



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

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Thursday, 5 September 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mr. De Rivière
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mrs. Shino
Malta	Mr. Camilleri
Mozambique	Mr. Kumanga
Republic of Korea	Mr. Sangjin Kim
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Sierra Leone	Mr. Tejan
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Ms. Jambert-Gray
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 27 August 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2024/632)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 27 August 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2024/632)

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 Mr. Adedeji Ebo, Director and Deputy to the High Representative of the United Nations Office 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/2024/632, which contains the text of a letter dated 27 August 2024 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ebo.

Mr. Ebo: I thank 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. I provide this briefing on behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, who is currently away from the office.

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

Since the Council's previous meeting on this matter (see S/PV.9652), 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 reported at the previous briefing to the Council on this matter, the twenty-seventh round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority was undertaken in Damascus in May. During and subsequent to that round of consultations, the DAT requested explanations from the Syrian National Authority regarding the results of analysis of samples collected by the DAT between September 2020 and April 2023 at two formally declared chemical weapons related sites. Those results indicated potentially undeclared activities related to several chemical warfare agents, including the full production cycle from research and development to production, testing and storage for two of those agents. Although the Syrian Arab Republic provided some additional information on those results, the OPCW Technical Secretariat assessed that information as insufficient. That resulted in the opening of two new outstanding issues in July, raising the total number of issues from 24 to 26, of which seven have been resolved and 19 remain unresolved. That is an extremely worrisome development.

I have been further informed that the Syrian National Authority did not accept the OPCW Technical Secretariat proposals for two possible time periods for the twenty-eighth round of consultations. As a result, on 14 August, the OPCW Technical Secretariat informed the Syrian Arab Republic of its intention to deploy a reduced team to the Syrian Arab Republic to conduct the twenty-eighth round of consultations in mid-September. The planned activities were also updated accordingly, as the DAT will not be in a position to conduct any field visits during the proposed deployment. Through a note verbal dated 19 August 2024, the Syrian Arab Republic informed the OPCW Technical Secretariat that it had no objection to receiving the DAT in mid-September. However, I understand that the negotiation of the relevant dates is still ongoing.

I have been informed that the delayed deployment of the DAT will have an operational impact on the planned schedule for inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC). As of the date of this month's report, the Technical Secretariat has not received any new information that might resolve the issues related to the presence of a Schedule 2 chemical in the sample collected during the November 2018 inspection and to the origin and usage of a chemical of dual-use nature observed by the inspection team during the September

2022 inspection at the SSRC Barzah facilities. The OPCW Technical Secretariat will further engage on those issues with the Syrian National Authority during the next round of SSRC inspections.

As reported previously, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has also requested information regarding the unauthorized movement of the two cylinders related to the chemical weapon incident that took place in Duma on 7 April 2018, which were allegedly destroyed in an attack on a chemical weapons production facility. I have been informed that, as of the date of this report, the Technical Secretariat has not received a response to that request.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat remains fully committed to implementing its mandate aimed at verifying the fulfilment of the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration's obligations under the Convention, decisions by the OPCW policymaking organs and Security Council resolutions. 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. I call upon the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and respond with urgency to all of the Technical Secretariat's requests.

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

The United Nations will continue to support all efforts to uphold the norm against chemical weapons and to relegate those dreadful weapons to history. As the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs has emphasized on many occasions, any use of chemical weapons is unacceptable. I also echo the Secretary-General's call to end impunity for all those who dare to

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

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever support and assistance it can.

The President: I thank Mr. Ebo for his briefing.

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

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Adedeji Ebo, for his briefing.

The 131st monthly report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Technical Secretariat (S/2024/632, annex), entitled "Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme", is yet another clear example of the bias of that structure. Once again, we must reiterate that the contents of the reports of the Director-General of the OPCW are not balanced and spread the same accusations against the Syrians with the sole aim of creating the impression that the dialogue between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic is being blocked only by the Syrians' lack of cooperation and goodwill. For example, it, once again, inappropriately puts forward an artificial problem that has been completely blown out of proportion by the Technical Secretariat and has nothing to do with the issues during the reporting period, namely, the issuance of a visa to one staff member of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). Furthermore, there is deliberate silence regarding the fact that the situation was resolved solely thanks to the efforts and goodwill of Damascus.

The paragraphs regarding the plans to conduct the twenty-eighth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian authorities appear completely absurd and unprofessional. The leadership of the Syrian Arab Republic welcomed the organization of the consultations and was fully prepared to continue the discussion in order to agree on the necessary modalities, including dates that would suit both sides. In that regard, we absolutely do not understand why three entire paragraphs of the report are devoted to that purely technical detail. It would seem that the only aim is to present Syria in a poor light.

