressure on”. The Technical Secretariat is also attempting to turn a blind eye to 200 tons of missing chemical-weapon precursors in Libya, while at the same time pressuring Syria to explain the disappearance of tiny quantities of chemical substances. Can Mr. Arias confirm that the issues concerning Syria’s initial declaration are not extraordinary for the OPCW? And if that is the case, then how does he explain the discrepancy in the way the Technical Secretariat has approached the Syrian initial declaration as compared to other countries? Why are the requirements for Libya different from those for Syria, for example?

Fourth, the controversy surrounding the OPCW’s Douma investigation and report has been widely publicized. Some of the investigators claimed that there was irregular and scientifically fraudulent behaviour in the process involving the suppression and manipulation of, among other things, chemical and toxicological evidence, as well as a failed attempt to publish a doctored version of the team’s original report. Mr. Arias said that all views were taken into consideration, yet the inspectors say otherwise. Many, including the first Director-General of the OPCW, José Bustani, believe that an open and free discussion between the OPCW management team and all of the investigators would help the organization resolve that controversy. After all, the CWC provides for inspectors to attach any differing observations to inspection reports, including reports on the alleged use of chemical weapons. In that respect, has Mr. Arias met or would he be willing to meet with those inspectors to allow them the opportunity to share their concerns?

Fifth, it is now well established via leaked documents and the testimonies of former OPCW inspectors that the Fact-Finding Mission's original interim report on Douma was heavily redacted and that there was a failed attempt to publish that redacted version without the knowledge of the Douma Mission team, including the insertion of a number of unsubstantiated conclusions. That failed attempt was widely reported and, as far as we know, has not been publicly denied. That incident constitutes a major act of deception on the part of the OPCW and was, as the Director-General is aware, the cause of the original rift within the Fact-Finding Mission. In an email recently published by the Grayzone news outlet, it is claimed by the OPCW's former Chief of Cabinet that the report was not redacted at the behest of the Office of the Director-General. Has an investigation been conducted to determine at whose behest it was carried out, and if so, what was the outcome of that investigation and what actions were taken as a result?

Sixth, in October 2018 the Courage Foundation panel reported that there were detailed anomalies in the Fact-Finding Mission's final report on the Douma incident, including with regard to chemical analysis, toxicology consultations, ballistics studies and witness testimonies. Those anomalies were corroborated by leaked documents and are now well understood. However, the OPCW has refused to respond to any of those clearly defined issues and instead repeatedly dismissed those issues based on the assertion that most of the work was carried out after the departure of Inspector B. But if we compare the final report with the original report that was leaked, it is clear that the bulk of the text was already written by June 2018. In the light of those facts, does the Director-General still stand by his assertion that the bulk of the Fact-Finding Mission's investigation was carried out after the departure of Inspector B?

Seventh, in recent weeks OPCW personnel are reported to have leaked a draft letter to the Bellingcat news website. The Bellingcat article claims that Mr. Arias said that Inspector B's assumptions concerning the final report were wrong because

“he simply wasn't aware of the latest scientific techniques used by the OPCW, because they were developed after he had left the Organization. It was these techniques that allowed the OPCW to conclude that chlorine gas had been released in the building in which the Syrian civilians died”.

Regarding the draft letter that was leaked to Bellingcat, can Mr. Arias confirm whether the source of that leak was from inside the OPCW, whether he agrees with the information in the article and whether an investigation has been launched into the suspected leak?

Eighth, over the past week new documents have emerged, again via the Grayzone, confirming that other senior officials also shared concerns regarding the Douma investigation and supported the dissenting inspectors. One senior official is reported to have made highly politicized and prejudiced comments that the Douma investigation could not be challenged because that would “feed into the Russian narrative”. Has the Director-General been made aware of that, and what comments does he have in that regard?

I will stop there. Eight questions will be enough for now, but I can assure Mr. Arias that we have many more. I want to draw the Director-General's attention to the fact that yesterday we circulated as an official document of the Security Council and the General Assembly the summary of our Arria Formula meeting in September, which contains the statements of all the participants who sent them to us. I will make sure that Mr. Arias receives a copy of that document, which I believe will be of particular interest to him.

In conclusion, I wish to remind the Director-General of the special responsibility that rests with him in leading a key pillar of the chemical-weapon non-proliferation regime, namely the organization responsible for its implementation and verification. Though it may be technical in nature, its conclusions have far-reaching political consequences that affect people's daily lives.

