



General Assembly Security Council

Distr.: General
11 December 2020

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-fifth session
Agenda item 103
General and complete disarmament

Security Council
Seventy-fifth year

Letter dated 11 December 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Chair's summary of the open Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council on "Implementation of Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#): Upholding the authority of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons", which was hosted by the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on 28 September 2020 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 103, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vassily **Nebenzia**



Annex to the letter dated 11 December 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Chair's summary of the Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council on "Implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013): Upholding the authority of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons" hosted by Russia and China on 28 September 2020

Introduction

On 28 September 2020 the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China hosted an Arria-formula meeting on "Implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013): Upholding the authority of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons". The event took place online by means of videoconference and was live-streamed on several platforms. The video recording can be accessed on the YouTube channel of the Russian Mission at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCyPR4-HQ7s>.

The debate was chaired by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Vassily Nebenzia, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China, Geng Shuang, with all other Council members present, 13 of them making statements. The meeting witnessed a remarkably high turnout of more than 100 participants, with 30 delegations to the United Nations actively engaged in the discussions.

The guest speakers were independent international experts with a keen interest in matters related to the Syrian chemical dossier: the participants were briefed by Ian Henderson, former leader of a fact-finding mission team of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) participating in the investigation of the Douma incident; Aaron Maté, an independent journalist and contributor to *The Grayzone* and *The Nation*; and Theodore Postol, Professor Emeritus of Science, Technology and International Security at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The hosts arranged the meeting with a view to facilitating an open, inclusive and objective exchange on the situation around the implementation of Council resolution 2118 (2013) and possible ways to enhance the chemical weapons non-proliferation regime and the authority of OPCW in the context of an array of revelations about malpractices by its Technical Secretariat. The primary objective was to engage, in an open setting, the wider United Nations membership and independent experts on issues related to the investigative methods and conclusions of OPCW, as well as measures to address administrative, infrastructural and policy flaws of the OPCW Technical Secretariat in handling the Syrian chemical dossier and thus uphold the authority of the Organisation and its ability to implement its mandate.

The meeting was also meant to further enhance the transparency of the Council's discussion of the file, which on the basis of a proposal of the Russian Federation in September was opened to the general public for the first time in two years. In the same vein, it sought to provide a wider international audience with a technical perspective from independent experts, including those with extensive experience on the ground.

A concept note with background information on the file was circulated beforehand. It recalled that, while in 2014 all the chemicals declared by Syria were removed from its territory and destroyed, Western countries went on to claim that the Syrian Government continued to use chemical weapons. However, the investigative

mechanisms (the fact-finding mission, the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Investigation and Identification Team) failed to provide convincing evidence of that. Moreover, numerous concerns have been raised about their geographically unbalanced composition, flawed methodology and poor work ethics, as well as unsubstantiated conclusions, which put the impartiality and integrity of their reports in question. From the very beginning, the Technical Secretariat reports have been loaded with scientific anomalies clearly evident to external observers. Those discrepancies have never been clarified by the Technical Secretariat. For years, scandals around its malpractices have been piling up. They include the report on the Douma incident of 7 April 2018, when clear manipulations of its content were revealed. There are also questions with regard to the activity of the Declaration Assessment Team and its mistreatment of the evidence provided by the Syrian side. The calls on the Technical Secretariat principals to take measures to redress the situation have so far met with no response.

The above-mentioned developments around the Syria chemical file challenge the credibility of the OPCW Technical Secretariat as an independent body overseeing the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Briefings

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Henderson, as a former OPCW inspection team leader with 12 years of service, shared his first-hand perspective on the findings of the fact-finding mission report on the Douma incident in April 2018. He referred to his statement at the previous Arria-formula meeting of 20 January 2020, reiterating that the findings did not reflect the actual situation. Mr. Henderson expressed concern that the investigation of the case was controlled and locked down and stressed that he stood ready to provide sufficient information for a transparent technical inquiry, should there be a demand for that.

The intervention by Mr. Maté followed up on the issues raised by Mr. Henderson. According to the briefer, OPCW is currently facing a serious scandal and its authority is compromised since it was manipulated to retroactively justify the bombing of Syria by three Security Council members after the Douma incident. He also recalled that the OPCW leadership had retaliated against two veteran inspectors, including Ian Henderson, who had challenged the conclusions of the fact-finding mission report on the case. In his analysis, Mr. Maté restored in much detail the narrative around the rewriting of the original fact-finding mission report when it was later replaced with a version that sharply contrasted with the initial findings. He stressed that the original report did not conclude that a chemical attack occurred; instead, it presented a possibility of a non-chemical-related incident. However, according to the briefer's account, those conclusions were overridden, since the Technical Secretariat was pressured by a number of States. As a result, the publicly released report claimed that there were "reasonable grounds" to believe that a chemical attack with use of chlorine occurred in Douma. In addition, Mr. Maté drew attention to the fact that the OPCW leadership not only ignored the request of the two inspectors directly involved in the investigation to investigate alleged scientific fraud, but also tried to portray them as incompetent and playing only a minor role.

Mr. Maté extended to the OPCW Director General an appeal to address those malpractices, meet with the entire Douma team and look into all the evidence on the incident, including that excluded from the final conclusions.

Mr. Postol in his intervention focused on the technical anomalies in the fact-finding mission report on the incident in Khan Shaykhun of 4 April 2017. He claimed that all the major findings of the report were from a technical perspective disproved

by the evidence cited therein. The briefer illustrated his points with a detailed visual presentation.

As shown in his slides, no signs of the damage can be found on the satellite photos of the alleged bombing sites. The evidence of the goat allegedly poisoned at the time of the attack is disputed, since the footage shows visible tracks on the ground and the rope on the neck of the carcass, which allows it to be presumed that the goat was poisoned beforehand and later dragged into the area. The briefer's analysis also shows that the crater allegedly left by an aerial bomb was rather an artillery crater produced by a rocket explosion on the pavement. He also questioned the presence of individuals with no anti-sarin protection in the crater immediately after the alleged attack in which the substance was used, which in real life would lead to their exposure and death.