At the same time, no one bothered to mention the fact that, despite the infringement of Damascus's rights and privileges under the Chemical Weapons Convention, it continues to cooperate with the OPCW in good faith and to comply with its obligations under the Convention. Syria is providing all necessary assistance with the inspections carried out by representatives of the OPCW. To those who do not want to notice that we would like to point out that, over the past 10 years, 150 technical meetings and 45 visits to facilities were conducted, 180 samples were tested and 350 documents were provided by Damascus. I think that our Syrian colleagues will tell us today about the work they have done so that the Council can have a more objective understanding of what is happening. The reports of the Director-General still do not enable us to do that.

Moreover, it is important not to forget that cooperation with the DAT is a part of the voluntary bilateral obligations that Syria has undertaken. The mandate of the DAT does not involve any "investigative" activities. Its aim is solely to assist the Syrians in preparing their initial declaration. In that regard, we are surprised that the report deliberately stresses the fact that the DAT has put forward to Syria two new technical issues regarding traces of listed chemical agents. That routine issue is groundlessly presented as if chemical weapons stockpiles had been found.

We believe that the Technical Secretariat's decision to add those two new issues is unjustified. It is clear that one should not rush into including those issues on the unresolved list. Rather, additional clarification should have been sought from Damascus. Our experts are convinced that most of the remaining unresolved issues can theoretically be closed out. It is necessary to consider the difficulties involved in obtaining sufficient amounts of material and/or documentary evidence for objective reasons, such as the hostilities in the Syrian Arab Republic, the time frame of probable suspicious activity and the accelerated procedure for the destruction of the Syrian chemical programme, *inter alia*.

However, there is nothing surprising here, because we have repeatedly asked in this Chamber why the approach towards Syria differs from that towards other countries that have encountered similar problems but, unlike Damascus, have not had as much criticism levelled against them. We have provided specific examples to that effect but have received no response whatsoever.

We regret that the report did not reflect the fact that this year, thanks to Damascus's engagement with the DAT, three of the previous unresolved issues were closed. For our part, we welcome the progress made on eliminating Syrian chemical weapons and dismantling facilities intended for their production and storage. Likewise, we welcome the resumption of consultations between the Syrian National Authority and the DAT and the agreement to extend the trilateral agreement between Syria, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services until the end of the year. Denying the progress made would amount to denying the truth. Judging from the way the Western members of the Council present that issue, it is clear that any progress on the Syrian chemical file seems to stick in their throat and that they will do everything they possibly can to ignore it.

In that respect, I would like to remind our colleagues who claim that Damascus is concealing its alleged chemical weapons stockpiles that they have still not provided either the Security Council or the OPCW with any information on certain Syrian facilities intended for production or stockpiling chemical weapons. And it was those facilities that Western countries attacked in April 2018, acting in violation of the Charter of the United Nations, which is in and of itself a gross violation of resolution 2118 (2013).

Such a politicized presentation has only one purpose: to mislead the Council and to play into the hands of Damascus' foes in their attempt to keep the Syrian chemical file afloat indefinitely. The price for such actions is the overwhelming politicization of the OPCW. As a result, the chemical weapons ban regime as a whole is being clearly damaged, and the organization's ability to respond to the real challenges facing the international community in the field of chemical disarmament and non-proliferation of chemical weapons is being undermined. We urge our Western colleagues to consider whether their pettiness and vindictiveness towards the Syrian Government, which has defeated terrorism, are worth such consequences for international cooperation in this area.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Director Ebo for his briefing.

This month marks 11 years since the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), which the Council adopted unanimously in response to horrific chemical-weapons attacks in Syria. Today the United States wishes

to review where we stand on the critical pillars of that resolution.

Resolution 2118 (2013) required the full implementation of the decision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council, necessitating the expeditious destruction of Syria's chemical-weapons programme, under stringent verification. It stated that the Syrian Arab Republic shall not use, develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer chemical weapons and shall cooperate fully with the United Nations and the OPCW, including by giving United Nations and OPCW personnel immediate and unfettered access to inspect any and all sites. Resolution 2118 (2013) stated that those individuals responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria must be held accountable.

By every one of those measures, the Syrian Arab Republic has not only failed to implement the provisions but has shown utter contempt for the will of the Council and for the families of the men, women and children who suffered and died due to such attacks.

After 11 years of this behaviour, we can all see that this regime has no shame whatsoever. Multiple international investigations have all come to the same conclusion — the Al-Assad regime repeatedly used chemical weapons against Syrian citizens.

Despite this conclusive evidence, the Syrian Arab Republic refuses to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention by fully and verifiably accounting for its chemical-weapons programme and arsenal. Even more disturbing is the fact that this regime has yet to take responsibility for the atrocities it has committed against its own citizens.

Director Ebo, we appreciate the OPCW's continuing efforts to verify the accuracy of Syria's declarations and to press the regime to address the many remaining gaps and inconsistencies. We also laud the professionalism, dedication, impartiality and determination of the Syria special missions. We know that theirs is a daunting task, but we must do all we can to ensure that Syrians never again have to endure such a catastrophe. There must be no impunity for the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances.

