



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

**9097**<sup>th</sup> meeting  
 Wednesday, 20 July 2022, 10 a.m.  
 New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Costa Filho . . . . . (Brazil)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Mr. Hoxha
China . . . . .	Mr. Xing Jisheng
France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon . . . . .	Mrs. Koumba Pambo
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Agyeman
India . . . . .	Mr. Mathur
Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Gallagher
Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Olanda
Mexico . . . . .	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Polyanskiy
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Ms. Matar
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Eckersley
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Mills

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 June 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/530)

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

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Middle East**

#### **Letter dated 30 June 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/530)**

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

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

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/530, which contains the text of a letter dated 30 June 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

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

Since the Council's previous consideration of this matter (see S/PV.9026), and consistent with established practice, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been in regular contact with its counterparts at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter.

Efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to clarify all the outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration and subsequent declarations of the Syrian Arab Republic have not progressed since the Council last met on this issue. The OPCW Technical Secretariat has yet to receive the requested declaration from the Syrian Arab Republic on all undeclared types and quantities of nerve agents produced and/or weaponized at a former chemical weapons production

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

The OPCW Technical Secretariat also expects further information and documentation from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding damage caused during the 8 June 2021 attack on a military facility housing a declared former chemical weapons production facility. I have been advised that the Technical Secretariat has not yet received a response to the request for information regarding the unauthorized movement and the remains of two destroyed cylinders related to the chemical weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018. The Syrian Arab Republic must respond with urgency to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's requests.

I regret to inform Council members that the Technical Secretariat is still not in a position to conduct the twenty-fifth round of consultations in Damascus between the Syrian National Authority and the DAT due to the repeated refusal by the Syrian Arab Republic to issue an entry visa for the DAT's lead technical expert. Moreover, I have been advised that the Syrian National Authority has stated that the exclusion of the same DAT expert from a limited round of consultations in Beirut, as proposed by the Technical Secretariat, is a condition for its participation in those consultations.

I have also been advised that, in response to the Technical Secretariat's note verbale dated 20 May, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic sent a letter to the OPCW Director-General on 31 May, agreeing with the OPCW Technical Secretariat's proposal to address the shortcomings in the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration through an exchange of correspondence for the time being.

In his letter, Syria's Foreign Minister also acknowledged that such an exchange could not replace consultations between the Syrian National Authority and the DAT, while at the same time reiterating that the exclusion of the DAT's lead technical expert was a condition for holding the twenty-fifth round of consultations.

I urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat, as set out in paragraph 7 of article VII of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and to facilitate arrangements for the deployment of the DAT, in accordance with paragraph 7 of resolution 2118 (2013), including

by allowing immediate and unfettered access for all personnel designated by the OPCW Technical Secretariat as soon as possible.

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

The OPCW Technical Secretariat remains fully committed to ensuring the full implementation by the Syrian Arab Republic of all its declaration requirements and assisting Syria in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. I take this opportunity to once again reiterate my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of the work of the OPCW.

I regret to inform the Council that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the OPCW Technical Secretariat to close the issue related to the detection of a schedule 2 chemical at the Barzah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in November 2018.

Regarding the in-person meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is still awaiting the Syrian Arab Republic's position on the latest version of the agenda. The proposed meeting would be an important opportunity to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between both parties.

Further to previous updates to the Council, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) remains in the process of studying all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. I have been advised that the FFM is continuing its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic and other States parties with regard to a number of incidents and is preparing for upcoming deployments.

I understand that the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues its investigations into incidents in which the FFM has determined that chemical

weapons were used or likely were used in the Syrian Arab Republic. The IIT will issue further reports in due course.

With regard to OPCW Conference of the States Parties decision C-25/DEC.9, of 21 April 2021, entitled "Addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic", I have been informed that, unfortunately, the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet completed any of the measures stipulated in paragraph 5 of OPCW Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2.

The use of chemical weapons is a grave violation of international law and an affront to our shared humanity. We need to remain vigilant to ensure that those awful weapons are never used again and are eliminated, not only in Syria but everywhere.