I have intentionally refrained from elaborating on the Executive Council's disputed decision of 9 July, which is based on the controversial and biased report of the illegitimate IIT. However, the Council should be mindful of the fact that that report, coupled with the artificial delay in resolving the outstanding issues related to Syria's initial declaration, triggered a chain of unfair, discriminatory and oppressive initiatives against Syria, both in The Hague and in New York. One such unfortunate example is the campaign being led by Western countries to implement a decision of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to disqualify Syria from the OPCW. That is another destabilizing step that could have severe and irreversible implications.

The Director-General mentioned the Alexei Navalny situation in his briefing. We also have questions to raise on that issue, but I will save them for the closed consultations that will follow this meeting.

Annex XII**Statement by the Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Diani Jamesha Prince**

I wish to thank Director-General Arias and High Representative Nakamitsu for their briefings.

I would like to begin by commending the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for having successfully hosted the first part of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention despite the impediments created by the coronavirus disease pandemic. We look forward to the second part of the Conference taking place in April 2021 or as soon as the situation allows.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates its support for the mandate of the OPCW. Our commitment to ensuring that applied science is used only for peace, progress and the prosperity of all humankind never wavers. As the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW plays a tremendous role in realizing our shared goal of a world free of chemical weapons. We therefore continue to underscore that it is fundamentally important that its work and that of its various facets and subsidiary bodies be impartial, independent and free from politicization. Anything less contributes to the erosion of the multilateral system.

Although the current pandemic has further delayed progress on this dossier, we recognize the efforts made by both the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic to continue to undertake the critical work in as far as it is possible to do so. We take note of the seventh round of inspections conducted between 8 and 13 November, and we look forward to receiving the corresponding report. We also take note of the reports on the work of the Declaration Assessment Team.

It remains imperative that all gaps and inconsistencies be clarified, and it is our hope that the continued constructive and inclusive dialogue between the parties will help to make meaningful progress in that regard. That is the only path to building trust, fostering cooperation and ensuring the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

The Security Council should not overlook the notifications issued by the Syrian Government warning that various armed groups operating in Syria may be preparing to use chemical weapons. We have an obligation to give that matter due attention in order to make an assessment and safeguard civilians.

In conclusion, we reiterate our well-known, long-standing and principled position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances constitutes an abominable violation of international law. The development, stockpiling, transfer or use of chemical weapons must be prevented, and the norm against that reprehensible form of warfare must be preserved. Impunity for their use must not be encouraged through inaction, and the perpetrators of chemical weapons atrocities must be held accountable. Failure to do so will only embolden future actors.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations, Jerry Matjila**

I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and Mr. Fernando Arias, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), for their briefings.

Let me begin by reiterating South Africa's position against the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances. No cause can ever justify the use of any weapon of mass destruction. South Africa remains committed to its international obligations as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and a member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. The use of chemical weapons undermines those obligations as well as the international norms against the production, use and stockpiling of such weapons, as established under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The alleged use of chemical weapons by a State party to the Convention is a very serious matter that would constitute a material breach of obligations under the Convention.

South Africa strongly supports multilateralism and the international rule of law, which includes the non-discriminatory and consistent application of the provisions of relevant multilateral instruments and the preservation of international norms against weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. The OPCW is the only technically competent international authority in the field of chemical weapons. We therefore appreciate the work that Director-General Arias and the OPCW continue to undertake in that regard. In order to ensure that States parties adhere to their obligations, it is imperative that they have full faith and confidence in the work and processes of the OPCW, without external interference or manipulation of its work. The States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention should therefore unite in preserving the international norm against chemical weapons and the provisions of the Convention, along with its consistent and non-discriminatory implementation.

South Africa will continue to work for the depoliticization of the relevant management and decision-making structures established under the Chemical Weapons Convention, and also towards ensuring that States parties are held accountable for any violations of their obligations, based on credible, impartial and incontrovertible evidence. We encourage the Government of Syria to cooperate with the OPCW in resolving all outstanding issues in order for the international community to have confidence in the peaceful nature of Syria's chemical activities. We welcome the progress made by the Declaration Assessment Team in closing three outstanding issues related to Syria's initial declaration during its recent visit to Syria. South Africa looks forward to additional progress being made in addressing the remaining outstanding issues.

South Africa reiterates that the only sustainable solution to the Syrian question remains the achievement of a political solution through an inclusive Syrian-led dialogue aimed at achieving a political transition that is reflective of the will of the Syrian people, with guaranteed protection for all groups in Syrian society.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb**

[Original: Arabic]

I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and Ambassador Arias, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), for their briefings.

