



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9411th meeting

Thursday, 7 September 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Dautllari	(Albania)
<i>Members:</i>	Brazil	Mr. Moretti
	China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
	Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Ms. Betoe Ndojombouet
	Ghana	Mr. Boateng
	Japan	Mr. Kitada
	Malta	Mr. Camilleri
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	Russian Federation	Mr. Glukhov
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Azzam
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Phipps
	United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 28 August 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/637)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 28 August 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/637)

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite 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/2023/637, which contains the text of a letter dated 28 August 2023 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

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

Since the Council's previous consideration of this matter (see S/PV.9372), and consistent with established practice, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been in regular contact with its counterparts at the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on activities related to resolution 2118 (2013). Since then, the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) has continued its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration and subsequent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic.

As previously reported, the last round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority took place in February 2021. Since then, all efforts to organize the next — the twenty-fifth — round

of consultations have been unsuccessful. I have been advised that, although the Syrian Arab Republic agreed to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's May 2022 proposal to address the declaration-related issues through an exchange of correspondence, the Technical Secretariat has yet to receive from the Syrian Arab Republic any declarations or other documents requested. That includes the complete declaration of activities at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) and the declaration of quantities of nerve agents produced at one chemical weapons production facility that was declared by the Syrian Arab Republic as never having been used to produce chemical weapons.

Due to this situation, and in a further attempt to implement its mandate, the OPCW Technical Secretariat deployed a reduced team comprised of several members of the DAT to the Syrian Arab Republic to conduct limited in-country activities. The first such deployment took place from 17 to 22 January, and the second took place from 12 to 19 April. The outcomes of the deployments were reported to States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in March and July, respectively.

As the Council was previously informed, a delegation from the Technical Secretariat met with representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic in Beirut on 22 and 23 June. At that meeting, the OPCW Technical Secretariat emphasized its priority of the resumption of rounds of consultations, which would include all experts designated by the Technical Secretariat. In that regard, I understand that the matter was to be referred to the head of the Syrian National Authority and that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is awaiting that decision in order to proceed with planning for the next round of consultations.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat remains fully committed to implementing its mandate, aimed at verifying the fulfilment of the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, decisions by OPCW policymaking organs and, of course, resolution 2118 (2013). However, as has been previously emphasized, full cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat is essential to closing all outstanding issues. Considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved, at this time the OPCW Technical Secretariat assesses that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

With regard to the inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the SSRC, I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat continues to plan the next round of inspections, to be held in 2023. I regret to inform the Council 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.

In addition, I have been informed that during the ninth round of inspections at the Barzah facility of the SSRC in September 2022, the inspection team observed a number of boxes containing a chemical of a dual-use nature, stored in large quantities at the facility's chemical storage warehouse. Following the inspection, the OPCW Technical Secretariat engaged the Syrian National Authority on the matter and requested information that would allow it to assess that all activities conducted therein are for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. The OPCW Technical Secretariat has also requested information regarding the unauthorized movement of the two cylinders related to the chemical weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018, which were allegedly destroyed in an attack on a chemical weapons production facility.

I have been advised that the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission continues to study all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. I understand that the Fact-Finding Mission is currently preparing upcoming deployments and will report to the Executive Council on the results of its work in due course. The Investigation and Identification Team also continues its investigations into incidents in which the Fact-Finding Mission has determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic and will issue further reports in due course.

Two weeks ago, on 21 August, the world marked the tenth anniversary of the large-scale chemical weapons attack that took place in the Ghouta district of Damascus. In remembering that horrible incident, the United Nations pays its respects to the victims of the attack, which resulted in numerous casualties, particularly among civilians and including many children.

As the Secretary-General has stated before, any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and a clear violation of international law. We have a responsibility,

particularly to the victims, to identify those responsible and ensure accountability for the use of those heinous weapons. The United Nations will continue to support all efforts to uphold the norm against chemical weapons and to relegate those dreadful weapons to history.

I urge the members of the Council to unite on the issue and show leadership in demonstrating that impunity in the use of chemical weapons will not be tolerated. 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.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I want to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing today. I would also like to thank the teams at the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for the steadfast leadership and exceptional work they bring to this critical issue each day.