In summing up, Mr. Postol concluded by saying that the report on Khan Shaykhun is by its character the same as the report on Douma.

Statements by Member States

China, as a co-host, in its introductory remarks underscored that it supports OPCW in fulfilling its mandate in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and that all investigations should be conducted in an objective, fair, impartial and professional manner. With regard to the Syrian chemical dossier, the delegation of China called for more in-depth technical discussion in The Hague before any premature decision is taken. Addressing the imbalances in the OPCW decision-making process, China noted that pushing for a vote while there is still significant divergence will only incite confrontation and undermine cooperation. China stressed that what really harms the authority of OPCW is neglecting different views. In its assessment, such an approach undermines the reputation, functioning and long-term development of the Organisation.

The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Denmark on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic States (Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden), Italy, Canada on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, the Netherlands, Ireland, Turkey and Luxembourg expressed their wholehearted support for the activities of OPCW and emphasized that, in their view, the Organisation is fulfilling its duties in the service of the international community in a professional, objective and impartial manner. They underscored their full confidence in the expertise, impartiality and independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat investigation teams and rejected any attempts to bring their reputation into dispute.

Some of the delegations called the meeting a disinformation exercise designed to attack the professional work of OPCW and divert attention from Syrian non-compliance with the chemical weapons non-proliferation regime, thus effectively refusing to engage in any meaningful exchange with the briefers.

Syria firmly rejected the claims of some delegations about its alleged use of chemical weapons. It described the accusations as a tool of pressure against Syria and called on the Member States to put an end to the manipulations in OPCW and to the politicization of the Syrian chemical dossier. As one of the examples of the current OPCW Technical Secretariat malpractices, the Syrian delegation also recalled the mistreatment of the sensitive samples that were collected in order to resolve the outstanding issues relating to the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic.

South Africa, the Dominican Republic, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Tunisia, Brazil and Nigeria in their interventions reaffirmed their position of condemnation of the use of chemical weapons anywhere by anyone and under any circumstances and called for

the enhancement of cooperation and dialogue among the States parties. Some of those delegations emphasized that any investigation of a possible use of chemical weapons must be conducted in a most comprehensive, objective and impartial manner in order to provide irrefutable evidence, and regretted the excessive politicization of OPCW. It was also underscored by some Member States that it is imperative that the States parties continue to have confidence in the impartiality of OPCW as the only technically competent international authority in that field and that there should be no political interference in the work of OPCW. Indonesia also asked the briefers whether they had concrete proposals for OPCW to strengthen its verification regime.

Belarus, Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Iran reiterated their strong commitment to the chemical weapons non-proliferation regime while expressing profound concerns about the politicization of OPCW and calling for the preservation of the technical nature of the OPCW mandate. According to some of those delegations, OPCW is now going through a crisis of credibility. It was stated that OPCW is abused by certain countries with the objective of satisfying their narrow political ambitions and that its attribution mechanisms are weaponized to violate the sovereignty of Syria. The participants also stressed that a non-transparent and politically motivated approach to the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention is unacceptable.

Interactive discussion

All three briefers expressed surprise and profound regret about the reluctance of some participants to discuss scientific evidence that challenges the impartiality and credibility of the work of the Technical Secretariat.

Mr. Henderson pointed out that, when he discovered that the findings of the fact-finding mission on the Douma incident were not supported by science or engineering, he provided a full briefing to the delegation of one of the Western States, at its invitation. Afterwards he was told that, though it is a very serious matter that “will go very high”, nothing can be done about it.

In response to a question on the way forward, Mr. Henderson outlined three issues that should be fixed in order to redress the current crisis in the OPCW Technical Secretariat. First, improve the chain of reporting of the OPCW missions deployed in Syria, which are currently de facto subjected through a single line of control of the Chief of Cabinet of the Director General to influential Western delegations, with the United States being a key player. Second, amend the working methods of the Technical Secretariat so as to avoid selective cherry-picking of excerpts from opinions provided by carefully selected anonymous experts. Third, make sure that all the conclusions are based on scientific evidence.

On the activities of the data assessment team, Mr. Henderson noted that many States had the same issues with their initial declarations as the Syrian Arab Republic; however, they had never amounted to the level of criticism Syria is faced with. He described the approach of the Technical Secretariat to the Syrian initial declaration as “Keep the file open” and “Keep pressure on”.

Addressing the allegation that the current discussion denigrates OPCW, Mr. Maté underscored that his mission is to defend OPCW from exploitation. He reiterated his appeal to the OPCW Director General to meet with the two inspectors involved in the investigation of the Douma incident.

Mr. Postol urged the delegations to get down to technical discussions and engage in scientific deliberations rather than politicizing the matter by reiterating national positions.

Recommendations

Despite the divergent views expressed by the participants in their interventions, the following points were identified for further consideration:

(a) An open format for the discussion of the issues relating to the implementation of Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) and OPCW activities has proved its value and is much in demand among Member States. It is in the common interest to follow up on the deliberations in an open setting;

(b) Any discussion of these matters should be depoliticized, based on scientific evidence and inclusive. Independent experts provide a valuable contribution to a more objective and balanced picture. The wider audience should have uninterrupted access to such a factual narrative. Any attempts to “silence” “uncomfortable” opinions are unacceptable;

(c) There is a continued need for the consideration of OPCW-related matters by the Council to address serious flaws in the work of the Technical Secretariat that adversely affect cooperative efforts to implement resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#). To that end, the active engagement of the OPCW authorities in an open and frank exchange with the Member States is needed.

Conclusions

The meeting proved the value of the engagement of independent experts in the discussions on the Syrian chemical dossier and the OPCW activities in this field. The audience had a chance to get first-hand scientific evidence from reputed independent sources. However, the issues concerning the Technical Secretariat malpractices will remain unresolved until the OPCW authorities come out with exhaustive clarifications. Further discussion of those issues in the Council in an open format will be helpful to overcome misunderstanding, restore trust and uphold the authority of OPCW.