At the outset, I would like to reaffirm Tunisia's commitment to the chemical-weapon non-proliferation regime, which is made up of the Chemical Weapons Convention and its implementing body, the OPCW. That regime constitutes a comprehensive and balanced framework that is founded on multilateralism, consensus and cooperation with the aim of ending the possession and use for hostile purposes of toxic chemicals and completely preventing the proliferation of that type of weapon of mass destruction, thereby promoting the maintenance of international peace and security.

I would like to reaffirm my country's firm and principled position, which is that Tunisia condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and for any reason. We also reaffirm that those who commit such terrible crimes must be brought to justice. The use of chemicals as weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security and a violation of resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Tunisia supports the important technical work carried out by the OPCW, in accordance with its mandate. That work led to the elimination of the chemical stockpile that the Syrian Arab Republic had declared. We commend the Director-General of the OPCW, as head of the Technical Secretariat, and the various parties concerned for their efforts, thanks to which the first part of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention was successfully convened despite the difficulties and challenges posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic. We look forward to the Conference resuming its work next spring on various matters on its agenda, including the compliance of the Syrian Arab Republic with its treaty-based obligations.

In view of the current situation, Tunisia welcomes the resumption of cooperation between the Syrian Government and the Technical Secretariat. We are therefore pleased that a team from the Technical Secretariat was able to conduct a seventh round of inspections last month in the Syrian Arab Republic. In that connection, we would like to reaffirm the importance of ensuring the safety and security of Technical Secretariat officials. We urge the Government of Syria to continue to engage in dialogue and to cooperate with the OPCW in a spirit of constructive engagement in order to resolve all outstanding issues as soon as possible and ensure full compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Tunisia reaffirms that all allegations of the use of toxic chemical substances as weapons, including by non-State actors, must be investigated in a thorough, impartial, independent and transparent manner. It is the responsibility of the international community and the Security Council to work collectively and in a united and coordinated manner to ensure the continuity and stability of the regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to close the issue of Syrian chemical weapons.

Annex XV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward**

I would like to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu and Director-General Arias for their briefings today. The Director-General's presence, along with Mrs. Nakamitsu, underscores the cooperation between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations on this issue affecting international peace and security.

I thank Director-General Arias for his eighty-sixth monthly report (see S/2020/1152, annex) and for his update today on the work of the OPCW. Despite the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has spared no effort in attempting to take forward its mandated activities. We are grateful for the professionalism and dedication of the OPCW and its personnel. We take particular note of the updates on the work of the Declaration Assessment Team. The Director-General's report raises two important points.

First, we note that the Declaration Assessment Team and Syria were able to close three outstanding issues related to Syria's initial declaration. That shows that contrary to the assertions of some that the outstanding issues are artificial, they are in fact real and eminently capable of being resolved.

Secondly, the report highlights the evidence collected by the Declaration Assessment Team since 2014 indicating the production or weaponization of chemical-warfare nerve agents at a production facility that the Syrian regime declared never to have been used for such production. That underlines the serious nature and importance of resolving the remaining 19 issues.

In addition, the unresolved issues related to Syria's declaration include thousands of munitions and hundreds of tons of chemical agents that Syria has not accounted for. Until all of the issues are resolved, the complete elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme cannot be verified, as required under resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Given that the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) have established that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons on at least seven occasions since 2013, it is beyond dispute that the situation represents an ongoing threat to international peace and security.

In the light of that situation, we welcome the resolve shown by the OPCW Executive Council in adopting its decision of 9 July in response to the findings of the IIT on the 2017 chemical-weapon attacks carried out by the Syrian Arab Air Force in Ltamenah. In that decision, the Executive Council was explicit in stipulating that Syria had to declare the chemical weapons and facilities in its possession, acknowledge its chemical-weapon activity and resolve the outstanding issues related to its initial declaration. As Director-General Arias has once again confirmed today, Syria failed to comply with the decision, and that will now be addressed during the next part of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in April 2021.