The United States notes that the OPCW's Technical Secretariat continues to discover alarming evidence of Syria's chemical-weapons capabilities, the latest of which dates to April 2023. That has resulted in

the Organization opening two new outstanding issues regarding the accuracy and completeness of Syria's declaration, bringing the number of gaps and discrepancies with Syria's initial declaration on this long list to 19, including many that have persisted since 2014.

In response to Syria's continued non-compliance, the OPCW Conference of States Parties adopted the forward-looking decision invoking article XII, paragraph 3, of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which recommends that States parties take a number of collective measures, including to prevent the transfer to Syria of certain dual-use chemicals and equipment. That decision also aims to prevent the same dual-use chemicals and equipment from falling into the hands of non-State actors, including terrorist groups. The United States urges all Member States to implement these measures without delay.

The United States continues working with partners across the world to bring an end to the regime's chemical-weapons programme and promote accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere. After 11 years, the Syrian regime is banking on all of us forgetting their atrocities. The United States refuses to do so. We will not forget, we will not relent, and we implore every nation seated at this table to do the same.

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

We thank Mr. Adedeji Ebo, Deputy to the High Representative of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, for his briefing. We welcome the participation in this meeting of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Türkiye.

The A3+ reiterates its firm belief that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances must be condemned. We remain committed to ensuring accountability for such actions under international law.

We carefully reviewed the contents of the 131st monthly report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) covering the period from 24 July to 23 August 2024 (S/2024/632, annex).

We also acknowledge the submission of the 129th monthly report on progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic on the destruction of its chemical weapons.

Regarding the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the A3+ notes with satisfaction that 100 per cent of declared chemical weapons have been destroyed, as of 7 July 2023. In that regard, we welcome the completion of the destruction of chemical-weapons stockpiles, including those declared by the Syrian Arab Republic.

While recalling the decisions of the Executive Council with respect to the elimination and destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and the destruction of Syrian chemical-weapons production facilities, the A3+ commends the substantive efforts made and the significant progress achieved in that regard. We also welcome the OPCW Director General's reports on the completion of the destruction of all chemical weapons and chemical-weapons production facilities declared by the Syrian Arab Republic.

The A3+ acknowledges the ongoing collaboration between the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW Technical Secretariat, particularly the twenty-seventh round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian National Authority in Damascus. We look forward to the report on those consultations, and we anticipate further positive developments.

We have taken note that the Syrian National Authority has agreed to hold the twenty-eighth round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team after 10 September, and the A3+ looks forward to the conduct of that visit and to the achievement of productive results in order to permanently close this file.

The A3+ encourages the Secretariat to continue its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial and subsequent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. We also encourage the Syrian Arab Republic to continue its cooperation to address the outstanding issues in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. The A3+ believes that maintaining communication channels open and fostering a spirit of collaboration is crucial for the successful resolution of outstanding matters. In that respect, we encourage Syria's continued engagement with the OPCW.

The A3+ welcomes the extension of the tripartite agreement concluded between the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Syrian Arab Republic until 31 December. We believe that the agreement plays a vital role in facilitating the Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic. We remain committed to the imperative against the use of chemical weapons and to all efforts aimed at prohibiting their development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use. The A3+ reaffirms its continuing support for resolution 2118 (2013) and underscores the importance of its full implementation.

The A3+ looks forward to the continuation of the existing successful cooperation between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic on all issues in order to close the file permanently. We believe that through sustained dialogue and mutual understanding, further progress can be achieved in addressing the remaining issues.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ebo for his briefing.

Eleven years ago, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013) a few weeks after the use of chemical weapons in the suburbs of Damascus. On 21 August 2013, the inhabitants of Ghouta, including many children, were the victims of one of the most devastating chemical attacks on civilians since the Second World War. Syria subsequently acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction. And yet, over the past 11 years, the obligations under the Convention and resolution 2118 (2013) have been violated on at least 25 occasions in chemical attacks documented by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

In 11 years, the OPCW has done much to clarify all the issues surrounding the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Syria's initial declaration had to be amended 20 times. Nonetheless, the OPCW has raised and reported a total of 26 issues, with 19 still outstanding. The fact that two of them were raised only this year is worrisome. Switzerland therefore urges Syria to continue to cooperate with the OPCW and all its missions fully and in good faith. We further call on Syria to provide verifiable and scientifically plausible explanations that clear up all unresolved issues. The twenty-eighth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and Syria is

necessary to that end. In the meantime, we are counting on the forthcoming visit of a reduced DAT team in mid-September and look forward to reading its report. Switzerland underscores its full confidence in the OPCW and its support for all its missions, the integrity and professionalism of which are unimpeachable.