Enclosure

Attachment

Statements of the participants
(those received by the announced deadline
of October 6, 2020)

**Remarks by Ambassador Geng Shuang
at the Arria-Formula Meeting**

“Implementation of UNSCR 2118: Upholding the Authority of the OPCW”

Opening Remarks

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

I welcome all of you to this Arria-Formula Meeting on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2118. We believe it is a good opportunity for us to hear the views and opinions from independent experts.

As a state party to the *Chemical Weapons Convention*, China firmly opposes the use of chemical weapons for any purpose by any country, organization or individual under any circumstance. Stockpiled and abandoned chemical weapons should be destroyed.

China supports the OPCW in fulfilling its mandate in accordance with the CWC. All investigation should be conducted in an objective, impartial, and professional manner, to reach conclusions that withstand the test of time and truth.

Regarding the chemical weapon issue in Syria, we need to re-emphasize the importance of strengthened dialogue and consultations between the OPCW and the Syrian Government.

It is appreciated that the two parties maintain regular contacts and have held technical consultations. We take note that the Permanent

Representative of Syria has sent a number of letters to the President of the Security Council, providing information on possible chemical weapon attacks by terrorist groups. We call on the OPCW to pay close attention to the information and follow it up in its monthly reports.

As there are still questions and doubts around certain cases, China calls for more in-depth technical discussions in the Hague before any premature actions be taken.

We object hasty accusations to alleged use of chemical weapons in the absence of hard evidence. In January, the Russian Delegation hosted an Arria-Formula meeting, revealing the gaps and inconsistencies in the Douma report. Up to now, there are still many question marks. The establishment, composition and working methods of IIT are controversial as well. Therefore China voted against the draft decision in the 94th Executive Council along with two other members, and 9 members abstained on it. The decision is far from widely supported. Many countries believe it is improper to jump to conclusions, and relevant State Parties need to continue technical discussions.

It is our consistent position that State Parties should bridge differences through dialogue, and maintain the established practice of making decisions based on consensus in the OPCW.

The OPCW should make every effort to strengthen mutual trust among State Parties and carry on the tradition of making decisions based on consensus. Pushing for a vote while there is still significant divergence, will only incite confrontation and undermine cooperation. Some countries claim that raising different views will harm OPCW's authority. On the contrary, what really harms the authority of the OPCW is neglecting different views.

It will also undermine the reputation, functioning and long-term development of the OPCW.

As the discussion in the Hague is going on, we are surprised to see a Security Council draft resolution on this file. It is even more surprising that certain country insists on convening consultations, in total disregard of Council members' concerns. Such practice is detrimental to the settlement of the chemical weapon issue in Syria, the momentum of the political process, and the unity of the Council.

Bearing in mind the above questions, I would like to thank the briefers for their presence and look forward to their professional perspectives.

Thank you.

※ ※ ※ ※

Closing Remarks

I would like to thank the briefers again for their remarks, which contributed positively to this meeting and to this dossier. The information provided by the three briefers was revealing and shocking. It exposed the political manipulation behind this dossier. We hope it could be shared with the OPCW and would be taken into account in future discussions.

It is our consistent position that the disagreements among State Parties should be resolved through technical discussions, instead of rushing to conclusions. Germany and some other western countries questioned the motivation of Russia and China in hosting this Arria Formula meeting. They should read the concept note more carefully. What the briefers shared with

us is based upon science. But some western countries did not respond to facts and evidence, only blindly rejected and slandered the information provided by the experts. There is no logic in their statements, nor did they respect facts and science, which further exposed their political agenda. We call on all sides to adopt a scientific, objective and responsible attitude in discussing the chemical weapons issue in Syria .

Thank you.

**Statement by Ian Henderson to the Arria-formula Meeting
of the UN Security Council on 28 September 2020**

1. I attend this meeting in response to requests from delegations to provide my personal experiences as an OPCW inspector. I shall briefly clarify my situation here, and what I can or can't do. I am attending in my individual capacity, as a scientist and former OPCW Inspection Team Leader with more than twelve years' impartial and committed service. I remain impartial, and would therefore kindly request that you don't refer to my role, nor that of any other Douma Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) inspectors, as being part of anyone's disinformation campaign.

2. I was not directly involved in the Ltamenah FFM. Whilst I have studied those three cases, including the FFM reports and the subsequent report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), it would be inappropriate for me to provide opinion on that topic at this meeting. I was, however, directly involved in the Douma FFM investigation, and will answer questions on that topic as best I can.

3. At the previous Arria-formula meeting on this topic, I provided a written statement which subsequently became public. The summary report of the engineering study on the Douma cylinders is also publicly available. Therefore, there is little further I need to add on the details of my involvement and findings.

4. I speak for myself, but I know there are other Douma FFM inspectors who hold similar concerns. As a scientist, I cannot be convinced by the only defence of the Douma FFM report being one that states "we had the best (anonymous) experts; therefore, the case is closed; believe us, trust us". There is a strong alternative case, resulting from the findings of inspectors in Douma and Damascus, that has demonstrated facts and science that point towards a different outcome. But in my case, I am not imploring you to believe me, to believe us, despite the significant volume of information now available on Douma. All we have been saying all along, is that surely there are now sufficient clear contradictory facts and information to justify a transparent technical enquiry, aimed at clarifying what happened in Douma, conducted in a manner that demonstrates scientific rigour and integrity.

5. But the lockdown on Douma remains impenetrable. Our hope, therefore, remains that there is someone with the scientific discipline and integrity to recognise the possibility that something may have gone amiss with the Douma FFM investigation and report. And, perhaps more importantly, we continue to hope that there is someone willing and able to do something about it.

