



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

8943

rd meeting

Wednesday, 5 January 2022, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Ms. Juul (Norway)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
India	Mr. Tirumurti
Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 28 December 2021 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2021/1103)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Expression of welcome to new members and of thanks to outgoing members of the Security Council

The President: As this is the first formal meeting of the Security Council this year, I should like to extend my warm wishes on the occasion of the New Year to all members of the Security Council, the United Nations and the Secretariat.

In presiding over this first formal meeting of the Council in 2022, I am happy to welcome the new members — Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates. We look forward to their participation in the work of the Council. Their experience and wisdom will be of invaluable assistance in the discharge of the Council's responsibilities.

I also take this opportunity to express the Council's gratitude to the outgoing members — Estonia, the Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Viet Nam — for their important contributions to the work of the Council during their terms.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: I should also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Ambassador Abdou Abarry, Permanent Representative of the Niger, for his service as President of the Council for the month of December 2021. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Abarry and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 28 December 2021 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2021/1103)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2021/1103, which contains the text of a letter dated 28 December 2021 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

Before we begin with our speakers list today — recalling the Security Council's latest note by the President (S/2017/507) on its working methods — I wish to encourage all speakers, both members and non-members of the Council, to deliver their statements in five minutes or less. Note 507 also encourages briefers to be succinct and to focus on key issues. In that spirit, briefers are further encouraged to limit their initial remarks to 10 minutes or less. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

Mrs. Nakamitsu: I thank Security Council members for the opportunity to brief them again on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the new non-permanent members of the Council — Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates. I look forward to working closely with all members on this important issue.

Since my previous briefing, on 8 December 2021 (see S/PV.8921), the Office for Disarmament Affairs has continued to maintain regular contact with counterparts at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter. Per established practice, I held a monthly call with the OPCW Director-General on 29 December 2021, to receive an update on developments and ascertain his views. In addition, the Office for Disarmament Affairs received a letter from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic, dated 27 December 2021, referring to a letter sent by the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates to the OPCW Director-General concerning the information contained in his latest reports on the progress in the elimination of the

Syrian chemical weapons programme. That information was studied carefully and forwarded to the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

As I have previously informed the Council, the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has impacted the OPCW Technical Secretariat's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. Nevertheless, the Technical Secretariat maintains its readiness to deploy. Despite continued travel restrictions, the OPCW Technical Secretariat continues to undertake its mandated activities related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in that regard.

Efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) are still ongoing to clarify all outstanding issues related to the initial and subsequent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. I have been informed that in order to assess the completeness and accuracy of the Syrian Arab Republic's declarations, the DAT conducts an assessment of all incoming information submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as information generated through other activities. Any gaps, inconsistencies or discrepancies are raised and discussed with the Syrian National Authority and reported to States parties as outstanding issues. Once the Syrian National Authority has provided sufficient information and explanations related to an outstanding issue, the DAT considers the related outstanding issue to be resolved and, if needed, assists the Syrian Arab Republic in amending its initial declaration.

I understand that the Syrian Arab Republic has submitted a total of 17 amendments and a number of supplements to its initial declaration. However, out of the 24 outstanding issues opened by the DAT in 2014, 20 remain unresolved. As noted by the OPCW Technical Secretariat, the substance of these outstanding issues is of concern and involves, inter alia, undeclared research, production and/or weaponization of unknown quantities of chemical weapons, and significant quantities of chemical-warfare agents or precursors and chemical munitions whose fate has not yet been fully verified by the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not yet received the requested declaration from the Syrian Arab Republic on all undeclared types and quantities of nerve agents produced and/or

weaponized at the former chemical-weapons production facility that was declared by the Syrian Arab Republic as never having been used to produce and/or weaponize chemical-warfare agents.

I have also been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not yet received a response from the Syrian Arab Republic on the requests for information and documentation regarding the damage caused during an attack on 8 June 2021 against a military facility that housed a declared former chemical-weapons production facility. Nor has it received a response to the request for information regarding the unauthorized movement and remains of two destroyed cylinders related to the chemical-weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018. In that regard, I call on the Syrian Arab Republic to respond to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's requests as soon as possible.

As I have previously informed the Council, since April 2021 the OPCW Technical Secretariat has attempted to schedule with the Syrian National Authority the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the DAT in Damascus.

However, I regret to inform Council members that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not been in a position to conduct that deployment owing to the continued refusal by the Syrian Arab Republic to issue an entry visa for one member of the DAT. I also regret to inform the Council that efforts by the Technical Secretariat to convene a limited meeting with Syrian experts at the OPCW's headquarters in The Hague in late October 2021 were unsuccessful.

I urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate arrangements for the deployment of the DAT and to comply with resolution 2118 (2013), including by allowing immediate and unfettered access to the personnel designated by the OPCW Technical Secretariat as soon as possible.

Full cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat is essential to closing those outstanding issues. As has been stressed on numerous occasions, owing to the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the OPCW Technical Secretariat continues to assess that at this stage, the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat conducted the eighth round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) from 10 to 17 December 2021. The outcome of that round of inspections will be reported in due course. I am also advised that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the OPCW Technical Secretariat to close the issue related to the detection of a Schedule 2 chemical at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC in November 2018.

With regard to the in-person meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, I note that the officials in charge of preparations continue to discuss the date, location, agenda and composition of the delegations.

Consistent with previous updates to the Council, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) remains in the process of studying all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. I have been informed that the FFM deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic between 28 November and 10 December 2021 to collect information and conduct interviews regarding the incidents that took place in Hama Governorate on 7 July 2017 and 4 August 2017 in Khirbat Masasinah; on 9 August 2017 in Qalib Al-Thawr, Al-Salamiyah; and on 8 November 2017 in Al-Balil, Suran. The FFM continues to analyse the information collected from recent activities and is preparing for upcoming deployments, which, as I noted, remain subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I understand that the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues its investigations into incidents in which the FFM has determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic. The IIT will issue further reports in due course, subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. I 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 decision entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC.9), adopted on 21 April 2021, I have been advised that, unfortunately, the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet completed any of the

measures stipulated in paragraph 5 of decision EC-94/DEC.2. I therefore reiterate my call on the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in that regard.

It cannot be repeated often enough: there is no justification for the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. The use of such weapons with impunity and without accountability is a threat to international peace and security and a danger to us all. It is therefore imperative to hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons. As we start the new year, I state my sincere hope once again that members of the Council will unite on this issue. The Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever support and assistance it can.