For 11 years, regular meetings of the Security Council have served to remind us of the crucial challenge of preventing the production, stockpiling, proliferation and use of chemical weapons in Syria and ensuring their destruction. The regularity of the meetings also reflects the Council's universal commitment to the fight against impunity, on which our collective security depends. Those who manufacture, possess, not to mention use such weapons must not go unpunished. There will indeed be no peace in Syria unless justice is served for the victims of violations of international law.

That is why Switzerland will continue to support any international organization or initiative charged with documenting such crimes under international law and preventing them from being perpetrated by parties to conflicts, including States and non-State armed groups. In that spirit, we welcome the formal cooperation between the OPCW and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. That cooperation marks an important step towards the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) and compliance with the relevant international law, to which Switzerland is deeply committed and for which it will continue to work in this forum and elsewhere.

Mr. Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank Mr. Ebo for his informative briefing and commend the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for its impartial efforts in ensuring the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. I also welcome the representatives of Syria, Iran and Türkiye.

Today's briefing has once again demonstrated why the Security Council should remain regularly seized of this matter. Although Syria joined the Convention more than a decade ago, it remains impossible to fully verify the declarations Syria has made, leaving substantial quantities of chemical weapons unaccounted for. In that regard, I would like to highlight the following points.

First, the Republic of Korea expresses serious concern at the opening of new outstanding issues regarding Syria's compliance with the Convention and the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). We note with apprehension the OPCW's recent findings, which suggest undeclared activities related to several chemical warfare agents, including their full production cycle. That is a disappointing development, especially considering the progress made earlier this year, when some outstanding issues were resolved. While the recent report by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) acknowledges some efforts by the Syrian Government, they still fall short of what is needed to fully verify its explanations. We therefore urge Syria to provide comprehensive information to the OPCW Secretariat to resolve all remaining issues.

Secondly, we urge the Syrian Arab Republic to demonstrate greater cooperation with the OPCW. We take note of the recent extension of the tripartite agreement concluded among Syria, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services until the end of this year, which we see as a positive and incremental step that could facilitate the OPCW's mandated activities. However, we remain greatly concerned by Syria's refusal to issue entry visas to all DAT members last year, limiting the Team's activities. Such actions undermine OPCW's efforts in resolving outstanding issues. We strongly encourage Syria to grant full access to all relevant OPCW teams, including the DAT and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), and to support their efforts without delay.

Thirdly, we reiterate our call for those responsible for the use of chemical weapons to be held accountable. Eleven years after the horrid chemical weapons attack in Ghouta in August 2013, our responsibility to ensure accountability for the loss of more than 1,000 lives remains. The repeated use of chemical weapons in 2017 and 2018 also serves as a stark reminder of the importance of combating impunity to deter the recurrence of such actions. We express our deepest sympathy for the victims of chemical weapons use and emphasize that those crimes cannot remain unpunished. In that regard, we strongly support the work of the IIT, which identifies the origin of chemical weapons and perpetrators, and we oppose any attempts to undermine its legitimacy and value.

Adherence to the obligations under the Convention is critical in the current Syrian context, in which the resurgence of Da'esh and escalating regional tensions

significantly heighten the risk of chemical materials falling into the wrong hands. In that regard, the Republic of Korea urges all parties to fully comply with their obligations under the Convention and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Ebo for his briefing.

China's position on chemical weapon-related issues remains consistent. We firmly oppose the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstance, for any purpose. We hope to see a world free from chemical weapons at an early date.

China calls for dialogue and negotiations to resolve the outstanding issues related to the initial declaration of chemical weapons in Syria. We encourage the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian Government to continue to head in the same direction on the basis of mutual respect and cooperation on an equal footing and to communicate on conducting the twenty-eighth round of technical consultations, so as to resolve the outstanding issues.

The OPCW investigation and accountability work on any alleged use of chemical weapons should be conducted in strict accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and the relevant verification annex to ensure compliance with the established procedure, the reliability of evidence and the credibility of its conclusions. At the same time, we hope that all parties will jointly uphold the technical nature of the OPCW and refrain from bloc confrontations and political antagonism.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Mr. Ebo, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for his briefing.

I would like to begin by reiterating Japan's principles on the Syrian chemical weapons file. Any use of chemical weapons, anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable, and those responsible for their use must be held accountable. It is truly regrettable that we have not witnessed tangible progress on this file since our most recent meeting on the subject (see S/PV.9652). The recent monthly report by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Director-General (S/2024/632, annex) again highlighted

concerns regarding Syria's conduct. According to the report, Syria has not provided adequate explanations for the traces of undeclared chemical warfare agents. That lack of transparency suggests the possibility of an undeclared full-scale development and production of chemical weapons at two formally declared sites related to chemical weapons. The detailed report by the Declaration Assessment Team of the OPCW, released on 4 July, pointed out additional outstanding issues: first, undeclared activities involving nitrogen mustards; secondly, undeclared activities involving soman; and thirdly, the presence of an indicator of nerve agent EA-1699 at a chemical weapons production facility.