Ian Henderson

PRESENTATION

by Mr. Theodore Postol,
Professor Emeritus of Science, Technology
and National Security Policy
at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology,
at the Arria formula meeting of the Security Council:

**“Implementation of the UNSCR 2118:
Upholding the Authority of the OPCW”**
on September 28, 2020

click to download:

https://russiaun.ru/en/news/presentation_postol



**United Nations Security Council Arrria Formula Meeting on the Implementation of UNSCR
2118: Upholding the Authority of the OPCW**

**Statement by Ambassador Bob Rae, Permanent Representative of Canada, delivered on
behalf of Australia, New Zealand and Canada**

**September 28, 2020
AS DELIVERED**

Dear colleagues,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the following countries: Australia, New Zealand, and my own country, Canada.

Our countries remain deeply concerned by the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and we add our voices to what others have said today - there can be no political solution and there can be no sustainable peace if there is impunity for crimes of war.

Even more worrying is the morally indefensible position taken by some here today that the regime's abhorrent abuses can be ignored by attacking the very institutions that are meant to hold Syria to account.

The OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT)'s conclusion regarding the March 2017 sarin and chlorine attacks brings the regime's record of chemical weapons use to seven confirmed cases and, by direct implication, establishes that the regime failed to declare and destroy all of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities.

We welcome the OPCW Executive Council's decision of July 2020 to address Syria's possession and use of chemical weapons and we strongly encourage the Conference of the States Parties to take action if Syria does not comply with the decision within the 90-day timeframe established by the Council.

The irony of bringing this debate back towards the UN Security Council is not lost on us. It was Russia's refusal to allow the Joint Investigative Mechanism to continue its work that led States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to put in place arrangements to identify perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria, in full compliance with the Convention. In doing so, States Parties sent a very clear message that we would not allow any of the permanent members of the Council to shield the users of chemical weapons. At the same time, States Parties demonstrated their confidence in the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat to undertake the difficult and dangerous work assigned to it – not to reach political conclusions, but to identify the facts.

The international community has shown that the collective stand against impunity is strong. We cannot allow this to be undermined by efforts to sow confusion and doubt about the OPCW's mandate and expertise. We are watching, I have to say, I'm certainly watching today, with growing concern coordinated actions across several multilateral fora to discredit and undermine the OPCW. This meeting is simply the latest in a series of such efforts, which include misinformation campaigns, smear campaigns against staff, and efforts to starve the organization

of vital financial resources. In its agenda for this meeting Russia has asked "what can be done to uphold the authority of the OPCW?" Well our answer is direct and quite simple – "stop undermining it".

Canada, Australia and New Zealand reiterate our strongest support for the OPCW, whose impartial, independent, professional and thorough investigative work is invaluable in bringing the perpetrators of chemical weapons use in Syria to the bar. We stand by the highly professional work of the OPCW's Fact Finding Mission (FFM) and Declarations Assessment Team (DAT). We stand by the legitimacy of the IIT and the credibility of its evidence-based and independent conclusions. To question the objectivity, impartiality, integrity or capacity of the OPCW and its investigative bodies is in fact, to prejudice the fight against chemical weapons.

**Nordic-Baltic statement at the United Nations Security Council Arrria-Formula
Meeting 28 September 2020.**

Implementation of UNSCR 2118: Upholding the Authority of the OPCW

Delivered by H.E. Ambassador Martin Bille Hermann

Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to be speaking on behalf of Nordic-Baltic countries Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania Norway, Sweden and my own country Denmark.

Mr. Chairman,

The re-emergence of chemical weapons is one of the most urgent threats to international peace and security and has to be dealt with firmly and collectively. Impunity for breaches of the global norm against chemical weapons must not be tolerated.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the recent assassination attempt on Alexei Navalny, who was poisoned in Russia by a military chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok” group. Any use of chemical weapons, under any circumstances, is a clear breach of international law and contrary to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which prohibits the use of all chemical weapons. We reiterate our call on Russia, as a matter of urgency, to be fully transparent and to bring those responsible to justice, bearing in mind Russia’s commitments under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The prohibition on Chemical Weapons continues to be challenged – deliberately, and on the assumption of absence of accountability. But violations of the Convention must have consequences. It is exactly for this reason that a number of essential decisions – as foreseen by the Chemical Weapons Convention – have been taken.

The use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic led to the establishment of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission and the Joint Investigative Mechanism. Highly professional and competent bodies designed to deal with use of Chemical Weapons. At the same time, it was clear that Syria had not fully declared its Chemical Weapons

Programme. To remedy this violation of the Treaty, the OPCW established the Declarations Assessment Team.

At a special session of the conference of States Parties, it was decided to task the OPCW Technical Secretariat to set up arrangements to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons (CW) in the Syrian Arab Republic (SAR). This was a direct consequence of the Russian veto of the continuation of the JIM. Just as it was beginning to deliver results.

The Declarations Assessment Team, The Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team are instrumental in preserving the integrity of our Chemical Weapons Convention and in upholding the global ban on chemical weapons.

We commend the extraordinary high degree of professionalism of these mechanisms. The quality and competence of the staff is beyond reproach. Their tenacity and courage – working in adverse and sometimes hostile or dangerous situations – is admirable. The impartiality and integrity above questioning. We can only congratulate the OPCW Director-General in having assembled teams of exceptional quality that complements his own efforts and that of the Technical Secretariat in general.

We firmly reject attempts to discredit or bring into disrepute the OPCW and the work of the Technical Secretariat. Such attempts against the international community's efforts in securing accountability and preventing use of Chemical Weapons are deeply concerning.

To us the law is clear. The decisions to set up mechanisms in order to investigate the facts in Syria are in full accordance with the Convention. The investigations and the assessments by the Fact Finding Mission, by the Declarations and Assessment Team and the Investigative and Identification Teams are well established and beyond any reasonable doubt. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force as concluded by the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The Syrian Arab Republic should return to full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention in accordance with the clear and verifiable parameters as set up by the Executive Council in its decision of 9 July.