Just as the OPCW Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties have a role to play in upholding compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and their own decisions, the Security Council has a clear and distinct obligation to address Syria's repeated breaches of resolution 2118 (2013). Those breaches include the use of chemical weapons, as identified by both the JIM and the IIT, the retention

and production of chemical weapons in order to carry out those attacks and the failure to comply fully with the OPCW, including with regard to its initial declaration and ensuring access for the Investigation and Identification Team. We were unequivocal on the action that the Security Council should take in response to non-compliance with resolution 2118 (2013). Not to act would be a dereliction of the Council's duty.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the United Kingdom's trust and confidence in the OPCW, including its work and dedicated staff. We have full confidence in the expertise of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the robust methodologies of its Fact-Finding Mission in investigating the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. It is not surprising that the individuals working at the Technical Secretariat hold a range of views, and a robust assessment process should involve debate and challenge. However, as the Director-General confirmed, the Technical Secretariat took all views, evidence and theories into account in reaching its considered overall judgment regarding the attack in Douma. The OPCW Technical Secretariat and its multinational personnel showed great professionalism and resilience under intense external pressure and scrutiny. That included, as we have heard, cyberattacks, such as the foiled attempted cyberattack by Russia's Military Intelligence Service in The Hague in 2018, and a sustained disinformation campaign designed to undermine its credibility.

Attempts to undermine the OPCW and its staff have intensified since the use of nerve agents in the Salisbury and Amesbury attack in 2018, the vote by the Conference of the States Parties to give the Technical Secretariat the role of attributing responsibility for the chemical-weapon attacks in Syria in 2018 and the poisoning this year of the Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny with a nerve agent from the Novichok group.

Only a year ago, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement that unanimously reaffirmed its strong support for the work of the OPCW (S/PRST/2019/14). Just two weeks ago, the overwhelming majority of States parties from across all regional groups voted in favour of the OPCW's budget, which included renewed funding for the IIT and other Technical Secretariat teams working on the Syria file. As a permanent member of the Security Council, the United Kingdom is well aware of the responsibility conferred on us by the States Members of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security. We will continue to act on behalf of the vast majority of Member States who believe in the necessity of protecting the long-held norm prohibiting the use of chemical weapons and holding to account those who violate it.

I have questions for the Director-General, which I will raise now, but he may prefer to answer them in the closed session, as is customary.

Some have argued that Syria verifiably destroyed all of its chemical weapons in 2014 and that the OPCW has not been able to find any evidence to the contrary since then. How would Mr. Arias respond to that?

Our second question is as follows. In some respects, Syria appears to be engaging in a process with the OPCW, and yet the verification of its initial declaration has been outstanding for seven years. How can Syria improve its engagement, and how does the Director-General assess the prospects of achieving a complete and accurate declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic as to its chemical weapons programme? What is needed in order to achieve that?

And our third question: does the Director-General know of any other case in which it has been necessary for the Technical Secretariat to continually engage with a State party over several years in order to arrive at a declaration that is considered accurate and complete, in accordance with the CWC?

Annex XVI**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Richard Mills**

We thank Director-General Arias and High Representative Nakamitsu for their briefings, which were professional as always.

We welcome the opportunity for the Security Council to hear directly from Director-General Arias and to engage in a transparent and open discussion about the Syrian regime's abhorrent use of chemical weapons against its own people, its refusal to fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons programme and its continued flouting of its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Given the comments of our Russian colleague, I should begin by saying that the United States strongly supports the leadership and the impartial and independent work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We applaud the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We believe that it conducts its work in a professional manner and carries out its mission in accordance with the international standards that the international community expects. The coronavirus disease pandemic has raised additional hurdles for the OPCW, yet it has found ways to continue its important work, investigate when incidents of the use of chemical weapons take place and assist States parties when asked to do so.

The Al-Assad regime's violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention go far beyond its undeclared chemical-weapon stockpile; they also include the barbaric use of those weapons against the Syrian people, including women and children, throughout the protracted civil war. We must not allow those types of attacks to be normalized, nor should we become numb to the depravity of the Al-Assad regime. The United States condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime. Al-Assad's chemical-weapon attacks are, tragically, just one example of the atrocities he has committed and continues to inflict on the Syrian people.

The OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) has, in our view, diligently and professionally carried out the work of its mandate, and in April the IIT's first report concluded that the Syrian Arab Air Force was responsible for three chemical weapons attacks in Ltamenah, Syria, in March 2017, including two sarin attacks and one chlorine attack, affecting more than 100 Syrian people. The victims of sarin exposure can experience horrific symptoms, from blurred vision and breathing difficulties to convulsions and respiratory failure, and it can eventually lead to death. Unfortunately, the IIT's findings were not surprising, given the Al-Assad regime's repeated and well-documented history of the use of chemical weapons.

In response to the IIT's findings, the OPCW Executive Council took action and adopted a decision in July requesting that Syria take measures to redress the situation. That decision received support from more than two thirds of the Executive Council, including members from across all regional groups. On 14 October, Director-General Arias shared a report with the Security Council stating that Syria had failed, unsurprisingly, to complete any of the measures set forth in July's Executive Council decision.