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

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

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Let me start by congratulating you, Madam President, on the start of your Security Council presidency. I look forward to a productive month under your leadership. I also want to extend a warm welcome to our new Security Council members — Albania, my next-door neighbour, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates. Welcome to the fold. The United States is excited to work with the new members as vital partners over the next two years.

With regard to the discussion at hand, I would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her informative briefing and dedication to this issue. The work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its investigative bodies — the Investigation and Identification Team and the Fact-Finding Mission, as well as the Declaration Assessment Team — remains essential. I commend the Fact-Finding Mission for pressing forward with its impartial and independent investigations of alleged chemical-weapons use in Syria, despite the Syrian regime’s obstructionism, obstacles presented by the coronavirus disease pandemic and persistent baseless attacks by some in the international community against this work. The Fact-Finding Mission’s most recent trip to Syria, which concluded last month, collected essential information on four incidents of chemical-weapons use in 2017. Those facts help hold the Syrian regime accountable for its chemical-weapons

use and uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which all of us on the Council are States parties. As in previous investigations, the United States stands firmly behind the Fact-Finding Mission's thorough and impartial evaluation and analysis of suspected chemical-weapons use.

It is profoundly disappointing that in the ninety-ninth report of the Technical Secretariat (see S/2021/1103), we continue to witness Syria's complete disregard for its obligations and deliberate attempts to delay and obstruct the OPCW's work. The OPCW still assesses that Syria's declaration cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013).

We should not be fooled by Syria's veneer of cooperation while it continues its obfuscating narrative. The Al-Assad regime has not been candid or forthcoming with the OPCW, despite the tireless efforts by the OPCW to engage Syria to resolve these issues. For nearly nine months, Syria has prevented the next round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team from occurring in Syria. It has also failed to accept the alternative solution proposed by the OPCW — to hold a limited set of meetings in The Hague. Let me be clear — every amendment Syria makes to its original declaration has been the result of the thorough work of the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team to uncover those inconsistencies. The Syrian regime did not provide any of this information itself.

It is a matter of international peace and security that Damascus fulfil its international obligations. That includes granting OPCW personnel immediate and unfettered access to undertake their mandated work. Recently, an individual in France was arrested in connection with the procurement of chemical-weapons-related equipment by the Syrian regime as late as 2018. These are preliminary charges related to complicity in crimes against humanity and war crimes. This arrest is an important step in pursuing accountability for those responsible for the use of chemical weapons.

The United States reaffirms its strong support for the OPCW's continued work on this matter and all efforts to implement resolution 2118 (2013). It is time for the Syrian regime to quit stalling, cease its obstructionism and comply with its international obligations. It is time for the Syrian people to have justice and peace.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on the start of your presidency of the Council. You and your team can count on our support. I would also like to welcome our colleagues from Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates to the first briefing of the Security Council this year. We look forward to constructive cooperation.

Our newcomers are very lucky today. On their very first day, they have the opportunity to plunge headlong into one of the most controversial and politicized files on the Security Council's agenda — the Syrian chemical dossier. It is unique because no other plot is so disconnected from reality, resembling instead a fairy tale concocted by some science fiction writer. I will explain what I mean.

The most paradoxical thing is that the Syrian chemical dossier has no connection to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. That has been the case for a long time. Its non-proliferation aspects have been resolved. By joining the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Damascus has fulfilled in good faith all the obligations it assumed in that regard, as the Secretary-General reported to the Security Council in June 2014 (see S/PV.7212). The elimination of Syria's military-chemical potential was confirmed in 2016 by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Conference of the States Parties.

No real, scientifically corroborated evidence to the contrary has been presented to the Council in all these years. True experts cannot in good faith consider as evidence the demonstrably staged videos provided by politically engaged non-governmental organizations created specifically to fight the Syrian Government — such as the notorious White Helmets — videos in which people without chemical protection equipment are working with toxic substances and the alleged victims' symptoms are completely inconsistent with the use of chemical weapons.

It would seem that the OPCW Director-General, Mr. Arias, and the Technical Secretariat would have the final say in that regard. Unfortunately, hopes of that occurring are dwindling, as they are deeply mired in the scandal surrounding the report of the Fact-Finding Mission on the incident in Douma in April 2018, the final version of which was revised, due to pressure on

behalf of some delegations, to make it more anti-Syrian. This is fraud, plain and simple. That continues to be confirmed by various sources, including former inspectors of the OPCW who were directly involved in the investigation. Attempts by said inspectors to get the OPCW leadership to investigate what happened only led to them being persecuted for their search for the truth. All attempts to set the record straight, or at least to discuss the situation, including by engaging the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board, have been rejected by the Technical Secretariat.

Unfortunately, instead of admitting obvious mistakes and correcting them, the Director-General continues to openly violate, year after year, the provisions of the CWC, the integrity of which he must defend. I would even say that he is flaunting the use of a flawed methodology that is violating the provisions of the Convention and is based on data collected remotely from politically engaged sources.

As a result, the situation is only getting worse, with the appearance of increasingly dubious innovations. For example, in today's report (see S/2021/1103), the Director-General indicates that, in November and December 2021, the FFM collected information and conducted interviews about incidents in a number of towns in Syria that took place in 2017. Common sense dictates that such investigations post facto are, by definition, improper. How can a chain of events be established four years after they occur, especially given the evolving military situation in Syria? What kind of eye witnesses can be found? What details can they remember? This is especially regrettable bearing in mind the colossal efforts made, together with the Syrians, to drag the obstinate FFM inspectors to the site of the alleged incident in Douma in 2018.

Our Western colleagues, on the other hand, did not need an investigation at all. Not only did they immediately blame the Al-Assad Government despite the fact that, on the eve of the alleged incident, we had warned of the impending provocation by Syrian insurgents, but they actually conducted a missile strike against Government targets supposedly connected to the use of chemical weapons. Bearing in mind that we know in detail about the under-handed dealings I have just mentioned, it is impossible to call what happened anything other than a carefully planned political provocation. By the way, our American colleague just said that the facts collected by the Fact-finding Mission in November 2021 demonstrate the criminal nature of the Al-Assad

regime, but where do they get such information and facts? These have not yet been circulated. Unless they have written them themselves, that is.

To give the Council a full picture, it is important to mention the illegitimate activity of the Investigation and Identification Team, which is working remotely to rubber-stamp the unconvincing anti-Syrian reports based on videos and information from anti-Syrian groups. Also worth mentioning is the campaign launched by our Western colleagues on Syria's initial declaration. As a result, under a bogus pretext and in a gross violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, Syria was stripped of a number of rights and privileges at the OPCW.