We reiterate our full confidence in the technical expertise, objectivity, impartiality and independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its Investigation and Identification Team.

Mr. Chairman,

This concludes my statement.



**MISSION PERMANENTE
DE LA FRANCE AUPRÈS
DES NATIONS UNIES
À NEW YORK**

*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*

REUNION DU CONSEIL EN FORMAT ARRIA – SYRIE / ARMES CHIMIQUES

**DÉCLARATION DE M. NICOLAS DE RIVIÈRE,
REPRÉSENTANT PERMANENT DE LA FRANCE AUPRÈS DES NATIONS UNIES**

New York, 28 septembre 2020

Tout d'abord, je voudrais remercier la Fédération de Russie et la Chine. Il est très rare qu'elles proposent de tenir une réunion en format « Arria », je remarque que cela devient une habitude sur le dossier chimique syrien. Je regrette seulement que la réunion d'aujourd'hui se réduise à un exercice de désinformation.

Permettez-moi tout d'abord de rappeler une évidence : à la base de la discussion d'aujourd'hui se trouve le fait très simple et évident que le régime syrien, en août 2013, a gazé 1 300 hommes, femmes et enfants pour renforcer sa mainmise militaire. Et cela n'est contesté par personne.

Depuis lors, du sarin, du chlore et d'autres armes chimiques ont été utilisés et continuent de l'être, en Syrie et ailleurs. La réémergence des armes chimiques dans le monde, et pas seulement en Syrie, est l'une des menaces les plus graves auxquelles nous sommes confrontés aujourd'hui.

C'est pourquoi je regrette que chaque fois que le régime Assad est incriminé, des efforts systématiques soient entrepris pour le protéger, pour semer la confusion et paralyser l'action internationale. En 2017, le renouvellement du mécanisme conjoint d'enquête, le JIM, a été bloqué à trois reprises par un veto. Aujourd'hui, l'équipe d'enquête et d'identification de l'OIAC est discréditée sous le couvert d'une soi-disant expertise scientifique parce qu'elle fait précisément ce que la communauté internationale attend d'elle : elle enquête sur les incidents et identifie les responsables de manière tout à fait professionnelle, impartiale et indépendante. Son rapport publié le 8 avril sur les attaques à l'arme chimique à Latamneh est particulièrement accablant pour les unités des forces aériennes du régime.

En 2013, le régime syrien s'est engagé à coopérer en toute transparence et en toute bonne foi avec l'OIAC. Et il faut le dire : le régime n'a pas tenu sa parole. Il est grand temps qu'il fasse la lumière sur l'état de ses stocks. A l'initiative de la France, le Conseil exécutif de l'OIAC a décidé en juillet dernier de donner 90 jours à la Syrie pour redresser la situation. Il est encore temps. Nous appelons la Syrie à coopérer sans délai avec le secrétariat de l'OIAC et à révéler son programme chimique militaire.

Il y a vingt-trois ans, l'OIAC a été créée pour être un pilier de notre sécurité collective mondiale.

www.franceonu.org
@FranceONU

One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza
245 East 47th street, 44th floor
New York, NY 10017, USA

Elle a prouvé sa valeur. Il est honteux de chercher à la discréditer sous prétexte que ses conclusions ne sont pas conformes à la version des faits que la Syrie et certains membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité veulent donner.

Monsieur le président,

L'utilisation d'armes chimiques est un crime qui menace l'humanité entière. Comme vous le savez, c'est aussi une menace pour la paix et la sécurité internationales, comme l'a déclaré à l'unanimité ce Conseil dans sa déclaration présidentielle de novembre 2019. Il ne peut y avoir d'impunité. C'est pourquoi nous soutenons le mécanisme international indépendant et impartial et c'est pourquoi la France est à la tête du partenariat international contre l'impunité pour l'utilisation des armes chimiques. Tous les pays qui le souhaitent peuvent rejoindre ce partenariat, qui n'est ni un instrument anti-syrien ni un club de pays. Par cet engagement, ils démontreront leur attachement au droit, à la stabilité internationale et à la justice.

Je vous remercie./

SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING IN ARRIA FORMULA - SYRIA (CHEMICAL)

STATEMENT BY MR NICOLAS DE RIVIÈRE, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

=TRANSLATION FROM FRENCH=

New York, 28 September 2020

First of all, I would like to thank the Russian Federation and China. Proposing to hold an Arria-formula meeting is very rare on their part. I notice that this is becoming a habit on the Syrian chemical file. I just regret that today's meeting is reduced to a disinformation exercise.

Let me first of all recall the obvious: at the root of today's discussion is the very simple and plain fact that the Syrian regime, in August 2013, gassed 1,300 men, women and children to strengthen its military hand. And this is not disputed by anyone.

Since then, sarin, chlorine and other chemical weapons have been used and continue to be used, in Syria and elsewhere. The re-emergence of chemical weapons in the world, and not just in Syria, is one of the most serious threats we face today.

That is why I regret that every time the Assad regime is incriminated, systematic efforts are undertaken to protect it, to sow confusion and paralyse international action. In 2017, the renewal of the Joint Investigation Mechanism, the JIM, was blocked three times by a veto. Today, the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team is being discredited under the guise of a so-called scientific expertise because it is doing precisely what the international community expects of it: it is investigating incidents and identifying those responsible in a fully professional, impartial and independent manner. Its report published on 8 April on the chemical weapon attacks in Latamneh is particularly damning for the regime's air force units.

www.franceonu.org
@FranceONU

245 East 47th street, 44th floor
New York, N.Y. 10017, USA

In 2013, the Syrian regime committed itself to cooperate in transparency and good faith with the OPCW. And it must be said: the regime has not kept its word. It is high time for it to shed light on the state of its stocks. At France's initiative, the OPCW Executive Council decided last July to give Syria 90 days to redress the situation. There is still time. We call on Syria to cooperate without delay with the OPCW Secretariat and to reveal its military chemical programme.