Syria continues to flagrantly flout its obligations to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Syria continues to defy numerous Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2118 (2013). It has grown clear that the Al-Assad regime believes it can continue to operate with impunity, despite the objective and evidence-based record of its chemical weapons attacks.

Syria acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention in October 2013, a decade ago next month. In doing so, it accepted, as all signatory States parties, to be bound by the Convention's obligations, including: first, never to produce, develop, acquire, stockpile or use chemical weapons; secondly, to submit timely, accurate and complete declarations of its chemical weapons and facilities; and thirdly, to cooperate with the OPCW in the exercise of all its functions and provide assistance to the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

Yet, 10 years after it undertook those obligations by ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention, Syria continues to make false statements and flout the authority of the Security Council. Time and again, the OPCW has found that the regime's declarations regarding its chemical weapons programme, as Director-General Arias succinctly puts it, still cannot be considered accurate and complete. Moreover, the

Al-Assad regime continues to deny OPCW personnel the unfettered access it is obligated to provide per the Council's decision. The Al-Assad regime has displayed such obstruction for nearly a full decade, during which time the OPCW and, before Russia's Security Council veto dissolved the body, the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism had found the regime responsible for nine separate chemical weapons attacks against its own people that occurred following Syria's accession to the CWC.

With full knowledge of that duplicity, Russia continues to shield the Al-Assad regime from appropriate oversight by the Security Council, depriving the Council of its ability to promote international peace and security by holding Al-Assad to account for his despicable actions. In that regard, I note with particular concern that for the second consecutive month, two permanent members of the Council have indicated that they will not even participate in our discussion of an issue of this seriousness.

Despite Russia's intransigence and Syria's deceit, the United States continues and will continue to raise the issue in the Council. We will continue to call on Syria to comply with its CWC obligations and its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013). We will continue to seek briefings by the Under-Secretary-General on the status of those efforts, and we call on other Council members to do the same.

Despite the efforts of Syria and Russia to impugn the credibility and professional work of the OPCW and distract us from the gravity of the issue, we commend the OPCW's investigations of chemical weapons use in Syria. We continue to be impressed by the rigour the OPCW brings to each of its investigative efforts, meticulously collecting and analysing evidence from a multitude of sources to reach irrefutable conclusions. That important work is necessary so that those responsible for the attacks can be held to account. There can be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons. Anything less would be turning a blind eye to a regime that has chosen to manufacture, stockpile and, even more horrifically, use chemical weapons repeatedly against its own people.

The United States remains committed to holding to account those responsible for Syria's repeated use of chemical weapons in violation of its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention. We will continue to press for progress

both at the OPCW and in other relevant United Nations forums, while continuing to raise the issue here at the Security Council. We keep pushing on this issue because we remember the victims and survivors of the horrific attacks by the Al-Assad regime. We will continue to seek justice for the victims of the attacks and to remind our fellow Council members that it is our duty as members of the Council to do our part by remaining seized of this issue and demanding, at long last, real steps to end a serious chemical threat.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her briefing.

We are meeting once again because the Syrian regime has used weapons of mass destruction against its own population. Independent reports from the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have established that on nine occasions. In January, the OPCW confirmed that the Syrian air force deliberately dropped two barrels of chlorine on residential buildings in the Douma area, resulting in the deaths of 43 people. Last month marked the tenth anniversary of the chemical massacre carried out by the Syrian regime on 21 August 2013 in the Ghouta area of Damascus, which claimed more than 1,400 lives. Almost 10 years after the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), in defiance of its international obligations, the Syrian regime has still not relayed all the information related to the status of its chemical-weapon stockpiles. We know, however, that they have not been completely destroyed, as evidenced by their use by the Syrian regime since 2013, which the OPCW has documented.

The Syrian regime continues to obstruct the work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. The latest report by the Organization's Director-General, issued in late August (see S/2023/637), attests to that once again. The OPCW continues to await a response from the regime so that it can finally organize the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the initial Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian authorities. I would like to remind the Council that the previous round of consultations took place in February 2021, that is to say, more than two and a half years ago. Furthermore, it is unacceptable that the regime continues to impose restrictions on the deployment of OPCW personnel in Syria. The OPCW must be able to fully implement its mandate, and the limited deployment of members of the Declaration Assessment Team is not a viable solution. Next month, 14 October marks the tenth anniversary of

Syria's accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is imperative that Syria stop obstructing the work of the OPCW and comply with its obligations if it wants to regain its rights and privileges under the Convention. Despite those obstacles, France would like to pay tribute once again to the tenacity of the Technical Secretariat's teams and their efforts to independently and professionally carry out their work.