Nevertheless, even after that, the Syrian Government, showing significant restraint, continues to be ready to engage in dialogue with the OPCW. However, in reality, this cooperation is being held up by the Technical Secretariat itself despite its efforts to shift blame to Damascus in relation to the work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). Syria has clearly stated its readiness to receive the DAT on its territory and to conduct the twenty-fifth round of consultations. However, as we have been told, this round has once again been postponed by the leadership of the Technical Secretariat on artificial and politicized grounds, namely, that, supposedly, the entire mission cannot visit the country because one of its members was not granted a visa. The pretext chosen by the Technical Secretariat last time was no less absurd: that supposedly in the summer it was impossible to visit Syria because of the heat.

It is crucial to understand that the dialogue with the DAT is part of the voluntary, bilateral obligations that Syria undertook. I stress the word "voluntary". The very nature of the DAT mandate does not provide for any kind of investigative functions. Its role is simply to help the Syrians prepare their initial declaration. It has no authority to conduct retrospective investigations.

Furthermore, preparatory work is continuing on meetings between Mr. Mekdad, Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, and Mr. Arias, Director-General. Mr. Arias has been invited to visit Damascus because it would be very important for him to get a first-hand impression of the situation on the ground. Would the Syrian authorities try to do this if they wanted nothing to do with the OPCW or had

something to hide? And why is Mr. Arias himself refusing to visit Syria?

I have to say, generally speaking, that there are more and more questions for Mr. Arias. His last appearance before the Security Council (see S/PV.8785) left us with an unpleasant aftertaste. He attempted to cover up the discrepancies in the aforementioned report on Douma by any possible means, on the one hand, and to justify the use of remote methods of work employed by the Technical Secretariat when gathering evidence, on the other hand. In addition to that, he tried with a straight face to distort the content of the note verbale sent by the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW in connection to that report. Nevertheless, we deem it important to continue to demand from Mr. Arias clear and logical explanations of the current situation, which risks destroying the OPCW. We only insist that Mr. Arias thoroughly execute the provisions of the OPCW. We also intend to do this again in the Security Council, by inviting Director General back to one of our meetings.

There is one more very important aspect to mention in order to understand the evolution of the chemical dossier. By peddling the so-called violations by the Syrian authorities, the United Nations Secretariat and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW are, in essence, turning a blind eye to the topic of the use of chemical weapons by terrorists in Syria and neighbouring States. I just want to mention the November report of United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which contains a wealth of evidence of the use by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) of chemical weapons in Iraq in 2014 and 2016. Specifically, ISIL used the laboratory of the University of Mosul to conduct chemical research and development.

These facts fall within the purview of paragraphs 18 and 19 of resolution 2118 (2013) and are subject to the resolution's paragraph 12, which stipulates that such information should be shared with Member States. Nevertheless, no information on this has been provided either today or earlier. This is very important evidence that clearly points to the fact that chemical weapons could be spreading among terrorists and used by them at any moment to make chemical provocations.

In sum, the so-called Syrian chemical dossier has lately lost even the appearance of impartiality and the objective establishment of facts that could confirm the

use of chemical weapons in Syria. Today, it is no more than simply another lever that Western colleagues may use to criticize the country and try to prove what cannot be proven, even in disregard of the laws of physics, chemistry and basic logic.

This is the situation that my colleagues in the Council will have to work with in the near future. Of course, we must be ready to hear the most rabid accusations against Russia for allegedly undermining the authority of the OPCW. We would like to think that this topic, which has become a pain in everyone's neck, will take a turn in an objective and fact-based direction by the end of your term in the Council, Madam President. If Norway, together with us and other clear-minded delegations, can contribute to bringing that about, then rank-and-file Syrians and their neighbours will only be the more grateful for it.

Mr. Kiboino (Kenya): I wish to congratulate Norway on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January 2022.

I assure you, Madam President, of Kenya's cooperation and support. I also wish to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

As this is our first meeting in 2022, we welcome our colleagues from Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates to the Security Council. We look forward to working closely with each of them this year.

Noting that there have been no significant movements in this dossier since the Council's last meeting (see S/PV.8921), I will reiterate Kenya's already-known positions on this matter.

It is Kenya's belief that expeditious closure of the investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria will allow the Council to support the Syrian people more meaningfully in their quest for lasting peace. We welcome the agreement on the extension of the Tripartite Agreement between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Syrian Arab Republic, which will cover the period from 1 January 2022 up to and including 30 June 2022. We encourage similar cooperation and engagement in good faith between the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW Technical Secretariat, particularly regarding

the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved.

Kenya reaffirms its support for the mandate of the OPCW, which bears great responsibility as the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The OPCW must remain transparent, free of politicization and capable of withstanding scrutiny.

We reaffirm Kenya's principled position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere and by anyone constitutes a grave violation of international law. No cause can ever justify the use of any weapon of mass destruction by any actor under any circumstances.

Finally, we reiterate our firm conviction that the long-term solution to the situation in Syria can be achieved only through a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned inclusive political dialogue, and Kenya stands in solidarity with the people of Syria in this endeavour.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): At the outset, and since this is the first time I take the floor in the Security Council under your presidency, Madam President, permit me to congratulate you and wish Norway a successful presidency. As a new member of the Council, but a long-time collaborator of Norway on several multilateral issues of mutual interest, I would like to assure you of Ghana's cooperation during this month.

I would also like to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her participation in today's meeting under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, and for her insightful briefing to the Council. My delegation also welcomes the Secretary-General's letter contained in document S/2021/1103, conveying the ninety-ninth monthly report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), for the period from 24 November to 23 December 2021, on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) and the relevant decisions of the OPCW Executive Council in relation to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons. I equally and warmly welcome the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey to this meeting and look forward to their participation.

In considering this agenda item, Ghana would like to reiterate its conviction that the use of chemical weapons is the most serious breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We recall, in this context, the international community's strong condemnation of

such use by anyone under any circumstances. We therefore reaffirm that any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and constitutes a serious violation of the norms and standards of the modern society of nations.

My delegation, in this regard, would like to emphasize two points.

First, Ghana strongly encourages the Syrian Arab Republic, a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and a State whose actions have been the subject of decisions by the OPCW Executive Council and the Council, to afford its full cooperation with designated entities in accordance with its obligations.