The United States strongly supports providing the highly professional and hard-working staff of the OPCW's investigative and attribution mechanisms, such as the IIT, with the means and the resources they need to be able to fulfil the mission entrusted to them. We congratulate the Director-General on the overwhelming adoption of the budget at the recent Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical

Weapons Convention so that the Organization can continue its important work on upholding the norm against the use of chemical weapons.

Chemical weapons pose a security threat to all States, and when they are used, the members of the Security Council must never remain silent about such inhumane and reprehensible acts or treat them with impunity. The Council has a solemn responsibility to ensure that there are serious consequences for the perpetrators of such heinous attacks. Unfortunately, Russia and other members of the Security Council would prefer to support their friend Bashar Al-Assad and block all action rather than fulfil the Council's central responsibility to promote international peace and security.

It is incumbent upon the Security Council to take steps to hold Syria accountable for its use of chemical weapons and hold Syria to its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013). Syria must also uphold its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, and we call on the Conference of the States Parties to take appropriate action, when its session reconvenes in the spring, in order to send a strong message to the Al-Assad regime that its actions have consequences. To that end, the United States, along with 45 other sponsors with broad geographic representation, has submitted a draft decision to the Conference of the States Parties in response to Syria's brazen violation of its obligations under the Convention and its failure to fulfil the measures set forth in July's Executive Council decision. We call on all countries to support that draft decision, aimed at holding Syria accountable for its actions.

We urge the Al-Assad regime's enablers, particularly Russia, to encourage Syria to come clean about its use of chemical weapons and its current chemical-weapon stockpiles. We continue to support all efforts aimed at ensuring accountability, not only to provide justice to the victims and the families who have suffered as a result of those heinous chemical-weapon attacks, but to support the broader political process, as called for in resolution 2254 (2015), so as to bring peace and stability to Syria and the Syrian people.

In conclusion, we continue to support the work of the OPCW as well as its leadership and experts as they work to rid the world of the risk and scourge of chemical weapons. We applaud the OPCW's professionalism and integrity in undertaking that important and solemn task.

Annex XVII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dinh Quy Dang**

At the outset, I would like to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). I would also like to thank Mr. Fernando Arias, Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), for his presence at today's meeting and for the update he provided.

As a committed advocate of multilateralism and international law, Viet Nam fully supports the implementation of the Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC), including the role and work of the OPCW entrusted to it under the Convention. Respecting and fully implementing the Convention is undoubtedly of the utmost importance, as we all aspire to a world free of chemical weapons.

I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey in today's meeting.

As our briefers mentioned today, there has been continuing engagement between the OPCW and Syria over the past few years. We take note of the eighty-sixth monthly report of the OPCW Director-General (see S/2020/1152, annex) and of the efforts to continue the work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat in Syria despite the logistical challenges caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic.

The clarification of outstanding issues remains crucial to putting an end to this long-standing matter. After an undesirable period in which little progress was made, we welcome the fact that three outstanding issues related to Syria's initial declaration were closed following the twenty-third round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian National Authority. It is our hope that the two sides will be able to settle the remaining 19 issues in a constructive spirit. We call on the relevant parties to step up their efforts and enhance dialogue and cooperation in a constructive and non-politicized manner. That is the only viable way to address all of the remaining gaps and work for the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

Regarding the alleged uses of chemical weapons in Syria, we share the international community's concern about the reports on those incidents. Our delegation strongly believes that investigations into any possible use of chemical weapons should focus on the goal of establishing irrefutable facts and evidence. To achieve that, investigations must be carried out in a comprehensive, conclusive, objective and impartial manner, based on verified information and without any politicization.

In seeking a solution to this issue, we note with regret that there is a profound divergence among various parties. Viet Nam would therefore like to stress the vital importance of unity on this topic, both among States parties to the CWC and among the members of the Security Council. We share the same goal of ridding the world of chemical weapons everywhere. We must work together. Viet Nam will continue to actively participate in the work of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC and to closely follow the discussions of the OPCW Executive Council, including on this subject.