Lastly, I would like to remind everyone that the regime's use of chemical weapons against civilian populations constitutes war crimes and crimes against humanity. The international community cannot accept impunity in such circumstances. The fight against impunity is the cornerstone of the effectiveness and credibility of the chemical-weapon ban's regime, and France will therefore continue to work resolutely with its partners to that end.

Mr. Moretti (Brazil): I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing today.

As we have done in the past, we have read the latest report (see S/2023/637) of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) closely and have been unable to identify any new information for the reporting period. We are therefore forced to reiterate our suggestion that we reconsider the frequency of these meetings.

In the absence of new developments, Brazil reaffirms that 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. As always, Brazil firmly condemns the development, storage and use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, in any circumstances. Incidents must be addressed with transparency and subject to thorough and impartial investigations, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We continue to support action-oriented engagement between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic as the only path towards resolving all outstanding issues in the Syria chemical-weapon file.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I would like to begin my statement by extending Mozambique's warmest congratulations to Albania on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of September. We are also grateful to the United States for its

excellent presidency. We thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing on the implementation of the elimination of the Syrian chemical-weapon programme. We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Türkiye, and commend the Secretary-General on the monthly report on the activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (see S/2023/637), in compliance with resolution 2118 (2013), covering the period from 24 July to 23 August 2023.

We reiterate our firm belief that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and in any circumstances is to be condemned. Impunity for such a heinous crime under international law is unacceptable. While acknowledging some positive inputs for the reporting period, we believe that our continuing concerns are justified, considering that the document under consideration illustrates no meaningful new steps forward to ensure the complete elimination of the chemical-weapon programme. In that regard, Mozambique regrets that the efforts to convene the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian National Authority have not materialized. We reiterate our support for the continued efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial and subsequent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic.

We are convinced that efforts by the Syrian Arab Republic and United Nations bodies will continue to be deployed, aimed at building confidence and providing the necessary impetus to advance the various aspects of the programme.

Mozambique remains committed to the imperative against the use of chemical weapons and all efforts to eliminate their production, storage or use. We reiterate our support for resolution 2118 (2013).

Mr. Phipps (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking Director-General Fernando Arias of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for his most recent monthly report (see S/2023/637) and the OPCW Declaration and Assessment Team for their tireless efforts to resolve the outstanding issues in Syria's chemical weapons declaration. I would also like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing today.

As Mrs. Nakamitsu and others have said, 10 years ago, in the early hours of 21 August 2013, Bashar Al-Assad's forces used sarin against the people of Ghouta. More than 1,000 people were killed, many of whom were women and children. The resulting United Nations mission report (S/2013/553) described the attack as the most significant confirmed use of chemical weapons against civilians since Saddam Hussein used them in Halabja, Iraq, in 1988. The Council expressed its outrage, condemned the killing of civilians and affirmed that any use of chemical weapons constitutes a serious violation of international law. Collectively, we called for accountability. Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) was subsequently adopted unanimously.

That resolution condemned chemical weapons use in Syria and endorsed the implementation of the OPCW Executive Council's decision, setting out steps for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme. It was clear that the Syrian Arab Republic should not use, develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons. It compelled Syria to cooperate fully with the OPCW and the United Nations, including by providing personnel designated by the OPCW with immediate and unfettered access to any and all sites that the OPCW had grounds to believe to be of importance for the purpose of its mandate.

Ten years later, the provisions of resolution 2118 (2013) have still not been met. As others have said today, there have been nine further confirmed chemical weapons attacks by the Syrian regime.

Next month will mark 10 years since Syria acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is a moment for all of us around this table to reflect on our responsibility for the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). We should discuss how we can move forward in support of the OPCW's efforts to resolve the outstanding inconsistencies in Syria's declaration. We owe that to the victims of the attack in Ghouta and of all chemical weapons attacks — including the attack carried out by Russia five years ago in Salisbury, United Kingdom, which resulted in the death of a British national, Dawn Sturgess.

Syria's chemical weapons will remain a threat to international peace and security until they have been fully and verifiably destroyed by the OPCW.