Secondly, the use of chemical weapons has consequences, and those who use them must be held to account for their actions. In that regard, Ghana supports all efforts to ensure accountability for the violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention in Syria. Accountability is crucial to compel compliance, deter the use of chemical weapons globally and restore the international community's confidence in the norms and standards that uphold the non-proliferation regime.

In conclusion, we encourage the Syrian Arab Republic to provide the required data and clarity necessary to resolve any outstanding gaps and inconsistencies in the initial and subsequent submissions concerning its chemical-weapons stockpiles. We hope that its suspended rights and privileges under the Chemical Weapons Convention can be restored as soon as possible, once the issues that are pending have been resolved and closed. As a State party to the Convention, Ghana stands ready to be a helpful partner in the elimination of the chemical weapons in Syria.

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, we congratulate Norway on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. Today marks the first open meeting of the Council for the new year. We take this opportunity to welcome its new members: the United Arab Emirates, Albania, Brazil, Gabon and Ghana. We look forward to stronger cooperation with them for greater unity within the Council and the effective discharge by the Council of its mandate. China also thanks Viet Nam, Tunisia, the Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Estonia for their contributions to the work of the Council over the past two years. I also thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

According to the latest monthly report by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2021/1103), the Technical Secretariat conducted the eighth round of inspections of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre from 10 to 17 December 2021; the Tripartite Agreement among the United Nations Office for Project Services, the OPCW and Syria has been extended to 30 June; and preparations are under way for the in-person meeting between the Director-General of the OPCW and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria. China welcomes such progress and encourages the Technical Secretariat to maintain its engagement and cooperation with Syria.

We take note of the recent deployment of members of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission to Syria for a two-week investigation. We hope that they will work in strict compliance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). With regard to the twenty-fifth round of technical consultations, we hope that the Technical Secretariat will heed the concerns of the State party over the issue of visas and remain open and flexible so as to avoid a stalemate in the discussions.

I would also like to raise a question on the issue. Given Syria's refusal to issue a visa for only one member of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), would it be possible for the Technical Secretariat to find a replacement or deploy the other DAT members to Syria first for the consultations?

The CWC constitutes the basis and yardstick for addressing chemical-weapons-related issues. Regrettably, in recent years, in disregard of the provisions of the Convention and the tradition of seeking consensus, certain countries have forced voting on pursuing accountability related to the Syrian chemical-weapons issue, when consensus was far from being reached among the parties, including on establishing the extent of the mandate of CWC and the Investigation and Identification Team and suspending the rights of Syria as a State party, among others.

Such acts undermine the authority of the OPCW, poison the atmosphere and erode mutual trust among States parties. China urges the countries concerned to change course and desist from politicizing the work of the OPCW. We also hope that the Technical Secretariat and the Director-General in particular will maintain objectivity and impartiality in their work, listen broadly to others' views and facilitate the move from division

and confrontation to unity and cooperation among States parties.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on your role as President of the Security Council for the month of January. We wish you all the best in the month ahead. You can count on Brazil's cooperation. My delegation thanks Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing.

As this is the first time that I am addressing the Council on the matter, I would like to reiterate Brazil's firm commitment to the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Brazil condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances. We therefore support a strong, transparent and independent OPCW.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is the gold standard for multilateral regimes on weapons of mass destruction. It has established a comprehensive, legally binding and non-discriminatory prohibition and is equipped with a fully fledged and effective verification mechanism. It is unfortunate that, even with that institutional apparatus, we continue to observe the use of chemical weapons in different regions of the world. This year we are celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the CWC by the Conference on Disarmament. May that milestone give rise to a recommitment by States parties to the objectives of the Convention, as well as to strengthening its verification mechanism in order to ensure its unequivocal impartiality.

I would also like to reiterate Brazil's strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. We are convinced that there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict. We reaffirm our resolve to advance a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned and United Nations-facilitated political process in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

Chemical weapons are utterly incompatible with international humanitarian law and, therefore, must have no place in the practices and doctrines of today's world. The use of such weapons violates international agreements and poses serious threats to international peace and security. Incidents must be addressed with transparency and subject to thorough and impartial

investigations in accordance with the CWC. It is our view that the role of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in clarifying such incidents is irreplaceable. Its capacity to do so must be protected and, where necessary, continuously improved.

The use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic constitutes the first proven use of weapons of mass destruction in the twenty-first century. That dreadful reality represents a major setback in the international commitment to the principles of international humanitarian law. Over the past few years, Brazil has thoroughly analysed the reports issued by the Fact-Finding Mission, the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Investigation and Identification Team on episodes related to the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Given the gravity of the facts, we reiterate that all investigations pertaining to those incidents must be impartial, balanced, technical and comprehensive.

It is also important to note that, while Brazil supported the adoption of decision C-25/DEC.9 during the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC, it did so with the expectation that the application of the measures provided for therein would contribute to reverting Syria's state of non-compliance with the Convention. We continue to advocate for the need to restore trust between the organization and the Syrian Arab Republic, which would constitute a fundamental step towards overcoming the regrettable politicization that has undermined the culture of consensus within the OPCW and its decision-making bodies.

Brazil welcomes the recent efforts made by both the OPCW Director-General and the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates to hold an in-person meeting. That is the kind of constructive approach that helps build confidence and paves the way for the consolidation of a comprehensive and effective dialogue. We also welcome the extension of the Tripartite Agreement between the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services, which facilitates the organization's mandated activities in Syria.

Finally, we encourage the Syrian Government to provide full access to OPCW expert teams, including by issuing the necessary visas. Once travel restrictions worldwide begin to be lifted, we look forward to the

deployment of further on-site inspections, which could help advance a conclusion to the Syrian file.

Mr. Tirumurti (India): At the outset, allow me to extend my felicitations to you, Madam, and express our full support for your presidency. I also welcome our five new colleagues to the Council and thank our five outgoing colleagues for their contribution.

We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her update.

We have taken note of the contents of the ninety-ninth monthly report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted to the Council pursuant to resolution 2118 (2013) (see S/2021/1103).

We look forward to the report on the Technical Secretariat's latest round of inspections of Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre facilities. We have noted the submission by the Syrian Arab Republic on 16 December of its ninety-seventh monthly report, detailing activities undertaken to implement its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We have also noted that the Tripartite Agreement between the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services, which facilitates the Technical Secretariat's activities in Syria, has been extended for a further period of six months.