In conclusion, I would like to stress Viet Nam's consistent policy of supporting the complete disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. We categorically condemn the use of chemical weapons in any form, by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances and for any reason. It is a flagrant violation of international law and has disastrous effects on

civilians and their living environment. We reiterate our view that the only path to ending the current crisis in Syria is through a comprehensive political settlement, in full accordance with the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Annex XVIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi**

I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

In contemporary history, Iran was the main victim of the large-scale, systematic and frequent use of chemical weapons during the eight-year war imposed on us by Saddam Hussein, when some Western States not only assisted Saddam in developing chemical weapons but also refrained from taking any action when he made extensive use of those weapons against our citizens and later against Iraqi citizens. Those bitter experiences taught us that no one should possess such inhumane weapons and that the legal regime to prohibit their development and use must not allow any sort of politicization.

We understand and feel more than any other country both the horrible nature of those inhumane weapons and the poisonous nature of politicizing the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). It is in that context that we condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anytime, anywhere and under any circumstances, and also call for the full, effective, balanced and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention as well as for upholding the integrity, authority and legitimacy of the OPCW.

Nevertheless, it is a source of grave concern that in the past several years, a group of OPCW member States have politicized the consideration of Syria's implementation of the Convention, systematically abusing the processes of the Security Council and the OPCW. They disregard the fact that in her final report to the Council, in 2014, the Special Coordinator of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Mission confirmed that Syria had fulfilled all of its commitments and that its entire chemical stockpile had been destroyed. That was also later confirmed by the OPCW. They are referring to a technically defective report of the Investigation and Identification Team, which was prepared without on-site investigation or due regard for the chain of custody, and they intentionally disregard the progress achieved by Syria in implementing its obligations. They also overlook Syria's commitment, which it reiterated very recently, to continuing to work with the Technical Secretariat in order to resolve all outstanding issues as soon as possible.

Even the relevant decision of the OPCW Executive Council at its ninety-fourth session disregarded Syria's unprecedented cooperation with the OPCW, which it carried out despite the serious security threats posed by the deadliest of terrorist groups as well as the restrictions resulting from the coronavirus disease pandemic. Unfortunately, the unproductive policies of some Western countries, pursued relentlessly during the course of the past several years, have resulted only in division within the Security Council and the OPCW, eroding their legitimacy and credibility.

More important, those politically motivated approaches continue to endanger the consensus decision-making tradition of the OPCW, the latest example of which was the decision at the recently held twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC regarding the OPCW's programme and budget for 2021, which was adopted by a vote. That unconstructive approach will continue to adversely affect the efforts to achieve the full and effective realization of the very purpose of the CWC, namely the elimination of chemical weapons, which has yet to be realized, owing to blatant failure on the part of the United States, as the sole major possessor State party to the Convention.

A recent draft decision proposed by a group of countries in order to deprive a State from continuing to be a party to the Convention despite its having destroyed all of its chemical weapons, as verified by the OPCW, and despite its continuing cooperation with the Organization, will set a dangerous precedent and have far-reaching, serious consequences for the chemical-weapon disarmament regime.

The continuation of such policies is not acceptable and must no longer be permitted. Every effort must therefore be made to restore the OPCW's authority and promote the full and non-discriminatory implementation of the CWC.

Annex XIX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, Bashar Ja'afari**

[Original: Arabic]

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your friendly country, South Africa, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are confident that you will be able to successfully manage the work of the Council. I would also like to thank you for convening this open meeting.

I have listened attentively to the statements by my colleagues today. I would once again like to express our gratitude to those Member States that uphold international law and the Charter of the United Nations and that have condemned the use of chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction anytime, anywhere and in any circumstances. I would like to emphasize that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is a technical organization. However, in relation to the Syrian chemical-weapon issue, it has been transformed from a technical organization with noble goals into a pawn in a geopolitical game controlled by the United States of America and its allies. Instead of being a faithful custodian of the Chemical Weapons Convention and ensuring that it is implemented without politicization or polarization, the OPCW has become a tool that is being used to pressure and target a State party to the Convention with a view to advancing hostile agendas directed against the Syrian State.

Since acceding to the Convention in 2013, Syria has made every effort and strived with the utmost earnestness and diligence to implement all its treaty-based obligations in a credible and transparent manner, despite the strict timetables established by the OPCW and the extremely difficult conditions that Syria was dealing with at the time. Syria nevertheless did everything that was asked of it and cooperated fully with the OPCW's Technical Secretariat and teams, to which the OPCW and its Director-General have attested.