Twenty-three years ago, the OPCW was created to be a pillar of our collective global security. It has proven its value. It is disgraceful to seek to discredit it on the pretext that its conclusions are not consistent with the version of the facts that Syria and some permanent members of the Security Council want to give.

Mr. President,

The use of chemical weapons is a crime that threatens all humanity. As you know, it is also a threat to international peace and security, as this Council unanimously stated in its presidential statement from November 2019. There can be no impunity. This is why we support the International Independent and Impartial Mechanism and this is why France is leading the international partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons. All countries that so wish can join this partnership, which is neither an anti-Syrian instrument nor a club of countries. Through this commitment, they will demonstrate their commitment to the law, international stability and justice.

Thank you.

www.franceonu.org
@FranceONU

245 East 47th street, 44th floor
New York, N Y 10017, USA

**Statement by H. E. Ambassador Eshagh Al Habib
Deputy Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
At the United Nations Security Council Arrria-Formula Meeting
On “the Implementation of UNSCR 2118: Upholding the Authority of the OPCW”
New York, 28 September 2020**

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful,

Mr. Chairman,

I thank the Permanent Missions of Russia and China for organizing this meeting.

As the main victim of the large-scale, most systematic and frequent use of chemical weapons in contemporary history, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances.

Likewise, as an active country in the negotiations of the chemical weapons convention and a party thereto, Iran is a genuine strong advocate of promoting the balanced, full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Convention as well as upholding the integrity and authority of the OPCW.

Historical cases have taught us that the authority of no instrument or institution can be upheld without strict adherence of all parties and participants to the rules of the game, and the CWC and OPCW are not exceptions.

Partial implementation or discriminatory application of treaties as well as the exploitation of international institutions or abuse of their process act like a poison pill for their authority and effective performance. This is more dangerous regarding conventions and organizations on non-proliferation and disarmament as they relate to the security of nations.

The living example is the politicization and polarization of the OPCW following the consideration, by that Organization, of the Syrian chemical weapons dossier, initiated by a group of the CWC's States Parties to further their politically-motivated objectives.

To that end, Western countries first accused Syria of the use of chemical weapons and later abused the OPCW to develop purportedly technical reports and pseudo-legal justification to supposedly substantiate it.

They first used the unprofessional and yet biased work of the Fact-Finding Mission that was based mostly on unauthorized and open sources. Later, they followed their

objective through the non-consensual decision on the establishment of the so-called attribution mechanism, the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). While such a proposal had required the amendment of the Convention, it was adopted by the affirmative vote of even less than half of the States Parties and also in the absence of the representatives of 87 States Parties.

Now, to advance their goal, they are referring to a technically defective report of the IIT, prepared without on-site investigation or due regard to the chain of custody.

Such unproductive policies and destructive practices of Western countries have divided the States Parties, and by turning the Organization into a battlefield of unfruitful disputes among the Member States, have adversely affected the efforts for the full and effective realization of the Convention's object and purpose.

For instance, it now deflects the attention from the very purpose of the Convention, namely the elimination of chemical weapons, which is yet to be realized due to blatant failure by the sole major Possessor State Party.

All these events happened against the backdrop that in 2014, the head of the Joint Mission to Eliminate Chemical Weapons in Syria, presenting her final report to the Security Council, confirmed that Syria has fulfilled all its commitments and that its entire chemical stockpiles have been destroyed. Later, the OPCW confirmed the destruction of the entire chemical stockpile of Syria and all its 27 production facilities.

Likewise, they also continue to ignore the Syrian government's significant cooperation with the OPCW and the UN, including providing over 80 monthly reports and large amount of information it provided to the OPCW. Such cooperation is still going on.

Despite that, the Security Council has held over 80 monthly meetings on the subject with no result, as such meetings are only used to demonize Syria based on unsubstantiated allegations.

To avoid further erosion of the OPCW's credibility and undermining of the CWC's authority and effectiveness, this trend needs to discontinue. We need to do whatever in our power to restore the OPCW's real position and focus on promoting the CWC's full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Arria formula meeting

**Implementation of UNSCR 2118: Upholding the authority of the
OPCW**

Mr President, I thank you for giving us the opportunity to offer our remarks on the state of implementation of Security Council Resolution 2118. Italy is deeply concerned about the re-emergence, starting in 2013, of the use of chemical weapons in different geographical areas, particularly conflict-ridden countries, such as the Syrian Arab Republic.

Italy's policy has always been centered on a firm rebuke of the use of chemical weapons, anywhere, at any time, by anyone, and under any circumstance. And we believe, without exception, that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable.

Since the creation of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission mechanism in 2014, OPCW inspectors have attested to numerous cases of use of chemical weapons in Syria. More recently, the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to the OPCW Executive Council and to the UN Secretary-General, regrettably confirmed the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force on 8 April 2020.

This meets with Italy's strong condemnation and, conversely, with Italy's strong support for the Executive Council Decision, taken in July 2020, to address the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic (EC-94/DEC.2 of 9 July 2020) and to urge the Country to adopt all measures required by this Decision.

The use of chemical weapons must not be tolerated. The end of impunity is crucial for credible, effective deterrence, and we will continue to support efforts towards ensuring accountability for those responsible of these heinous crimes. In this spirit, Italy has joined and actively supports the work of the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Italy also remains strongly committed to supporting the Chemical Weapons Convention and the work of the OPCW. We reiterate our full confidence in the technical expertise, objectivity, impartiality and independence of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its Investigation and Identification Team.

The international community, as a whole, shares the responsibility to enforce the prohibition of chemical weapons and uphold the global chemical non-proliferation regime, which is a basic building block for international peace and security.

I thank you

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Andrejs Pildegovičs
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Latvia
at the UN Security Council Arria – formula meeting on
the implementation of UNSC resolution 2118
28 September 2020**

Thank you, Mr. Chair, dear Vassily,

I am honoured to participate in this Arria – formula meeting on pressing issue of the use of chemical weapons. My delegation was intrigued to hear about independent experts investigating OPCW's methods and conclusions, but to our disappointment, the information on briefers was not released until the very day of this debate. Furthermore, their interventions did not fulfill our expectations for an objective and impartial assessment on today's subject.