We encourage continued engagement between Syria and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to address and resolve all relevant issues relating to chemical weapons.

India's position on issues related to Syria acceding to the Chemical Weapons Convention is well known. It is our principled stand that the CWC is a unique, non-discriminatory disarmament instrument for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. India attaches high importance to the CWC and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. We support collective efforts by all parties to ensure that the credibility and integrity of that Convention is maintained to the fullest.

India is against the use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. India has consistently maintained that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, credible and objective. It must scrupulously

follow the provisions and procedures embedded in the Convention and be conducted in conformity with the delicate balance of power and responsibility enshrined under it to establish facts and reach evidence-based conclusions. That should be adhered to.

India has also been repeatedly cautioning against the possibility of terrorist entities and individuals gaining access to chemical weapons, including in the region. The reports of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have also referred to the repeated deployments of chemical weapons by United Nations-proscribed terrorist groups and those affiliated with ISIL against civilian populations between 2014 and 2016. ISIL remains active in wide swathes of Syria, where the group is seeking to rebuild its combat capabilities. Therefore, allegations of the use of chemical weapons need to be afforded utmost attention.

India continues to believe that progress on other tracks could help with potential forward movement with regard to the political process in Syria, as advocated by resolution 2254 (2015).

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): We are delighted to see you in the Chair, Madam, and I want to wish you and your team an excellent month ahead. I also wish to echo your remarks regarding your predecessor, Ambassador Abarry, and his excellent presidency of the Council for the month of December. I would like to welcome our new colleagues and congratulate those who are outgoing.

I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her contribution and her informative briefing today, as always.

The ninety-ninth report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2021/1103) shows us once again that, despite the best efforts of the OPCW's Technical Secretariat, there has been no progress on the Syrian file. That is a matter of serious concern. As the report makes clear, the work of the Declaration Assessment Team to assess the completeness and accuracy of Syria's declarations is essential. That work has been central to the 17 amendments and numerous supplements made to the declaration.

Those are substantial issues relating to the undeclared research, production and weaponization of unknown quantities of chemical weapons and significant quantities of chemical warfare agents or precursors and chemical munitions. They go to the very heart of the serious concerns that Syria continues to retain a chemical weapons capacity. That is what makes the seven-month delay to the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian authorities such a serious matter. Syrian efforts to interfere in the selection of experts by the OPCW, thereby preventing their deployment, are unacceptable.

The Council must maintain a strong and clear message upholding the requirements it set out in resolution 2118 (2013). Syria must cooperate fully with the OPCW, accept personnel designated by the OPCW in the course of their work and provide them with immediate and unfettered access. Syria cannot pick and choose which of its legal obligations it is willing to accept.

Equally, the OPCW must have our full backing in its professional and impartial work to resolve the many outstanding issues. We welcome the eighth round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre and await the results. We note that Syria is yet to adequately explain the Schedule 2 chemical found at the Barzah site in November 2018.

We also welcome the ongoing work of the Fact-Finding Mission and its inspections in December of four sites connected with possible chemical weapons use in 2017. We await the results of that work in due course. The Investigation and Identification Team's work will also continue in 2022.

It is only through Syria's serious and meaningful cooperation with the OPCW that we can be assured that its entire stocks of chemical weapons are declared and verifiably destroyed, in line with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013).

We support, therefore, the proposed bilateral meeting between Director-General Arias and Minister Mekdad. It is important that this be a frank and meaningful discussion aimed at resolving the impasse and ensuring that real progress can be made on all outstanding issues. We hope to see this take place as soon as possible.

Ireland will continue to support all efforts by the OPCW and the Security Council to resolve outstanding issues on this file.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to begin by congratulating you, Madam, on your assumption of the presidency and to assure you of France's full support. I wish also to welcome the presence among us of five new non-permanent members and to very warmly say to them that France will support them in the next two years. Finally, I would like to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Why are we meeting today? The reason is simple: because on 30 August 2016, the Syrian regime used chemical weapons against its own people, causing more than 1,000 victims — women, children and older persons — in Ghouta, on the outskirts of Damascus; and because the Security Council subsequently unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013) requiring the full and verifiable disarmament of the Syrian chemical-weapons stockpile. There was no denial of the facts at the time, hence the unanimous adoption. Indeed, for more than eight years, it has been impossible for the Council and for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as well as the other relevant mechanisms, to achieve the desired goal. Not only is the Syrian regime not cooperating; since 2013 it has resorted to chemical weapons once again. Unfortunately, this is not a fairy tale; these are simply the facts — facts that should be termed crimes against humanity.

Today, in January 2022, the Syrian regime continues to refuse to cooperate. It is not issuing the necessary visas. It continues to seek to interfere in the selection of inspectors. The Declaration Assessment Team has still not been able to be deployed. There is a very clear determination to obstruct the proceedings. Clearly the regime does not want light to be shed on its initial declaration. That is unacceptable. Syria has obligations to cooperate set out in the Chemical Weapons Convention and in resolution 2118 (2013) — which, I reiterate, was unanimously adopted by the Council — that it must respect. If Syria wants to have its rights and privileges restored within the OPCW, it must cooperate.

Once again, I would like to pay tribute to the outstanding work of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in the face of the regime's obstructionism and slanderous statements. The Technical Secretariat has demonstrating tenacity and great professionalism. The

disinformation campaigns against it must stop. They are shameful.

We all are aware of the Syrian regime's culpability and the appalling acts for which it is responsible. That is why France is firmly committed to fighting impunity. Victims are now turning to national courts. I say this in dead earnest: there will be no clemency for those criminals. That is the message that we are sending along with our partners within the international partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Madam, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. You and your team can count on the support of the delegation of Mexico. I wish to take this opportunity also to congratulate Ambassador Abarry and his team for their work at the helm of the Security Council in December.

I would also like to welcome the delegations of Albania, Brazil, the United Arab Emirates, Ghana and Gabon, with which whom we hope to work very closely throughout this year. I wish also to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Mexico takes note of the monthly report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2021/1103) and of the inspections that took place in December at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre. We await the outcome of those inspections and welcome the appointment of representatives of Syria and the OPCW to convene a meeting between the Director-General of the OPCW and the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

On the other hand, we regret the bureaucratic obstacles that continue to affect the work of the OPCW, as was the case with the failure to issue visas for all members of the Declaration Assessment Team.

Mexico once again calls on Syria to constructively cooperate with the OPCW to clear up the 20 pending questions pertaining to its initial declaration.