A few days ago, we cooperated with and provided all of the required assistance to the Declaration Assessment Team, which visited Syria recently, as well as to another team that departed Syria on 24 November. In its documented reports, the Technical Secretariat has acknowledged that all Syrian chemical weapons and declared production facilities were destroyed. Ms. Sigrid Kaag, who is currently a Minister in the Government of the Netherlands, said in her briefing to the Council in June 2014 that Syria had fulfilled all of its obligations. At the time, she was the Special Coordinator of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Mission, a post she held in 2013 and 2014. Syria has fulfilled all of its commitments, while Western countries and the United States have broken their promises by using the OPCW as a tool to pursue their political agendas.

The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that it has not used chemical weapons and that it remains committed to cooperating with the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat and the Declaration Assessment Team in order to resolve all outstanding issues and enable the matter to be closed once and for all as soon as possible, ensuring that it will no longer be part of a political game or used as fodder for media disinformation.

On 15 November, Syria submitted to the OPCW Technical Secretariat its eighty-fourth monthly report on activities related to the destruction of chemical weapons and production facilities in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic for the period from 16 October to 15 November. In that report, the Syrian National Committee for the Implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention reaffirmed its readiness to continue holding technical meetings and consultations with the

Technical Secretariat in order to resolve all outstanding issues, as had been previously agreed. It also reaffirmed that Syria remains completely committed to cooperating with the Technical Secretariat through structured dialogue aimed at resolving all of those issues. Such dialogue has led to significant progress on many of those issues, which can now be closed.

In the light of the ongoing cooperation between the Syrian Government and the OPCW, the Syrian Arab Republic hosted an OPCW inspection team that carried out a seventh round of inspections at the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre facilities in Barzah and Jamrayah. We also hosted an OPCW team tasked with removing remote monitoring equipment, in accordance with the decision adopted by the Executive Council on 24 July 2014, which provides that such equipment must be removed five years after installation.

From 8 to 14 November, the inspection team conducted a seventh round of inspections at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre. The Syrian National Committee provided all assistance to and cooperated fully with that team so as to enable it to complete its mission in full. During the final meeting, the head of the inspection team acknowledged that the team had been able to conduct all of the visits it had requested and thanked Syria for the cooperation and support it had provided during the visit.

Despite the Syrian Government's cooperation with the OPCW and its teams, certain Western countries continue to cast doubts on the declaration made by Syria and question Syria's cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. In doing that, they are misrepresenting the cooperation of Syria with the Declaration Assessment Team and deliberately overlooking the progress made so far in order to perpetuate the issue. My Government regrets that certain members of the Security Council have not addressed this issue in an objective and professional manner or complied with the rules and principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations during the discussions that take place in the course of the monthly briefings on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

As part of the role-swapping game that the United States is playing with certain Western countries, France has formally submitted to the OPCW Technical Secretariat a draft decision prepared by the United States that had already been distributed secretly by the United States to missions accredited to the OPCW in The Hague. Moreover, the Netherlands has submitted to the General Assembly a highly politicized draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, directed at a specific State, my country, which figures in four of the nine paragraphs in the draft resolution.

In that connection, I would like to draw attention to the involvement of the Netherlands in the scandal related to supporting terrorist organizations in Syria that played out before the eyes of the international public. Mark Rutte, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, recently admitted that he had personally intervened to obstruct parliamentary investigations into his Government providing millions of dollars to some 22 terrorist groups, including the Levant Front, which even Dutch institutions have designated a terrorist group. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Stef Blok, previously called for the investigation to be halted, saying that it would lead to major problems, including the revelation of top-secret matters, and embarrass allies, which would necessarily be impacted by the investigation. It should be noted that after Belgium, the Netherlands is the European country that accounts for the largest number of terrorists, estimated to be in the hundreds, fighting with terrorist organizations in Syria and Iraq. Moreover, in February 2017, the intelligence agency of the Netherlands acknowledged that it was dealing with dozens of Dutch children who had travelled with or without their parents to areas in

Syria and Iraq where the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant was present and had received military training from that extremist group.

In September 2018, the Dutch broadcasting service NOS also confirmed that the Government of the Netherlands was supporting the Levant Front group, which it had designated as a terrorist organization, and had provided equipment and logistical assistance to that group between 2015 and 2018. Those actions reveal that the Netherlands and the West are pursuing blatantly hypocritical policies with regard to counter-terrorism and the protection of human rights. The Government of the Netherlands fears that those scandals will be uncovered. That is why it has made new claims and allegations about Syria and recently attempted to submit the aforementioned draft resolution, which is directed against my country in particular, to the General Assembly, with a view to covering up its involvement in and support for terrorism.