Let me conclude by assuring the Council of the commitment of the United Nations to work with all Member States to reinforce the norm against chemical weapons and ensure that those responsible for their use are held to account.

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

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

**Mr. Polyanskiy** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Mrs. Nakamitsu presented us today with yet another report, the 105th report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) (see S/2022/530). It is unfortunate that, like previous reports, it is built on the same pattern and geared towards the achievement of the same goal, namely, to create the impression that Syria is supposedly unhelpful and uncooperative. As a matter of fact, Damascus continues to fulfil its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and to engage actively with the OPCW.

I think that our Syrian colleagues will today describe in detail the work that has been done, giving the Security Council an opportunity to have a more objective view of what is taking place. The reports of the Director-General still prevent that from being achieved. Any progress made in cooperation with Damascus, such as the decision to extend until the end of the year the tripartite agreement among Syria, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services,

is either barely mentioned or completely omitted. We have repeatedly pointed out the disadvantage of that approach at previous meetings of the Security Council on the Syrian chemical file. In order to be able to state this again, it is more than enough to convene an open Council meeting once every three months.

During today's meeting, we expected to see OPCW Director-General Arias among the briefers. We have a significant list of questions for him. We are grateful to the Brazilian presidency for sending an invitation to the Director-General. We understand that many are on holiday in Europe at present; however, we expect the OPCW Director-General to find an opportunity to address the members of the Security Council at the next meeting. For the moment, questions to him and the body he leads are not fewer in number. The majority of those questions continue to be linked to the misinformation in the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission report on the incident in Douma and the persecution of those who are not afraid to speak the truth in that regard.

We are also surprised by other things. For example, we have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that, in all the years of his work, Mr. Arias has not found the time to visit Syria in person. He eagerly visits other countries; he recently visited the United States of America, for example. His attitude towards Syria is completely different and it cannot be said that this country is outside the focus of the OPCW. Nearly one quarter of the comprehensive statement by Mr. Arias at the 100th session of the Executive Council held, on 5 July, was devoted specifically to the Syrian issue. Incidentally, in that speech the OPCW Director-General took the liberty of saying something quite odd. He noted that "in any event, [he] cannot justify travelling to a State party deprived of certain rights by the Conference of the States Parties". We would be curious to know what is behind such statements by the Director-General of the OPCW. On the contrary, logically Mr. Arias should be making every effort, including through regular visits to Damascus, to turn this shameful page in the Organization's history as soon as possible — from a time when at the behest of Western States and in violation of the CWC and the principle of consensus, a State that had been conscientiously complying with its obligations under the Convention was for the first time stripped of its rights. Perhaps Mrs. Nakamitsu can help to shed light today on the CWC norms that prevent Mr. Arias from visiting Syria.

Another issue that is repeatedly presented in the report as evidence of Syria's alleged non-cooperation is the delay of more than a year of the twenty-fifth round of consultations of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). The fact that the Technical Secretariat is guided in this by a presumption of Syria's guilt is clear simply from the phrase that the resolution of this issue hinges only on what is termed a change in attitude. The facts, however, say otherwise. I will list them briefly. The Syrians have never had any principled objections to holding those consultations. However, at a Security Council meeting in June of last year (see S/PV.8785), Director-General Arias himself said that he was not ready to send the DAT to Syria in the summer because the weather was too hot. The result was a serious delay. Later, Syria was willing to hold the consultations in The Hague, but at that point the Technical Secretariat refused to cover the costs of its experts' visit. After that, it was given out that all bilateral cooperation between the Technical Secretariat and Syria would be conducted through a single OPCW expert, without whose involvement they said that no consultations could take place. When it was proposed to hold the twenty-fifth round in Beirut, they again included in the mission the same expert, whose rejection Syria, like any sovereign State, has every right to insist on. But at that point Damascus once again demonstrated goodwill and agreed provisionally to continue cooperating with the DAT through an exchange of documentation. It is clear that it was not Damascus that created the problem — and which has every right to refuse the participation of any expert in the discussion of confidential issues — but rather the DAT, which turned the issue into a matter of principle.