We note with concern that the clarifications on the chemical agents produced in an installation that was not declared previously remain inconclusive. We are also concerned about the explanation concerning the unauthorized transfer of chlorine cylinders destroyed in an attack that were related to the incident in Douma,

as well as the presence of traces of chemical substances at the Barzah site.

We welcome the six-month extension of the Tripartite Agreement between the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and Syria. We would urge that such extensions cover longer periods so that United Nations agencies can plan their work with greater predictability.

Mexico reiterates its full trust in and support for the OPCW and its investigative work. We reaffirm our condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor and under any circumstances.

Lastly, we would urge States to cooperate with the work of the OPCW and to promote the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Council in order to put an end to the conflict.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I should like to congratulate you, Madam, on your presidency of the Council and on the way in which you have been leading our work. I assure you of my delegation's support throughout your presidency. I thank you, as well as those colleagues who already spoke, for the warm words of welcome to my country and to the other new members of the Security Council. I also welcome among us the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, and I thank her for her briefing.

The consideration of the ninety-ninth monthly report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2021/1103), submitted pursuant to resolution 2118 (2013), provides a timely opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the fight against chemical weapons and our commitment to disarmament. My country is clear on the fact that the use of chemical weapons, regardless of the context, represents a serious threat to international peace and security.

We take note of the declarations made by the Syrian Arab Republic on the destruction of 27 chemical-weapons production facilities and of the chemical weapons declared by the country that were removed from its territory in 2014.

Nonetheless, we remain concerned that, eight years after the establishment of the Fact-Finding Mission, only a small fraction of the numerous pending issues related to Syria's initial declaration have been resolved. It is also worrying to see the difficulties encountered by the experts to gain access on the ground, not only

because of the coronavirus disease pandemic, but also the difficulties related to the issuance of entry visas by the Syrian authorities.

We believe that it is crucial to support the OPCW's efforts and to encourage continued cooperation between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian National Authority in order to find solutions to the outstanding issues.

Finally, we welcome the Tripartite Agreement signed between the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Syrian Government, allowing the extension for a period of six more months of a more constructive collaboration, we hope, and we reiterate our support for the OPCW.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, at the outset I sincerely congratulate you on Norway's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. I wish you every success in managing the business of the Council. I also thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing.

Since this is the first time that I speak as a member of the Security Council, I am pleased to emphasize that the United Arab Emirates will spare no effort during its membership to shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, hoping that together we can meet the aspirations of all the peoples of the world. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Member States that joined the Council. I wish every success to all of us during the upcoming period. I would like as well to thank all members of the Council for their welcoming statements.

Regarding our topic today on the chemical dossier in the Syrian Arab Republic, I would like to focus on the following aspects.

First, it is important to stress that our fundamental responsibility and ultimate goal is to protect humankind from the horrible effects caused by the use of chemical weapons. We recall that this responsibility is at the core of the Chemical Weapons Convention, for the sake of all humankind and with a view to completely excluding the possibility of the use of chemical weapons. In this regard, we stress the principled position of the United Arab Emirates, which rejects and clearly condemns the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances,

by anyone and anywhere, as it constitutes a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Convention and international law. It also constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security.

Secondly, making tangible progress in this dossier requires, in principle, non-politicization of this issue and a willingness to engage in constructive dialogue. From that standpoint, the United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of communication and dialogue between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and Syria in order to discuss and identify ways to move forward on this dossier. In that context, my country calls on the relevant parties to work together on the basis of the principles establishing the technical nature of the OPCW, including consensus and non-politicization, and to facilitate the visit of the Declaration Assessment Team of the organization to Syria.

Thirdly, chemical weapons must be completely eliminated, and no one can have access to them or use them, inside or outside Syria. The risk of such weapons falling into the wrong hands, such as the terrorist Da'esh organization or other criminal groups, is extremely worrying and could have grave repercussions on the stability and security of Syria and the world at large. Accordingly, we stress the need to continue working with States parties and the OPCW to eliminate that threat completely. We also stress the importance of continuing to combat the terrorist Da'esh organization and of further intensifying efforts to prevent it from rebuilding its ranks and combat capabilities and acquiring and using chemical weapons.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates emphasizes the importance of making progress on the chemical dossier, in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013), and on all the issues related to resolving the Syrian crisis.

Dame Barbara Woodward: (United Kingdom): I join others in welcoming you, Madam President, to the presidency and assuring you of our full support. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to our colleagues from Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates. We look forward to working with them.

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her briefing and the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for his monthly report (see S/2021/1103). I agree that, as we enter a new year,

this meeting is an opportunity to review the facts and progress on this long-running agenda item.

Prior to the start of the conflict in 2011, Syria had an extensive chemical-weapons programme. In 2013, following several chemical-weapons attacks, including the large-scale attack in Ghouta in August of that year, the Security Council adopted resolution 2118 (2013), requiring Syria to cooperate fully with the OPCW on the expeditious destruction of its chemical-weapons programme.

Yet, despite international cooperation on the destruction of chemical-weapons stocks declared by Syria in 2013, it subsequently became clear that Syria had retained a chemical-weapons capability, in contravention of resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Further chemical weapons attacks took place. And thorough OPCW and joint United Nations-OPCW expert investigations have confirmed that the Syrian regime used chemical weapons, including chlorine and sarin, on at least eight occasions through the conflict. Those regime attacks have killed and injured hundreds of innocent people. The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant terrorist group was found to have used them on three occasions.

Now over eight years since Syria joined the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW Director-General's monthly reports, of which there are now almost 100, confirm there remain 20 unresolved issues with Syria's initial declaration. Those are not minor or technical issues but include the undeclared production and weaponization of toxic chemicals and the unknown whereabouts of significant quantities of chemical-warfare agents and munitions.

Over the past 12 months, Syria's failure to meet its obligations has continued. Syria has repeatedly refused to issue visas for OPCW personnel, made no serious effort to meet Technical Secretariat experts and shown a total disregard for decisions of the OPCW Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties.

Over the past eight years, accountability and effective Council action to uphold resolution 2118 (2013) has been blocked by the use and threat of use of the veto and by a concerted disinformation campaign to malign and undermine the OPCW and its findings.

In 2022, therefore, let us put aside narrow political motivations and unite behind the full implementation

of resolution 2118 (2013). That means ensuring the complete and verified destruction of Syria's chemical-weapons programme and holding accountable those who have used such weapons. Only then will we be able to stop the proliferation of chemical weapons and send a message that their use is unacceptable.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, as I take the floor for the first time in the Security Council, I would like to congratulate you for assuming the presidency of the Council during the month of January and assure you of our full support in the implementation of a rich and ambitious work programme.