We are gravely concerned about the continuing discrepancies, gaps and inconsistencies in Syria's initial and subsequent declarations, as once again confirmed by the most recent Director-General's report. We continue to urge Syria to engage in good faith with the OPCW and to provide all requested information to solve the outstanding issues under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). It undermines the objective and purpose of the OPCW if Syria continues to possess chemical weapons and fails to destroy undeclared stockpiles and production facilities.

Japan commends the professional, impartial and independent work conducted by the OPCW. We strongly oppose any attempts to undermine its authority and invaluable work. Japan believes that preventing the recurrence of the use of chemical weapons in Syria must continue to be the Security Council's priority.

Ms. Jambert-Gray (United Kingdom): I thank Director Ebo for his briefing today.

As so many have already noted in the Chamber, this month marks 11 years since Syria ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention and since the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013), calling on Syria to immediately cease its production, storage and use of chemical weapons. In 2013, Bashar Al-Assad's forces used sarin against the people of Ghouta, killing more than 1,400 people. In 2018, a chemical weapon attack in Douma killed 43 men, women and children and affected dozens more.

Yet the Syrian chemical weapon issue has still not been confined to history. The Syrian authorities have failed to account for thousands of munitions and hundreds of tons of chemical agent, despite the diligent efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its Declaration

Assessment Team. We have had 150 technical meetings, yet there are still outstanding issues with Syria's declaration. Nineteen outstanding issues remain unresolved regarding the Syrian declaration under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Two were added in July, opened, as set out in the OPCW Director-General's most recent report to the Council (S/2024/632), because of Syria's failure to sufficiently explain the traces of undeclared chemical warfare agents or their indicators in samples previously collected by the Declaration Assessment Team. That suggests the potentially undeclared full-scale development and production of chemical weapons at two formally declared chemical weapons sites. That is deeply concerning.

Syria's ongoing non-compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention has grave implications for both regional and international security. Since Bashar Al-Assad first used chemical weapons against Syrian civilians in 2013, chemical weapons have been used again and again, in Iraq, Malaysia, in my own country, the United Kingdom, and now in Ukraine. We all have a responsibility to uphold the global taboo against the use of chemical weapons. Chemical weapon use cannot become normalized. I urge Syria to comply with the OPCW and its Declaration Assessment Team, and I urge all members of the Council to make clear their opposition to the use of chemical weapons anywhere and to support the efforts of the OPCW.

The United Kingdom applauds the continued diligent efforts by the OPCW under the leadership of Director-General Fernando Arias. We will continue to work tirelessly to support the OPCW and uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention and one day finally achieve the total elimination of chemical weapons.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I thank Mr. Ebo for his informative briefing.

Malta supports the regular holding of these meetings. Not only are they mandated by resolution 2118 (2013), but the recent Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) reports clearly show the need to keep international attention on this file. In July, the Secretariat assessed that the information provided by Syria regarding the chemical warfare agents previously detected by the Declaration Assessment Team was insufficient. That resulted in the opening of two new outstanding issues in its initial declaration, which were also reported to the Executive Council.

The samples collected by the DAT suggested "potentially undeclared full-scale development and production of chemical weapons". That is unacceptable. The Syrian Arab Republic has an obligation, in line with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013), not to produce, acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons. Violations of those provisions must be unequivocally condemned. Furthermore, in its most recent report, the OPCW noted its intention to deploy the DAT to conduct the twenty-eighth round of consultations with Syrian authorities. Regrettably, Syria did not accept the time periods proposed by the secretariat. Therefore, owing to the time limitations and its reporting obligations, the secretariat will only deploy a reduced team, which will not be able to conduct any field visits. Unfortunately, the delayed deployment of the DAT will also have an operational impact on the schedule of the 2024 round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre by the secretariat. We call on Syria to fully comply with its obligations, including full cooperation with the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

The lack of progress on this file is deplorable, and Syria bears full responsibility for it. More than 10 years after its accession to the Convention and the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), its initial declaration still cannot be considered accurate and complete. Once again, we urge the Syrian Arab Republic to make decisive progress towards the full elimination of its chemical weapons programme. The use of chemical weapons is completely contrary to the legal standards of the international community and can never be justified. Malta condemns their use anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances. As we have just heard from Mr. Ebo, such weapons must be relegated to history. We must collectively ensure that the perpetrators of these horrific attacks are held accountable. That means justice for the victims, but also the prevention of future attacks.

To conclude, we reaffirm our full support for the OPCW and its technical teams, who implement their mandate independently and in accordance with international standards. Their professionalism and impartiality should be recognized by all, especially within the Council.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): This being the first time I speak this month, I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and by thanking Sierra

Leone for its excellent leadership of the Council last month. My delegation appreciates the briefing by Mr. Adedeji Ebo, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Ecuador recognizes the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its technical teams to implement the mandate of the Chemical Weapons Convention and relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2118 (2013). I again urge the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with the OPCW's technical teams and to provide the information necessary to clarify all outstanding issues in an expeditious manner. That is essential not only for the purposes of accountability but also for international peace and security.