Mr. Azzam (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing today.

I would like to reaffirm the United Arab Emirates' rejection and explicit condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. Their use constitutes a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law.

In the absence of tangible progress on the Syrian chemical weapons file, I reiterate what my country said about this file in our previous meetings.

Maintaining dialogue between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and Syria remains crucial to making progress on the file, but such dialogue must be conducted in a constructive manner and includes discussing all available means for holding the twenty-fifth round of consultations and overcoming related obstacles.

Meanwhile, we stress that the threats of chemical terrorism are concerns that cannot be overlooked and must be given sufficient attention. That is critical as the Da'esh organization continues its terrorist attacks and does not hesitate to use any means to achieve its goals, posing a serious threat to the security and stability of Syria and the entire region. In that context, we express our concern about the attacks that Da'esh continues to launch in north-eastern Syria, in addition to its efforts to rebuild its capabilities and networks, recruit fighters and release its elements from prisons. We stress the need to continue combating that group and to ensure that it does not acquire dangerous and deadly weapons.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reiterates the importance of making tangible progress on the Syrian chemical weapons file, as well as on all other files related to resolving the Syrian crisis.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): As Switzerland takes the floor in its national capacity for the first time this month, I wish, like my colleague from Mozambique, to express our gratitude to the United States delegation for having guided the Council's work in August. I also wish to assure you, Madam President, of our full support during your presidency.

Almost 10 years ago, as others have mentioned, Syria acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. As the High Representative — whom I wish to thank for her briefing — has just reminded us, its accession came just a few weeks after the large-scale use of such weapons in the suburbs of Damascus, in particular against civilians, including children. It constitutes one of the most devastating examples of the use of chemical weapons.

Over the past 10 years, obligations under the Convention have been violated on several occasions, and some 25 chemical attacks documented by the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have taken place in Syria. The missions and mechanisms of those organizations have concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that nine of those attacks are attributable to the Syrian Government. Among its obligations as a State party to the Convention, Syria must provide full cooperation to the OPCW. The Security Council unanimously reaffirmed that obligation in resolution 2118 (2013), which was also adopted 10 years ago.

As the High Representative has just informed us, despite recent contacts — notably in Beirut in June — the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team is still waiting to be able to deploy its full workforce to Syria and to organize the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the Syrian authorities. Switzerland calls for those consultations to be held as soon as possible. We also call on Syria to provide answers to the 20 points left unresolved in its initial declaration. Those outstanding answers constitute one of the conditions for Syria to regain its rights and privileges as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. Providing those answers is also an obligation to the Council.

Switzerland would like to reiterate its full confidence in the OPCW and its support for all its missions. Their work is fundamental, and their integrity and professionalism are beyond doubt. Since the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), the regular meetings of the Council have served as a reminder of a central issue: preventing the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and ensuring their transfer and destruction. Switzerland therefore calls on all parties to the conflict to refrain from using such weapons and to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Adopted 10 years ago, resolution 2118 (2013) reminds us that “those individuals responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic should be held accountable”. Their impunity remains unacceptable to this day.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, the High Representative of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing. We regret that once again the Security Council has made no progress on the issue of chemical weapons in

the Syrian Arab Republic. As we have said before, any incident involving the use of chemical weapons must be addressed with absolute transparency and thoroughly investigated, in accordance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Ecuador recognizes the efforts of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), through its Declaration Assessment Team, to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration and subsequent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic. We call once again on the Syrian authorities to cooperate with the OPCW and its technical teams by submitting all the information required to clarify the gaps that have been identified as soon as possible, in accordance with the norms of international law that require them to do so.

In the wake of the meetings held in Beirut in June, we also urge that the Syrian Arab Republic submit a favourable response to the proposal of the OPCW Technical Secretariat for organizing a twenty-fifth round of consultations, as that is the best mechanism for obtaining results with regard the Syrian chemical-weapon file and is an opportunity to work together. Putting the proposal into action would be a positive step towards ensuring accountability and proper compliance by the Syrian Arab Republic with its obligations under the Convention, the decisions of the OPCW and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, within a framework of common understanding through dialogue and transparency.

In conclusion, Ecuador reiterates its rejection of the production and stockpiling of chemical weapons and condemns in the strongest terms their use by anyone, against anyone, anywhere and in any circumstances.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I too would like to begin by congratulating Albania on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and thanking the United States for steering the Council's work for the month of August. I also thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her informative briefing today.