However it is important to remember that cooperation with the Declaration Assessment Team is part of the voluntary bilateral commitments that Syria undertook. The Team's mandate does not envisage any investigative activities. Its job is simply to assist the Syrians in drafting their initial declaration. However, for more than a year now, what we have seen in the reports is a different approach, with an ever-increasing number of reasons put forward as to why the Technical Secretariat is allegedly cannot do this.

Damascus has continued to demonstrate unprecedented openness. I should point out that Syria joined the CWC under exceedingly difficult circumstances of military and political instability and under threats of terrorism supported from outside,

and despite all of that, conscientiously complied with all of its related obligations. The Secretary-General reported that to the Security Council back in June 2014, while the definitive elimination of Syria's military chemical capacity was confirmed in 2016 by the OPCW Conference of the States Parties and Executive Council. The Technical Secretariat has no right to impose any enhanced verification requirements on Syria. However, the differences in the approach to this issue where Syria is concerned versus other countries that have encountered similar problems are clear to anyone.

The bias against Damascus is long-standing, and it is often difficult to call it mere bias. It is enough to recall the infamous report of the Fact-Finding Mission on the incident in Douma in 2018. I have already mentioned that its final version underwent radical redaction by comparison with the original, which was confirmed by various sources, including former inspectors of the OPCW itself who were directly involved in investigating the issue.

The same applies to the activities of the illegitimate Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), whose creation was forced through the OPCW Executive Council in violation of the principle of consensus and article XV of the CWC. I would like to once again make it clear that we reject any of the IIT reports, current or future, as illegitimate products of an illegitimate mechanism. Their purpose is not to establish an accurate picture of events but rather to shape a narrative that fits with the conclusions of Damascus's guilt. The flawed methodology of both the IIT and the Fact-Finding Mission directly violates the Convention itself in terms of the principles for conducting investigations, particularly where the collection of evidence and maintaining the chain of custody are concerned. We cannot take seriously any documents that are drafted on the basis of information collected remotely and retroactively, including from sources that have been shown to be unreliable, such as the White Helmets, who were directly involved in staging chemical-weapon incidents in Douma, again, and in Khan Shaykhun.

Against that backdrop, other, more pressing and genuine problems that do not fit the picture of the Syrian authorities' alleged guilt, have received far less attention. They include threats of the use of chemical weapons by terrorists on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic and in neighbouring States. There is evidence that terrorist groups in the Middle East have access to chemical warfare agents. The conclusions of the United

Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) suggest that ISIL has a full-fledged military chemical programme. However, we still hear nothing about any measures being developed to combat those threats.

We have repeatedly pointed out that Western countries' politicization of the OPCW has damaged the chemical-weapon prohibition regime as a whole and undermined its ability to respond to the real threats facing the international community in the area of the disarmament and non-proliferation of chemical weapons. I would like to point out that at a meeting on 29 April (see S/PV.9026), the Security Council commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In the Council's related press statement (SC/14876), we all reaffirmed that the OPCW must ensure the impartial, independent and professional implementation of all the provisions of the Convention. I call on our Western colleagues to finally exchange words for deeds and to abandon their perverse efforts to exploit the Organization as a blunt instrument for punishing States that they do not like.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the leadership of the OPCW still has every opportunity to comply with its obligations in good faith, ensuring, as the Convention requires, a transparent and objective investigative process that distinguishes between staged incidents and imaginary threats and real instances of the use of chemical weapons. In order to do that, it is necessary to correct the mistakes made and restore the spirit of professional depoliticized cooperation based on the consensus that once prevailed at the organization. We trust that, in the very near future, Mr. Arias will be able to personally share with the Security Council his plans in that regard.

**Mr. Mills** (United States of America): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing. We appreciate her persistent efforts and those of the experts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to provide independent, thoroughly researched and detailed information on Syria's chemical weapons programme and its use of chemical weapons.

I think we should take stock of where we are as we meet once again to address this issue. The Syrian regime has still not provided the information requested in October 2020 on the nerve agents produced and

weaponized at a weapons production facility that the regime declared to not be involved in chemical weapons production.