Ecuador reaffirms its firm commitment to the full implementation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and I reiterate my country's strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor and under any circumstances. It is essential that the Council remain united to ensure that there is no impunity for those responsible for the use of those atrocious weapons.

In conclusion, my delegation once again reaffirms its support for the impartial, objective and independent work of the OPCW and stresses the need to continue to strengthen international cooperation to ensure the complete and verifiable elimination of chemical weapons worldwide.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Ebo for his briefing.

A few days ago, the Security Council received the 131st monthly report of the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the elimination of the Syrian programme (S/2024/632, annex). Over the years, the OPCW teams responsible for assessing the Syrian authorities' declaration on their chemical weapons programme have conducted 27 rounds of consultations, including technical meetings, interviews and visits to manufacturing sites.

Despite the tireless efforts of the OPCW teams and their professionalism, light has still not been shed on the state of the Syrian chemical programme. Responsibility for that lies with the regime. The Director General's 131st report concludes, once again, that the declaration by the Syrian authorities cannot be considered to be precise

and complete. Indeed, serious new grounds for concern continue to emerge. The Syrian authorities have still not been able to explain the presence of chemical agents in samples collected from two sites in September 2020 and April 2023, which could indicate the existence of undeclared chemical weapons production activities. Question marks about those agents add to the long list of unanswered questions regarding the Syrian authorities' declaration.

We note the OPCW's intention to shortly deploy a team in Syria to conduct a twenty-eighth round of consultations, and we hope that that will enable progress to be made towards resolving the outstanding issues. We urge Syria to finally cooperate fully with the OPCW to resolve all the remaining queries. Syria must comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Only then will it be able to regain its rights and privileges as a State party to the Convention.

The possession and use of chemical weapons constitute a threat to international peace and security. The Syrian regime has deliberately used those inhumane weapons against its own population. Until assurances are obtained that the Syrian programme has been eliminated, the Security Council must remain seized of this issue. Any use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances, is unacceptable. We have not forgotten the threat posed by chemical terrorism, a threat highlighted in the fourth report of the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team, which attributed the 2015 attack in Marea to Da'esh. Together with its partners, France remains fully committed to supporting the OPCW, enforcing the ban on chemical weapons and combating impunity for their use.

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

I would like to thank director Ebo for his informative briefing.

Let me begin by stressing Slovenia's unwavering condemnation of any use of chemical weapons, anywhere and by anyone, be it a State or a non-State actor. Chemical weapons are a threat to international peace and security and, as a result of the extent and consequences of their use in Syria, we firmly believe that the Security Council must remain actively seized of the matter.

Slovenia appreciates the regular reporting by the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We underline that the efforts of the Organization and its experts are fundamental to ensure Syria's full compliance with the obligations deriving from the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as to identify and hold accountable those responsible for chemical weapons use in Syria.

We note with concern the recent emergence of two new outstanding issues, as Syria failed to sufficiently explain traces of undeclared chemical warfare agents. That might suggest the undeclared full-scale development and production of chemical weapons at two sites. That situation deepens our concerns about the accuracy and completeness of the Syrian authorities' declarations regarding the chemical weapons programme and stockpiles.

We call on Syria to provide technically credible explanations to the outstanding issues, comply with its obligations under the Convention, fully implement relevant Security Council resolutions and cooperate with the OPCW in good faith.

Slovenia remains determined to ensure strict observance of the prohibition of chemical weapons and to ensure that justice is served for the victims of those inhumane weapons by ensuring the accountability of those responsible for chemical attacks in Syria and elsewhere. There must be no impunity for such a crime.

We continue to believe only a multilateral approach, with the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW at its centre, can pave the way to our ultimate goal — a world without chemical weapons.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Aldahhak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country, Slovenia, assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the current month, and I wish you every success in managing the work of the Council during this busy month. I would also like to thank the permanent delegation of Sierra Leone for its efforts in managing the work of our Council in August.

My country, Syria, reiterates its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons at any time, anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances and affirms its commitment to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which was demonstrated recently as follows.

First, the Syrian National Authority submitted three monthly reports covering the activities conducted in Syria during the past three months, the most recent of which was its 129th monthly report, dated 14 August.

Secondly, the Syrian National Authority facilitated the convening of the twenty-seventh round of consultations of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) in May and facilitated the success of the DAT's mission. It also submitted all the required documents and information. While the DAT took two months to assess that information, the Syrian National Authority was given only three days to submit its comments on those assessments, which is, of course, insufficient.

Thirdly, the Syrian National Authority welcomes the convening of the twenty-eighth round of consultations between the Syrian National Authority's team of experts and the DAT after 10 September, in accordance with dates that are mutually acceptable to both parties.