The most recent report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2023/637), shows once again that no progress has been made on the file. Regrettably, the Technical Secretariat's efforts to organize a twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian National Authority have still

not succeeded. We also note that no advances were recorded on the 20 outstanding issues. The declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic therefore still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). The lack of progress is deplorable, and Syria bears complete responsibility for it. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat, including by granting full access to its personnel, and to submit all the requested documents and declarations, in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013).

Malta remains extremely concerned about the repeated baseless assertions intended to undermine the credibility of the OPCW and cast doubt on its findings. The Council should address and rebut them decisively. We reaffirm our full support to the Technical Secretariat and its technical teams, which carry out their mandates independently and impartially and in accordance with the highest international standards. The OPCW, including through its Investigation and Identification Team, the Fact-Finding Mission and the Declaration Assessment Team, plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the global prohibition of chemical weapons and in ensuring the complete elimination of all chemical weapons in Syria.

Independent OPCW and joint United Nations-OPCW investigations have concluded that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons against its own people nine times. Malta strongly condemns those attacks. There can never be a justification for the use of chemical weapons, and the Council and the international community must never look the other way when confronted with such reprehensible acts. Nor can we forget that in 2013 the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013), establishing that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable. We stress that the use of those weapons cannot and must not go unpunished.

In conclusion, we reiterate our full support to the OPCW and our condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor in any circumstances. We remain firm in our belief that the global norm on the prohibition of chemical weapons, as mandated by the Convention, must be universal.

Mr. Kitada (Japan): As this is the first time I take the floor this month, I too would like to congratulate the United States on its successful presidency of the

Security Council in August and to wish Albania all the best for this month. I would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her detailed and insightful briefing.

It is truly regrettable that we have not witnessed tangible progress on the Syria chemical-weapon file since our previous meeting on this issue (see S/PV.9372). In September 2013, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013). As this month marks 10 years since its adoption, we would like to stress one simple thing. Syria should comply fully and faithfully with that resolution, and the Council should not remain silent about its non-compliance. Resolution 2118 (2013) prohibits Syria from using, developing, producing, otherwise acquiring, stockpiling or retaining chemical weapons. However, since then, on a total of nine occasions, independent, impartial expert bodies have repeatedly found that the Syrian Arab Republic was responsible for the use of chemical weapons. Regarding the horrific use of chemical weapons that occurred in Douma, Japan once again condemns the Syrian Government's use of chemical weapons, as concluded in the third report of the Investigation and Identification Team.

Resolution 2118 (2013) also decided that Syria should cooperate fully with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and comply with all aspects of the OPCW Executive Council decision of 27 September 2013, including by accepting personnel designated by the OPCW or the United Nations and providing them with immediate and unfettered access to and the right to inspect any and all chemical-weapon sites. Nevertheless, as is described in the OPCW's most recent monthly report (see S/2023/637), Syria has not provided any of the declarations or documents requested by the OPCW Technical Secretariat to enable it to resolve the outstanding issues. Syria's refusal to issue a visa to the Declaration Assessment Team's lead technical expert is another regrettable example of its non-cooperation with the OPCW.

Japan once again calls on all Council members to urge the Syrian Government to fully comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013), including by completely dismantling its chemical-weapon programme. We should let the Council do its job before we witness another victim of chemical weapons in Syria.

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

I thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her briefing.

It is deplorable that the Syrian regime continues to refuse to fully cooperate with the international community regarding its chemical-weapon programme. It is time for Syria to understand that it must fully declare and destroy that programme in a transparent and verifiable manner. There is no other alternative for Syria than to fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), in compliance with resolution 2118 (2013) adopted unanimously by the Council. Unfortunately, the 119th monthly report of the Director-General of the OPCW (see S/2023/637) once again confirms Syria's position in that regard.

Since September 2022, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has provided the Syrian Arab Republic with the list of pending declarations and other documents requested by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). There are 20 outstanding issues that need to be clarified. Thus far, the Syrian Arab Republic has refused to do it, in violation of resolution 2118 (2013). We regret the fact that, due to the uncooperative position taken by the Syrian regime, the DAT has had to deploy a reduced team to carry out limited activities in the country. At the same time, we are waiting for the next round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority. Syria continues to create artificial obstacles, such as the refusal to issue a visa to the DAT's lead technical expert since April 2021. That is unacceptable.