Latvia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Denmark on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic States, and supports the statement by the PR of Estonia.

We are gravely concerned by the repeated attempts by Syria and of a few States, including those of a Permanent Member of this Council, to challenge the authority and integrity of the OPCW. There is no doubt that the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat, in spite of challenges posed by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) are fulfilling their duties in the service of the international community in a professional, objective and impartial manner. We express our strong political support to this important organization and encourage all States Parties to provide a predictable financial base for its future work in 2021.

We are deeply concerned about the continued non-compliance by certain States with their international obligations on disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. This is why the EU strongly supported the establishment of an international attribution mechanism to identify and hold accountable the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons.

Latvia condemns the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force as concluded by the first report of the OPCW IIT this year. We support the decision that sets clear and verifiable parameters for action and we urge the Syrian Arab Republic to take all measures required to redress the situation in the given timeframe. Impunity for these heinous acts will not be tolerated.

The use of chemical weapons is completely unacceptable under any circumstances.

Thus, we express our outrage about the hypocrisy and cynicism of one of the founding Member States of the UN holding a meeting on the implementation of UNSCR 2118¹ while independent specialized laboratories have confirmed the poisoning of opposition leader in Russia Alexei Navalny by a military chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok” group on its soil.

Instead of fully cooperating and stepping up transparency, we are once more witnessing a page from Russia’s disinformation playbook. We saw it in 2018 in the Salisbury case and we see it now. We deplore how Russia desperately attempts to allegedly link the origins of Novichok with other countries, including Latvia while trying to avoid disclosing the circumstances of the assassination attempt and bringing those responsible for this criminal act to justice.

The international Community cannot remain silent when the UN Charter and fundamental principles of international law are manifestly violated. We call on the UN Security Council, all Member States to demand accountability, a prompt investigation and justice to be served. An adequate response from the international society and relevant bodies should follow immediately. Latvia, together with other Member States of the European Union will continue to follow these issues closely and consider their implications in the OPCW as well as in a wider international context.

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹ Upholding the Authority of the OPCW.



GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG
Représentation permanente auprès
des Nations Unies

28 September 2020

**Security Council Arria-formula meeting on the implementation of UNSC
resolution 2118
“Upholding the Authority of the OPCW”**

28 September 2020

**Speech/intervention by Tatiana Konieczny
Counselor at the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg to the United Nations**

Thank you Mr Chairman.

Much has been said already, so I will be brief.

Implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 is a matter of utmost importance to us all. Luxembourg was an elected member of the Security Council when the resolution was adopted unanimously, seven years ago.

Luxembourg would like to seize this opportunity to reiterate its full confidence in the technical expertise, objectivity, impartiality, professionalism and independence of the OPCW's Director General and Technical Secretariat as well as its Investigation and Identification Team (IIT).

A limited number of States have criticized the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and later the work of the IIT since the very first reports on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. It is important to remember that the FFM and IIT, under the supervision of the OPCW, had to step up because the extension of the mandate of the OPCW-UN Joint-Investigative Mechanism, the JIM, was blocked by a veto in the Security Council on 24 October 2017. This happened after the JIM concluded that the Syrian Arab Republic forces were responsible for using chemical weapons.

The OPCW has to be commended for the way in which it has addressed allegations regarding the methodology of the investigation teams and the impartiality of their reports. The OPCW carried out a transparent and thorough investigation following those allegations. The results were made public on 6 February 2020 and they speak to the professionalism of the Organization.

The report of the IIT clearly shows that the investigations were conducted with the utmost care, expertise, impartiality, and transparency.

We would object to those criticizing the IIT for not investigating on the ground in Syria. Indeed, in spite of many good-faith attempts, the Syrian authorities have blocked all visa requests of the investigators.

Despite the numerous obstacles it has been facing, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has continued to ensure an exemplary quality of its work.

More broadly, we sincerely hope that the international norm prohibiting the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances will be re-established, which would ultimately make the need to use fact-finding missions and international investigations an occurrence of the past.

I thank you for your attention.



Intervention of

Ambassador Dr. Bashar Ja'afari

The Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic

At the Security Council Arria-Formula Meeting on

**The “implementation of UNSC resolution 2118: Upholding
the Authority of the OPCW”**

New York 28/9/2020

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to thank my colleague Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation and Ambassador Zhang Jun Permanent Representative of People Republic of China and the colleagues in their Missions for holding this meeting.

I would like also to thank the briefers for the information and insight they provide us.

We really appreciate the efforts of the friendly member states in the Security Council that seek to distance this sensitive file from politicized considerations. However, this will not be an easy task as the OPCW Technical Secretariat and UN Office for Disarmament Affaires are fulfilling western political agendas duo to the immense pressure by some member states, led by the United States, UK and France, in order to maintain the

chemical weapons file as a tool of pressure and blackmail against Syria and Russia.

The same hostile governments continue their attempts to cast artificial doubts about the solid and established facts, which proved that the Syrian Arab Republic no longer possesses any chemical weapons and that it has not and will not use them. Furthermore, they refused to admit that the activities of the “Joint Investigative Mechanism – JIM” and the “Fact-Finding Mission – FFM”, along with their reports were neither impartial, professional, nor balanced, but rather failed to provide scientific and factual documented evidence of any accusation leveled against Syria. Not to mention the remote Hollywood investigations conducted by the JIM and the FFM without visiting the crime scene, and the failure of the authors of their reports to provide any proof or scientific evidence regarding the validity and integrity of the chain of custody of evidence that has been used in

directing false accusations against the Syrian Arab Republic.