Fourthly, the Syrian National Authority approved the extension of the tripartite agreement between the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the United Nations Office for Project Services for an additional six months, in order to facilitate the completion of the OPCW's tasks and activities in Syria.

Syria's cooperation with the OPCW is met with the OPCW Technical Secretariat's continued politicization of this file instead of adhering to the principles of professionalism, neutrality and credibility. The monthly reports of the OPCW Director-General continue to promote the false allegations and accusations made by the hostile Western countries against Syria, which my country categorically rejects.

We have just listened to the briefing by Mr. Ebo, Director and Deputy to the High Representative of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. It is regrettable that his briefing today provided the Security Council with technical details that fall within the framework of the bilateral cooperation between the Syrian Government and the OPCW in the context of the Organization's work in The Hague. In fact, the

representative of the Secretariat unfortunately provided details concerning routine discussions about the dates of possible visits to Syria this month in a way that only leads to further politicization and serves the agendas of countries that want to undermine Syria's cooperation with the OPCW.

I mentioned earlier that Syria welcomes the holding of the twenty-eighth round of consultations between the Syrian National Authority and the Declaration Assessment Team after 10 September. It is not the Secretariat's role to discuss whether to hold that meeting before the Summit of the Future and before the Government delegation travels to New York to participate in the high-level week. All those technical details do not serve us and lead only to further politicization.

Syria reiterates its demand that the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Western countries that have been politicizing this file and using it as a tool for pressure not pre-empt the ongoing consultations between the Syrian National Authority and the DAT and not refer to new outstanding issues before allowing time for the discussion of those issues between the two sides.

We also call for an end to the false accusations and disruptions of the existing cooperation between Syria and the Organization. My country expresses regret for the contents of the Organization's latest report (see S/2024/632) in which the Technical Secretariat jumped to conclusions on issues that are still subject to technical assessment and require further consultations between the two sides. That only serves the hostile positions of the Western permanent members of the Council against my country.

The letter of the Berlin Group 21 dated 18 July and circulated to all States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention adds further evidence supporting what we have repeatedly warned against regarding the serious shortcomings in the work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. The contents of that letter merit the Council's attention, especially since the membership of that Group includes United Nations officials, academics, scientists and experts in relevant fields. In its letter, the Group explained the extent of risks to which the OPCW is exposed as a result of the politicization of its work. That is consistent with what was stated in the report prepared last year by two members of the European Parliament entitled "The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical

Weapons and the Chemical Weapons Convention: The Way Forward", which presents proposals to restore the credibility of the Organization by ensuring that its work be conducted once again within the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention and calls on the OPCW administration to address the issues raised by former OPCW experts, including Ian Henderson and Brendan Whelan.

As we mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1540 (2004) aimed at preventing non-State groups from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, and their means of production and delivery, we recall that my country has consistently provided the Security Council Committee established pursuant to that resolution and the United Nations Secretariat with information on the acquisition and use by terrorist organizations of chemical substances as a weapon against civilians and the Syrian armed forces and the fabrication of chemical incidents in Syria. However, that information has been ignored and obscured by Western countries which are busy fabricating lies and accusations against the Syrian Government for known purposes. My country's delegation reaffirms the dangers of terrorist groups possessing chemical weapons and stresses the need to strengthen international cooperation to address that serious threat to international peace and security.

My country calls for putting an end to the politicization of the work of the OPCW and for reforming its working mechanisms in a way that restores the Organization's professionalism and credibility, preserves the technical nature of this file and leads to positive results that contribute towards its permanent conclusion.

The representative of the United States Administration referred to the anniversary of resolution 2118 (2013) and some representatives mentioned the anniversary of an alleged incident that took place in the suburbs of Damascus in 2013. We would have wished for the representative of the United States Administration to remind us that, in August 1945, his country used nuclear weapons in Japan, specifically in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We would have wished for him to mention the hundreds of thousands of victims, including children, women, men and the elderly, who were killed not for any reason, but only because the United States Administration wanted to show its blind might, as it did later in other countries that it invaded

and occupied, looting their resources and killing their people.

The United States and its allies currently continue such actions through supporting Israel in destroying Gaza, thus killing tens of thousands of its people. The United States Ambassador in Japan and other Ambassadors have boycotted the anniversary to commemorate the victims of the nuclear bomb, in protest that the representative of Israel was not invited to take part in the commemoration. That reflects its policies and its alliances, as well as its position towards disarmament issues.

In 2003, when my country Syria was a member of the Council, we submitted a draft resolution to establish a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical, and biological — in the Middle East. Our proposal was thwarted solely by the United States, which continues to ignore Israel's arsenal of those prohibited weapons, to criticize my country and to level accusations against my country and talk about time — a week here and a month there. The United States itself was more than 20 years late in eliminating its own chemical weapons arsenal, even though it did not face a terrorist presence or illegal foreign occupation on its territories, was never subjected to illegitimate coercive measures or pressure by permanent Council members and was not affected by a politicized chemical dossier.