The rounds of consultation should resume as soon as possible and should include all experts designated by the Technical Secretariat. Albania condemns Syria's blocking policy and calls on Syrian national authorities to fully comply with its international commitments.

In that regard, we would like to highlight the work of the Office of the Investigation and Identification Team and its reports, which identify the perpetrators of the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria. We fully endorse the findings of its reports — that the Al-Assad regime is responsible for the deadly chemical-weapons attack on Douma on 7 April 2018.

Albania commends the work of the OPCW, which verifies facts with objectivity, impartiality, independence and professionalism. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable

anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances. Albania stresses the importance of the Security Council taking responsibility for implementing its own resolutions. In that context, these regular meetings are a necessity. Impunity for those who have used chemical weapons can never be an option.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, my delegation expresses its great astonishment at the insistence on holding this briefing in the light of the lack of developments. We also wonder what added value there could be from mentioning, in this briefing, activities that took place months ago, namely, in January and April. This approach is a clear waste of the Security Council's time and resources.

Second, my delegation categorically rejects the false accusations, defamation and abuse campaigns levelled by some countries, with the United States at the forefront, against my country in the context of their attempts to cover up the heinous crimes they have committed against the Syrian people — primarily military occupation of Syrian territories, the theft of Syria's national resources and the imposition of illegal and inhuman coercive measures.

Third, my delegation reiterates the Syrian Arab Republic's condemnation of the use of chemical weapons at any time, anywhere, by whomever and under any circumstances. We emphasize that the Syrian Arab Republic has fulfilled its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Fourth, my delegation affirms my country's full commitment to cooperating with the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). My country submits its monthly reports on a regular basis and affirms its readiness to hold the twenty-fifth round of consultations of the Declaration Assessment Team as soon as possible in a manner that will help close the outstanding issues. We are also ready to hold the high-level meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, who is the Chairman of the Syrian National Authority, and the Director-General of the OPCW, according to an agenda agreed upon by the two parties.

Fifth, my delegation regrets the selectivity observed in the monthly reports of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, where focus is placed on specific issues, while other important issues are ignored. For example, the most recent

report issued by the Director-General (see S/2023/637) did not refer to the response of the Syrian National Authority, on 21 August 2023, to all the requests of the Technical Secretariat, including Syria's response to all required documents about the dual-use material seen by the inspection team at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in Barzah during the ninth inspection round.

Sixth, my delegation acknowledges the danger of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorist organizations and attaches great importance to that issue. In that context, I refer to reports by the Syrian National Authority, submitted to the OPCW Technical Secretariat in August, that a number of Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham terrorists present in Idlib governorate transported a truck of chlorine and sarin gas from the Maarat Misrin district to the Jisr Al-Shughur area, under the supervision of the terrorists of the so-called "White Helmets", with the aim of using the gas later in that area against civilians and then accusing the Syrian Arab Army of using, in an attempt to serve the agendas of the countries that support and fund them.

Seventh, my delegation expresses its regret at the state that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has reached. Through its handling of the Syrian issue, it has allowed itself to become a tool in the hands of the United States, French and British Administrations to apply their destructive policies against countries that do not follow them. That has greatly undermined the credibility and professionalism of the OPCW.

Before I conclude, I would like to say to those who speak of accountability in the Council that they must fully realize that true accountability will only be achieved by holding accountable the Governments of countries that have allied themselves with terrorist and extremist organizations and have been involved in the shedding of Syrian blood. Those countries have fabricated incidents of using chemical weapons to level accusations against the Syrian State. Those countries continue to starve the Syrian people by imposing unilateral coercive measures that are neither legitimate nor humane. That is in addition to the need to hold accountable the Governments of countries that blatantly manipulate the provisions of international conventions and resolutions in order to serve their selfish interests, whether through enticement, intimidation or threat.

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

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

previous meeting on this issue (see S/PV.9393), there have been no significant developments or progress in the matter of Syria's chemical file, except Syria's submission of its monthly report to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its continued compliance with its obligations. The report delivered by the OPCW (see S/2023/637) has also not provided any fresh insight into the current situation. In the meantime, the repetition of statements at today's meeting highlights once more the inefficiency of holding regular and monthly meetings on the matter, given the evident absence of substantial progress or noteworthy developments.