It is also not surprising that Western countries, which continue to falsely claim that they care for the Syrian people, should continue to support and protect the terrorist organizations and groups that are responsible for inflicting suffering on the Syrian people and violating their rights.

The German magazine Der Spiegel has revealed that Khalid Al-Saleh, the leader of the so-called White Helmets terrorist group, and his family were deported from Jordan and sent to Germany, where they were received with open arms by the German Government. Two years ago, the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, during its review of the request made by the leader of that terrorist group, concluded that he remained committed to his radical and extremist beliefs and that he had links to terrorists. The terrorist materials and contacts with terrorist groups that were found in his telephone left no doubt in the minds of the German authorities that his arrival in Germany would be fraught with risk and could threaten German national security. The German Foreign Office nonetheless decided to host him in Germany, ignoring the warnings about him. He was not found acceptable by any of the security agencies of either the United States or Jordan.

In conclusion, my country's Government once again calls on all States members of the OPCW to reject attempts to politicize what is by nature a technical organization. We also call on them to address the politicization and serious flaws that have crept into the work of the OPCW and are undermining its status and credibility.

Annex XX**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Raziye Bilge Koçyiğit Grba**

I would like to express our thanks to High Representative Nakamitsu and the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Ambassador Arias, for their comprehensive briefings. I would also like to express our appreciation to Mr. Arias for his able leadership in ensuring the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention despite the unprecedented difficulties caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic.

We take note of the Director-General's eighty-sixth monthly report on the activities of the OPCW towards ensuring the elimination of the Syrian regime's chemical weapons programme (see S/2020/1152, annex). The report draws attention to the ongoing alarming situation regarding that stated goal. There are still 19 issues outstanding concerning the Al-Assad regime's chemical weapons declaration. One of those issues is particularly concerning, as it proves the existence of a chemical-weapon production facility. Such examples indicate yet again the urgent need to address the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified in the regime's fraudulent declaration.

The Syrian regime's non-compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention cannot be condoned and requires a firm response from the international community, in particular from the Security Council. If we overlook that collective task, the global norm against the use of weapons of mass destruction will be irreparably undermined. If we do not take the necessary action, the efforts to hold the regime accountable for its well-documented crimes against humanity run the risk of failure.

To reverse that ominous trend, concrete steps are required. The Syrian regime must fully cooperate with the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and immediately declare the full extent of its chemical weapons programme to the OPCW. It was on that understanding that Turkey co-sponsored the OPCW Executive Council decision of 9 July, which set clear and verifiable parameters for action. The decision required that the Syrian regime return to full compliance with the Convention within 90 days.

Regrettably, the October report of the OPCW Director-General established that the Syrian regime had failed to fulfil its obligations under that decision (see S/2020/1033, annex). We therefore support the implementation of concrete measures, in particular during the second part of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, with a view to addressing the persistent non-compliance of the Syrian regime with the Convention, including its repeated use of chemical weapons and failure to declare and destroy all of its chemical weapons and production facilities in a fully verifiable manner. Along with 45 other States parties, Turkey sponsored the relevant draft decision that will be considered during the second part of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties.

We look forward to seeing the results of the current investigations of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). Turkey reiterates its full support to the IIT, which performs a valuable role in identifying the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We have full confidence in the professionalism, integrity and impartiality of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, the DAT, the IIT and the Fact-Finding Mission. Their dedicated work is commendable and should have the support of us all. We regret the attempts to undermine their integrity and credibility.

Turkey remains steadfast in its call for accountability in Syria. The reports by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Fact-Finding Mission, and most recently the IIT report on the incidents in Ltamenah, provide a sufficient basis on which we can act to end impunity. In that context, we once again condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force in Ltamenah on 24, 25 and 30 March 2017, as established by the IIT report.

In conclusion, the Syrian regime must be urged towards result-oriented cooperation with the OPCW. It is crucial that the Security Council act in unity and ensure the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). That is the only way to prevent the Syrian regime's repeated use of chemical weapons against its own people. In that regard, we want to once again recall the special responsibility of those who have influence on the Syrian regime. We need to act decisively in order to ensure accountability in Syria and honour the victims of those chemical-weapon attacks.

As for the absurd claims made by the representative of the Syrian regime about my country, it is quite clear that after seven years, 86 progress reports and many concrete cases of blatant breaches of its obligations, such remarks are nothing but a futile attempt by the Syrian regime to distract the Council's attention from Syria's well-known crimes against humanity, particularly its well-documented use of chemical weapons. We refute such fabrications entirely and affirm once again that we will continue to stand by the Syrian people.