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

Mr. Iravani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to begin by congratulating Slovenia for assuming the presidency of the Security Council this month. We acknowledge Sierra Leone for its successful conclusion of the presidency in August. We also welcome the presence of Mr. Ebo, Director and Deputy to the High Representative of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, at today's briefing.

As a committed party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Syrian Arab Republic continues to uphold its commitments under the Convention and to cooperate closely with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We acknowledge the vital importance of the efforts of the Syrian Government to implement its obligations under the Convention.

We welcome Syria's monthly reports, the latest of which covers the relevant activities carried out on the

territory of the Syrian Arab Republic during the past three months (see S/2024/632). We commend Syria's continued cooperation and its holding of the twenty-seventh round of consultations between the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority. The Syrian National Authority also welcomed the holding of the twenty-eighth round of consultations. In fact, the Syrian National Authority agreed to extend the tripartite agreement between the Syrian Arab Republic, the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services for an additional six months in order to facilitate the tasks and activities of the OPCW in Syria.

We share the view that the OPCW must be able to perform its duties in an impartial, professional and objective manner in order to establish facts and develop evidence-based conclusions. It is in the interest of the Convention, the OPCW, the rule of law and the maintenance of international peace and security. We reiterate our full support for the Chemical Weapons Convention and the promotion of its authority. We also call for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation.

Unfortunately, what we continue to witness in the Council and in the OPCW in recent years is certain member States systematically abusing the process in order to advance politically motivated agendas at any cost. By citing a series of unsubstantiated allegations, they are using these bodies against the Syrian Government, disregarding the progress the country has made in fulfilling its obligations. We share the concern that repeated statements in today's meetings underscore the inefficiency of holding Council meetings on this matter, given the clear lack of substantial progress or significant developments. This trend, which undermines the Convention's authority and the OPCW's credibility, must stop.

In that regard, we take note that the letter dated 18 July 2024 from the Berlin Group 21, including United Nations and academic experts, was circulated to all States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Security Council and the Secretary-General. This letter provides further evidence of serious shortcomings in the OPCW's Technical Secretariat, highlighting the risks of politicization. We support the continued constructive dialogue between Syria and the OPCW to address any remaining issues and bring the file to a final and conclusive resolution. This approach is

pivotal for ensuring transparency, accountability and the satisfactory resolution of all outstanding issues.

As an active member of the OPCW, Iran underscores the essential importance of ensuring the independent, impartial and professional work of the Organization. That is of the utmost importance, especially concerning the issues related to the implementation of obligations by States Parties, including the Syrian Arab Republic.

Finally, as a major victim of chemical weapons, the Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. Every effort should be made to prevent the use of these horrific weapons.

Iran is deeply concerned about the threat posed by terrorist groups acquiring chemical weapons and emphasizes the urgent need for stronger international cooperation in order to confront this danger to global peace and security.

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

Mrs. Özgür (Türkiye): Let me start by congratulating Slovenia on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this important month of the year. We thank Director Ebo for his comprehensive briefing.

Last month marked the eleventh anniversary of the chemical-weapons attack in the Ghouta area of Damascus. Ghouta was neither the first nor the last of the chemical-weapon attacks in Syria, which caused the death and injury of so many innocent civilian lives. The repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria caused some of the worst suffering of the 14-year conflict.

The use of chemical weapons, whether by the Syrian regime or the terrorist organization Da'esh, is unacceptable under any circumstances. Impunity is equally unacceptable. In the current volatile circumstances on the ground, the risks of chemical weapons falling into the hands of the terrorist organizations in Syria are clear. It is essential to prevent a recurrence of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and to ensure accountability for past incidents.

Achieving those objectives requires the complete elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme and effective cooperation with the Declaration Assessment Team, Fact-Finding Mission and Investigation and Identification Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

In its unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013), the Council determined that any use of chemical weapons constitutes a threat to international peace and security and endorsed the expeditious destruction of Syria's chemical weapons programme and stringent verification procedures. Consequently, the Council has a primary responsibility. Its continued engagement on this file and its unified support for the work of the OPCW are required.

We are concerned about the lack of progress, as reported by the OPCW, on clarifying all outstanding issues regarding the declaration submitted by the Syrian regime. Furthermore, more than a decade since Syria's ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the emergence of previously undeclared elements of its chemical weapons programme and the opening of new outstanding issues are deeply worrisome. We urge the Syrian regime to unconditionally fulfil all its obligations arising from the Chemical Weapons Convention. The regime must fully disclose its chemical weapons programme in a transparent manner and stop any active programmes. We also call on Syria to comply fully and without delay with the guidance of the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team and to unconditionally allow the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team to carry out their work.

In conclusion, it is a collective duty to ensure accountability and honour the innocent lives lost owing to the chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

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 11.25 a.m.