In the recent open debate on the Security Council's working methods, held on 5 September, speakers underscored the critical need to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Security Council (see S/PV.9410). In that context, many speakers voiced their support for improved working methods and advocated for a reduction in the frequency of specific meetings, particularly those related to Syria. That collective push for enhancement is vital to upholding the Council's credibility and operational efficiency.

In line with that joint call for improvement, we reiterate our call to the Security Council to increase the effectiveness of its meetings focused on Syria. As emphasized repeatedly by some members, the practice of dedicating one monthly meeting solely to the repetition of positions and unsupported allegations against Syria does not contribute to the Security Council's overall efficiency. We agree with the idea offered by some Council members to adjust the frequency of discussions on the subject from a monthly to a quarterly basis. Such a modification would enhance the Council's efficiency, enabling it to direct its attention more effectively towards matters of immediate concern.

We fully support constructive dialogue between Syria and the OPCW, setting a specific time frame to address any remaining issues and bring the file to a final and conclusive closure. Such an approach would ensure transparency, accountability and a satisfactory resolution to all outstanding issues. We commend Syria's commitment to convening a high-level meeting between the Syrian Foreign Minister and the Director-General of the OPCW. We believe that to ensure a successful outcome, any investigation into chemical weapons incidents must be conducted with utmost impartiality, professionalism, credibility and objectivity, strictly adhering to the requirements and procedures of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We reiterate our stance that the integrity and credibility of the OPCW hinge on its ability to maintain neutrality and objectivity, guided solely by scientific and technical considerations. Therefore, complying with the obligations outlined in the Convention is significant for fostering a safer world, free from the looming threat of chemical weapons. In that regard, we stress the importance of the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention by all Member States.

In conclusion, Iran once again condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the use of chemical weapons at any time, anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances. The use of such weapons is a flagrant violation of international law, constituting a crime against humanity and posing a serious threat to global peace and security.

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

Mrs. Özgür (Türkiye): We thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

The use of chemical weapons is a grave violation of international law, and it is our collective responsibility to address that issue with the utmost diligence. Considering the Syrian regime's track record in the use of chemical weapons, we believe that the Council should remain actively seized of the matter. In that regard, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) also plays a pivotal role.

Türkiye supports close cooperation between the Security Council and the OPCW on this file. We commend the impartial, independent and professional work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and investigative bodies of the OPCW towards the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme. Yet we are concerned that the efforts of the Technical Secretariat and the investigative bodies have not been reciprocated by the Syrian regime.

The Technical Secretariat is awaiting the regime's decision to proceed with the planning of the next round of consultations. The Technical Secretariat also has yet to receive a response from the regime regarding the unauthorized movement of two cylinders used in the Douma chemical attack in 2018. Furthermore, the regime has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations concerning the detection of a Schedule 2 chemical at the Barzah facilities in November 2018. As a result, and as we have heard, once again, from the High Representative, the declaration submitted by the

Syrian regime still cannot be considered accurate and complete owing to the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved.

We would like to reiterate that the use of chemical weapons anywhere constitutes a major threat to international peace and security. We call on the Syrian regime to comply with its obligations and fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat and the investigative bodies of the OPCW, in line with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013).

The President: The representative of the United Kingdom has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Phipps (United Kingdom): I apologize for requesting to take the floor again, but I felt compelled to do so after the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic referred to the White Helmets as a terrorist organization.

To be clear, the White Helmets are a life-saving, search-and-rescue organization that is estimated to have saved more than 115,000 lives and provided essential services to more than 4 million Syrians throughout the conflict. Allegations linking the White Helmets to terrorist groups are baseless and part of a concerted disinformation campaign by the Syrian regime and by Russia that seeks to undermine the White Helmets' valuable work. One has only to look at the hundreds of videos of the White Helmets pulling people from the rubble of war to know that those accusations are complete nonsense.

The President: The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): In fact, I am not surprised that the representative of the United Kingdom took the floor to defend the terrorist organization known as the White Helmets, because that terrorist organization was established, supported and funded by Britain. Therefore, it is no surprise that the representative of the United Kingdom is defending that terrorist organization. It is a terrorist, terrorist, terrorist organization.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.