I thank all my colleagues for their warm messages of welcome to my country and the other new members of the Council. I would also like to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for the insights she provided.

We have just heard that the observation made in this Chamber by several Council members less than a month ago (see S/PV.8921) remains the same: the Syrian authorities do not wish to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) on the complete and verifiable elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme. We deplore this attitude.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat remains of the view that at this stage, due to identified shortcomings and inconsistencies as well as unresolved discrepancies, the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In April 2021, the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention decided to suspend Syria. As a member of the OPCW Executive Council since November 2021, Albania can only agree to consent to the restoration of Syria's rights and privileges once the OPCW Director-General reports that Syria has complied with all requests. We have just heard again today that this is not at all the case.

In this regard, we reiterate the importance and urgency of Syria fully cooperating with the Technical Secretariat. Syria must respond in a clear and unambiguous manner and can neither choose the inspectors nor which obligations it must fulfil. Any attempt to politicize the OPCW's work would only serve to delay Syria's implementation of resolution 2118

(2013) and thereby deny the OPCW's noble mission as guardian of the Convention whose goal is a world without chemical weapons. The swift conclusion of investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria will allow the Council to more effectively support the Syrian people in their quest for a peaceful future.

Albania reiterates the strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor under any circumstances, considering it a serious violation of international law and demands that all those who use or have used chemical weapons be identified and held accountable. To this end, the Security Council must maintain its strong and clear message of respect for the international ban on chemical weapons and ensure that these weapons are never used again, not in Syria or elsewhere. This is our way of assuming moral responsibility for the victims of chemical warfare.

Finally, Albania will continue to support the Syrian people in the pursuit of their future in peace and justice and hopes that the voice of the Syrians will be heard.

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

I would like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing on the progress towards the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

The international prohibition against the use of chemical weapons must remain a top priority for the Security Council. We reiterate our strong condemnation of any use of chemical weapons at any time, by anyone. As we usher in a new year, let us be clear in saying that we owe it to the victims to ensure that there can be no impunity for chemical-weapons attacks.

Moving to the recent report by the Director-General, we are encouraged by two positive developments that we would like to highlight. First, we welcome the deployment of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) between 28 November and 10 December 2021. The mission's efforts to collect information and conduct interviews in relation to several incidents that took place in 2017 in the Hama governorate are crucial for ensuring accountability. Similarly, we are pleased to note that, also this past December, the Technical Secretariat conducted the eighth round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre .

After many months without inspections or missions to collect information, we hope this recent engagement will foster a new spirit of progress on this dossier for 2022. We look forward to their reports to the Council. Yet, in order to fully implement resolution 2118 (2013), there remain numerous roadblocks to overcome and issues that require immediate attention.

These include the persistent delays in the issuance of visas to the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), which must be addressed. I would like to underline Syria's obligation to cooperate fully with the OPCW. Resolution 2118 (2013) explicitly mentions Syria's obligation to accept personnel designated by the OPCW and to provide these personnel with immediate and unfettered access and the right to inspect any and all sites.

That brings me to my next point. The OPCW has requested further information about a reported attack on a former chemical-weapons production facility that apparently contained equipment of relevance to an ongoing OPCW investigation. The OPCW has also requested a declaration of all undeclared types and quantities of nerve agents produced and/or weaponized at a certain former chemical-weapons production facility. It is vital that Syria comply with these requests.

Similarly, 20 outstanding issues from Syria's initial declaration remain unresolved. We urge Syria to provide sufficient technical information and explanations to close these outstanding issues.

Finally, it is critical that Syria completes the necessary measures to lift the suspension of its rights and privileges as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Let me conclude by underlining that cooperation is essential for settling all unresolved issues and finally achieving this eight-year-long effort to ensure the full elimination of the Syrian chemical-weapons programme.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I wish again to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

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

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Madam President, at the outset I congratulate

you on assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. Rest assured, Madam, that we stand ready to work with you and provide you with updates on the latest developments in the situation in Syria. I also congratulate the members who joined the Council at the beginning of this year.

The participation today of the five new members for the first time in the Council meeting on the Syrian chemical dossier prompts us to recall some of the main elements of the issue.

First, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, anytime, by anyone and under any circumstances. We stress that, despite the serious challenges faced by the Syrian Arab Army and its allies as a result of the crimes committed by terrorist organizations and their sponsors, we have never used any type of these prohibited weapons or any toxic chemicals.

Secondly, the Syrian State decided in 2013 to join the Chemical Weapons Convention. We have cooperated with the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to eliminate our stocks of chemical weapons and production facilities. We completed that process in record time and in unprecedented manner in mid-2014, as confirmed by the reports of the relevant organization.

Thirdly, while the Syrian Government has cooperated with the OPCW and fulfilled its obligations under the Convention, some Western countries have fabricated lies and waged a disinformation campaign while applying pressure in order to adopt resolutions and establish illegal mechanisms, such as the Investigation and Identification Team, which is a clear politicization and distortion of the technical work of the OPCW and another example of the hostile policies adopted against Syria by the same Western countries. As a consequence of those practices, the reports of the Technical Secretariat and its teams have become part and parcel of the hostile campaign against Syria, thereby undermining the work of the organization, the credibility of its reports and the professionalism of its teams.

Fourthly, on 10 December 2021, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria sent a letter to the OPCW Director-General, explaining the position of the Syrian Government with regard to the reports of the Technical Secretariat and the inaccurate information contained therein, which have become the foundation

and the pretext of the baseless accusations made within the OPCW decision-making bodies against Syria. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs noted the letter that I sent her explaining our concerns. In his letter, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates emphasized that, despite our disappointment with the OPCW's mistaken and unbalanced approach, Syria would continue to cooperate constructively with the Technical Secretariat and its teams.

With regard to the latest developments pertaining to the cooperation between Syria and the OPCW since the previous discussion in the Council (see S/PV.8921), the focal points on the two sides are continuing with preparations for the meeting between the Foreign Minister and the OPCW Director-General to agree on an agenda to discuss all issues between the two sides comprehensively and objectively. The Tripartite Agreement has been extended for six months, to 30 June. Syria presented its ninety-seventh monthly report on 16 December 2021. The Syrian Government facilitated the eighth round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre during the period from 10 to 17 December 2021. The Syrian Government also facilitated the visit of the Fact-Finding Mission before the end of 2021 to complete the investigations into the incidents that occurred in Hama governorate in 2017. The investigations have yet to be completed, although it has been five years since terrorist organizations used chemical weapons there. That raises the following questions.

