



Security Council

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Letter dated 28 December 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the eighty-seventh monthly report of the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) (see annex).

The report, in which the activities of OPCW in implementing Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) and the relevant provisions of the OPCW Executive Council decisions in relation to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme are set out, covers the period from 24 November to 23 December 2020.

The Declaration Assessment Team continues its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues related to the initial declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic, and the fact-finding mission continues to study all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Investigation and Identification Team continues its investigations into incidents in which the fact-finding mission determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic and will issue further reports in due course.

With regard to the inspections mandated by the OPCW Executive Council in paragraph 8 of its decision EC-94/DEC.2, entitled “Addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic”, the OPCW Technical Secretariat is continuing to monitor and evaluate the situation.

As I have stated previously, the use of chemical weapons anywhere by anyone and under any circumstances is intolerable, and impunity for their use is equally unacceptable. It is imperative to identify and hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons. Unity in the Security Council is essential to achieve this urgent obligation.

(Signed) António Guterres



Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled “Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme”, prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 of the Executive Council of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 24 November to 23 December 2020 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(Signed) Fernando **Arias**

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

Report by the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme**

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.
2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities” (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation “in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria” (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015), noting the Director General’s intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM), along with information on the Council’s discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled “Report by the Director General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director General’s intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.
4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled “OPCW United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director General shall “regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
5. The Council, at its Ninety-Fourth Session, adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-94/DEC.2, dated 9 July 2020). In paragraph 12 of that decision, the Council decided that the Director General shall “regularly report to the Council on the implementation of this decision and decide[d] also that the Director General shall provide a copy of this decision and its associated reports by the Secretariat to all States Parties and to the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly through the United Nations Secretary-General”.
6. This, the eighty-seventh monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 24 November to 23 December 2020.

Impact of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

7. As previously reported, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the Secretariat's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretariat is maintaining its readiness for deployments, which are being conducted subject to the evolution of the pandemic. The travel restrictions notwithstanding, the Secretariat is continuing its mandated activities related to the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in this regard.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

8. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) As stated in previous reports, the Secretariat has verified the destruction of all 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic.

(b) On 18 December 2020, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its eighty-fifth monthly report (EC-96/P/NAT.3, dated 18 December 2020) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

9. As stated in previous reports, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have been destroyed.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5

10. The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continues its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with paragraph 3 of Council decision EC-81/DEC.4, paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, and paragraph 5 of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2.

11. As reported to the Council through a Note by the Director General entitled "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team" (EC-95/HP/DG.2, dated 1 October 2020), an Addendum to this Note (EC-95/HP/DG.2/Add.1, dated 18 November 2020), and a further Note by the Director General entitled "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team" (EC-95/HP/DG.3, dated 18 November 2020), one of the 19 outstanding issues pertains to a CWPF declared by the Syrian National Authority as never having been used for the production of chemical weapons. The review of all the information and other materials gathered by the DAT since 2014, including samples, indicates that production and/or weaponisation of chemical warfare nerve agents took place at this CWPF. The Secretariat has therefore requested the Syrian Arab Republic to declare the exact types and quantities of chemical agents produced and/or weaponised at the site in question, in line with the relevant provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter "the Convention"). As at the date of this report, the Secretariat had not yet received a reply to this request from the Syrian National Authority.

12. At this stage, considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the Secretariat assesses that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention, Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1, and United Nations Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#).

13. In accordance with paragraph 10 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat is continuing to assess conditions for the conduct of inspections at the sites identified by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in its third and fourth reports. In doing so, the Secretariat is taking into account the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

14. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat conducted the seventh round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) between 8 and 13 November 2020. The outcome of these inspections will be reported to the Council in due course. The conduct of further deployments remains subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

15. With regard to the finding of a Schedule 2.B.04 chemical that was detected during the third round of inspections at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC, the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the Secretariat to close this issue.

Other activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

16. On 11 December 2020, at the invitation of the South African Presidency, the Director General briefed the United Nations Security Council on the status of the Secretariat's activities related to, inter alia, the Syrian chemical weapons dossier.

17. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) continues to provide support to the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement concluded between the OPCW, UNOPS, and the Syrian Arab Republic. This agreement facilitates the Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and to any subsequent decision or resolution of the relevant organs of the OPCW or the United Nations, as well as any bilateral agreements concluded between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic.

18. As at the cut-off date of this report, one OPCW staff member was deployed as part of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

19. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 4 February 2015 and 23 November 2015, respectively), as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution [2209 \(2015\)](#), the FFM continues to study all available information relating to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

20. The FFM is continuing its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic and other States Parties with regard to a variety of incidents. Additionally, the FFM is continuing to analyse information collected from its most recent deployments. The conduct of further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Secretariat issued a Note entitled "Summary Update of the Activities Carried out by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria" ([S/1922/2020](#), dated 21 December 2020), to update States Parties on its recent activities. The FFM will report further to the Council on the results of its work in due course.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 of the Conference of the States Parties at its Fourth Special Session related to the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic

21. Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018), adopted by the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) at its Fourth Special Session, addresses, inter alia, the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

22. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat established the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic by identifying and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those chemical weapons in those instances in which the FFM determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, and cases for which the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism did not issue a report.

23. The IIT is continuing its investigations, subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, and will issue further reports in due course.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2

24. With regard to the inspections mandated by paragraph 8 of EC-94/DEC.2, the Secretariat is monitoring the current security situation and will inform the Syrian Arab Republic when it is prepared to deploy for this purpose. The conduct of these inspections will also be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Supplementary resources

25. The Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the FFM and other remaining activities, which presently include the work of the DAT and IIT, as well as the biannual inspections of the SSRC and the two sites identified in paragraph 8 of EC-94/DEC.2. As at the cut-off date of this report, total contributions to this fund stood at EUR 34 million. Contribution agreements had been concluded with Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

Conclusion

26. The future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will focus on the work of the FFM; the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration related issues; inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah sites of the SSRC; the implementation of Conference decision C-SS-4/DEC.3; and the implementation of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2.