Having said that, allow me to take advantage of the presence of scientific experts with us in this meeting, in order to benefit from their experience regarding some questions that OPCW TS, is still trying to avoid answering:

- 1- To what extent the criteria for the reliability of the “chain of custody” apply to the methods used by experts of JIM and FFM, when they remotely investigated some of the incidents in Syria from Turkey? And how can they rely on so-called “open sources” and terrorist entities, namely the "White Helmets" terrorist organization, who happened to be the first to be present where the alleged crimes took place, and who happened to be the party that collected and transferred the so-called evidences?

- 2- How can anyone rely on the conclusions reached by the JIM and FFM while they used in their reports speculative and uncertain terms such as “likely” or “unlikely” while evaluating scientific and factual elements?
- 3- How can we explain that OPCW experts refused the Syrian request to collect samples from the “Al-Shuyrat” air base? As you know, the US claimed that this base was used in “Khan Sheikhoun” bombing, in order to justify its aggression against it? In this regard, can technical experts explain the scientific possibility of bomb falling from a warplane over the alleged site of this accident, while it was flying at a distance of five kilometers away from this site?
- 4- Regarding the alleged "Douma" incident, is it not scientifically impossible for a cylinder to fall from the sky and collide with the roofs of houses without exploding or being deformed? Even when it fell on a bed inside a room, no damage was caused neither to

the bed or the furniture nor the glass in this room, it is a miracle!

- 5- How can the OPCW lose sensitive samples that were collected in order to solve the outstanding issues regarding the Syrian Declaration? The OPCW TS informed the Syrian side on June 22, 2020, about a leakage of these samples. Yet, and until today, the OPCW TS is unable to provide a clear explanation regarding this leakage.
- 6- Didn't massive legal and procedural violations and abuses occur when the OPCW violated the Convention and established a so-called "Investigation and Identification Team - IIT" in June 2018? I am talking here about the non-consensual decision that was taken by an artificial majority and in the absence of the representatives of 87 member states from the vote!

Allow me here to invite you to read the report published by "The Gray Zone" entitled "Leaked docs expose

massive Syria propaganda operation waged by Western governments' contractors and media". This report reveals scandals about hundreds of millions of dollars that Western governments, namely the US and UK, have spent from taxpayers' money to establish and finance platforms, networks and media institutions, especially the "White Helmets", in order to promote distorted media propaganda against the Syrian government.

Mr. President,

It seems that the school of Gobbles, the Nazi propaganda minister , is still open until now and many of its graduates hold higher degrees in the literature of lying , the art of distorting scientific facts and sophistry philosophy that is anti- science and specialist experts who know well what they are talking about. These scientists support their talk with scientific evidence based on long experience and moral principle that is against Gobbles propaganda.

Unfortunately, colleague representatives of NATO alliance states insist to refuse opinions of scientists and attempt to empty the purpose of this meeting. Insisting on wrongful allegations is even worse than wrongdoing itself because it indicates principal mis-intentions, weak claims, and the absence of moral vision.

History is full of a series of scandals fabricated by the Same Gobblers graduates to destroy many member states, such as the invasion of Vietnam, Libya, Iraq, and the attempt to invade Cuba, and my own country Syria.

Mr. President,

We in Syria are realistic and pragmatic, and we will continue to work with the OPCW's Technical Secretariat within the limits of respecting and preserving the Convention and without prejudice to our national sovereignty. And we believe that the time has come to permanently put an end to the manipulation and politicization of this files and close it for good.

Thank you.



**Statement
by
Mr. M. Mevlüt Yakut
Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Turkey
at the
Security Council Arrria-formula Meeting on
“Implementation of UNSCR 2118: Upholding the Authority of the OPCW”
New York, 28 September 2020**

Mr. Chair,

Thank you for organizing this meeting and providing a platform to discuss this issue of utmost significance.

At the outset, I would like to underline that Turkey condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. This is a serious violation of international law and a crime against humanity.

The case of Syria remains highly worrisome. It has become clear during 10 years of Syrian conflict that there is no guarantee to prevent the recurrence of chemical weapons attacks, due to the regime's complete disregard of human lives, let alone its obligations emanating from the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Indeed, the regime's repeated crimes have been well documented on several occasions since 2013.

The adoption of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) was an important step in the aftermath of the gruesome attack in Ghouta in August 2013, which left hundreds of innocents dead and many more injured.

Unfortunately, 7 years after its adoption, the objectives of this resolution are yet to be fulfilled. This is mainly due to the ongoing gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies resulting from the initial chemical weapons declaration of the Assad regime. We continue to expect full implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

While the regime has evaded its responsibility stemming from this resolution, its record for the use of chemical weapons has been constantly growing. There is a clear correlation between its non-compliance and growing sense of impunity.

We cannot let the regime perpetuate the illusion that it has no chemical weapon stockpiles. The regime must be urged for a swift and result-oriented cooperation with the OPCW.

A strong message by the members of the Security Council is critical in this regard.

Mr. Chair,

We are all entitled to our own opinions, but not to our own facts.

OPCW Technical Secretariat, the Fact Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) perform a critical role in a scientific manner by identifying the perpetrators of the chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

The Ltamaneh report of the IIT clearly established the responsibility of the Syrian regime air force in three chemical weapons attacks that took place in March 2017.

This report is an important step to ensure that those responsible for the chemical weapons attacks in Syria are held accountable for their crimes.

Likewise, we look forward to the conclusion of the ongoing investigations carried out by both the FFM and the IIT on other cases.

Turkey reiterates its strong support for the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT).

We have full trust in the professionalism and impartiality of the FFM and the objectivity of its reports. We sincerely believe that it would serve no party's interest to question the credibility of the FFM.

Turkey is among the co-sponsors of the decision adopted during the 94th Executive Council of the OPCW. This decision is a crucial step in addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime.

This decision sets clear deadlines for the regime in order to return to full compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

I would also like to recall the responsibility of the parties who have influence on the Syrian regime in this regard.

Turkey will continue to support the steps taken by the international community, first and foremost the UN and OPWC, for ensuring full accountability in Syria.

Thank you.