Why are the investigations on the use of chemical weapons by terrorist groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Al-Nusra Front, lagging? Why would some cover up those incidents, although they were confirmed in United Nations reports? The pre-conclusion contained in the statement of the United States of America on those investigations, even before any report about them has been issued, clearly demonstrates the politicization of the issue and the misinformation surrounding this dossier. It exposes those who are trying to jump to conclusions and cast false accusations.

Concerning the visit by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to hold the twenty-fifth round of consultations, my delegation recalls that the Syrian Government welcomed the announcement of the visit by the DAT, and we have asked for one of its members to be replaced. We also welcomed the proposal to hold the meeting at The Hague. However, the meeting did

not take place, as the Technical Secretariat did not fund it. I therefore find it strange that my colleague the representative of the United States said that Syria refused to attend the meeting.

My delegation reiterates that the DAT was established to assist the Syrian Government. It is not an investigative team. It does not have the mandate to evaluate any information. Syria did not impede any of the 24 rounds of consultations held over eight years. My delegation considers that the information contained in the latest report of the Director-General (see S/2021/1103) that corrects the information contained in the previous report (see S/2021/989) concerning the issuance of visas to members of the DAT, and the clarification that the issue is related to only one member and not the entire team, demonstrates that the information provided by Syria is accurate and credible. The two teams of the Technical Secretariat to which I referred to earlier visited Syria within less than one month. That is a conclusive evidence about the significant cooperation between Syria and the OPCW. It also undoubtedly refutes the accusations that Syria is impeding the work of the Technical Secretariat, especially by refusing to issue visas to its members.

With regard to references about two chlorine cylinders related to the alleged Douma incident, my country rejects all attempts to divert attention from the Israeli aggression on one of the declared facilities that led to the destruction of the two cylinders, which provided physical evidence. Syria stresses that Israel's claim of responsibility for the attack, which was confirmed by its Minister for Intelligence and multiple media reports, must condemn Israel and subject it to accountability, not only for that attack but for all other attacks on Syria's sovereignty, including the most recent attack, on the commercial port of Latakia a few days ago, and for its occupation of the Syrian Golan and its continued illegal settlement activities.

In conclusion, Syria reiterates its rejection of all attempts to question the Syrian initial declaration or its cooperation with the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat. We condemn all baseless accusations based on erroneous information and attempts to jump to conclusions based on misinterpretation and probabilities in the absence of physical evidence. Syria has reiterated that some of the technical issues that have been discussed by the Syrian National Authority and the Technical Secretariat are subject to multiple

scientific interpretations. They must be discussed and examined. They cannot be settled hastily or selectively.

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

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Madam President, for presiding over the Security Council this month. We wish every success to the new members of the Council.

We reiterate our long-standing and principled position in strongly condemning the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. The only absolute guarantee that chemical weapons will never be used again is their total destruction and elimination worldwide, as well as taking all the necessary measures to ensure that such weapons will not be produced and used in the future.

That indeed is the prime objective of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which can be realized only through its full, balanced, effective and non-discriminatory implementation, as well as its universality. It is a source of serious concern that, as a result of non-compliance by the United States — as the only remaining possessor State party — with its obligations concerning the final extended deadline for the destruction of chemical weapons, that objective has yet to materialize. Another obstacle in that regard is the lack of the Convention's universality. In order to achieve that noble objective, the Israeli regime must be compelled to join the Convention without any precondition or further delay.

We once again warn about the serious impacts of the politicization of the implementation of the Convention on its authority and credibility, and therefore call for the depoliticization of the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). State Parties must avoid exploiting the organization to further politically motivated national objectives.

In that context, while significant efforts have been made by the Syrian Government to implement its obligations under the Convention — including the complete destruction, in the least possible time and under severe conditions, of all its 27 chemical-weapon production facilities, as verified by the OPCW — the holding of monthly Council meetings to consider the Syrian file has no justification. Instead of contributing to the objectives of the Convention, such meetings undermine the Convention's authority and the OPCW's

credibility. Moreover, they further deepen the trust and confidence deficit in the Security Council.

We welcome the submission by Syria of its ninety-seventh monthly report on its activities related to the destruction of chemical weapons and their production facilities. We also note the recent finalization of a six-month extension of the Tripartite Agreement between the United Nations Office for Project Services, the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Islamic Republic of Iran once again calls for ensuring the independent, impartial and professional work of the OPCW.

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

Mr. Keçeli (Turkey): At the outset, we wish to congratulate you, Madam, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. We also commend the new members of the Council and wish them success.

We thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

There is one clear takeaway from the ninety-ninth monthly report (see S/2021/1103) of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), namely, that the Al-Assad regime continues to violate its obligations. The OPCW cannot confirm that the chemical weapons declaration presented by the Syrian regime is accurate and complete.

Despite repeated calls, the Al-Assad regime fails to provide information that would help to uncover the true nature and scope of its chemical weapons programme. The declaration is full of inconsistencies, identified gaps and discrepancies. Indeed, there are at least 20 outstanding issues in the regime's declaration.

In that context, the discovery of a chemical-weapon production facility in Syria further deepens our concern. The regime's refusal to provide information on that site is a flagrant violation of its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). Moreover, the Al-Assad regime must still account for the unauthorized movement of two chlorine cylinders related to the Douma chemical attack.

The non-issuance of visas for Technical Secretariat officials is yet another concrete example of the regime's non-compliance. That pattern of behaviour is unacceptable and requires a strong message from the Council. Therefore, we once again call on the

Security Council to act in unity to achieve the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

Turkey strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances. Throughout the Syrian conflict, the Al-Assad regime has repeatedly used chemical weapons against its own people. The audacity of the Al-Assad regime demonstrates the grave consequences of impunity, yet its track record continues to grow to this day.

We once again remind those who embolden the Al-Assad regime of their responsibility under the

Charter of the United Nations. We cannot turn our backs on the innocent civilians in Syria, who have suffered unimaginable horrors, whose lungs have been ravaged by chemical weapons and whose children deserve a future free from fear. Turkey will continue to support efforts to end impunity, as that is an essential prerequisite for justice and lasting peace in Syria.

We repeat our support for the objective, impartial and professional investigations conducted by the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.