The regime has also not provided the information requested in July 2021 on the declared chemical weapons production facility that was reportedly damaged in an attack in June 2021. Syria claimed that two chlorine cylinders implicated in that Douma chemical weapons attack were destroyed at that site as a result of the purported attack. But as we just heard from the High Representative, the regime has not responded to multiple requests for information or provided an explanation for the movement of those cylinders to the site of their purported destruction.

The regime has not provided information or explanations on the Barzah facility of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre, where chemicals that can either be used as chemical weapons themselves or as precursors were detected in November 2018.

The regime has not completed any of the measures requested by the OPCW Executive Council in its July 2020 decision that the regime should declare the production and stockpiling facilities implicated in three chemical weapons attacks in March 2017, declare all of the chemical weapons it possesses and resolve all the outstanding issues with regard to its initial chemical weapons programme declaration.

The regime has refused to grant all the visas requested by the Declaration Assessment Team, despite its clear obligations to do so under resolution 2118 (2013). It has also refused to participate in a meeting with the full Declaration Assessment Team outside Syria.

Through deteriorating cooperation with the OPCW and the failure to hold the next round of consultations for more than a year, Syria has left unresolved the 20 issues in its still incomplete initial declaration. The Al-Assad regime and its supporters, in particular Russia, as we just heard, have repeatedly claimed that the OPCW is biased and unprofessional.

That claim is absurd. The regime itself has amended its own declaration 17 times, but only after OPCW experts identified discrepancies between what the regime had told them and the clear, observable facts. Was the OPCW biased when it uncovered the discrepancies that the regime belatedly admitted to? The Security Council has a responsibility to address this issue seriously, and Russia shares in that responsibility.

After 105 reports from the OPCW Director-General, the Technical Secretariat assesses that Syria's initial declaration cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with its obligations. The OPCW attribution effort continues in the face of relentless obstruction by the Al-Assad regime and its supporters.

We look forward to the release of the report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team on the use of chemical weapons in 2018 in Douma. We must recall that the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team has already attributed four separate chemical weapons attacks in Syria to the Al-Assad regime, in addition to the four chemical weapons attacks attributed to the Al-Assad regime by the former OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism.

But of course, tragically, the regime's most grievous transgression of all is still to the Syrian people — to the dead and injured, for whom there is no justice, to the surviving loved ones, for whom there is no comfort or closure, and to all those Syrians who still live in fear that Al-Assad's chemical weapons might once again be unleashed on them at any moment. We continue to call on Syria to engage in meaningful cooperation with the OPCW and fully comply with its obligations.

**Mr. Hoxha** (Albania) (*spoke in French*): I join others in thanking Mrs. Nakamitsu for her very detailed and comprehensive briefing.

This is a bitter situation, one that has changed little since the previous meeting of the Security Council on this item (see S/PV.9026). There has been no progress in discussions between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian Government, and no progress on the forthcoming inspections in Syria. That impasse prevents the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), and Syria's chemical weapons programme remains outside the control of the international community.

We deeply regret the deliberate, continued and obtuse obstruction of the OPCW by Syria. Any excuse is good enough to postpone the visit of the team of inspectors. Syria wants to choose the inspectors, and yet, as stipulated by paragraph 7 of resolution 2118 (2013), it does not have the right to do so.

We have before us the 105th report of the OPCW (see S/2022/530), which comes to the same conclusion that we have heard here many times before. The gaps, the inconsistencies and the discrepancies identified

in the declaration of the Syrian regime on its already identified chemical weapons programme persist. As a result, the OPCW — as we just heard — is still unable to confirm the completion of the declaration. The regime systematically fails to provide the necessary information that is crucial to revealing the true scope of its chemical weapons programme.

We therefore wait for Syria to demonstrate concretely and clearly its willingness to cooperate with the OPCW on all questions posed in their reports, in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013). We urge Syria to change its attitude and fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat. The refusal of their authorities to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat, supported by their allies, is irresponsible and unacceptable. Albania reiterates its firm condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic and its non-respect of its international obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The international regime of non-proliferation involves our collective security. It is one of the most effective disarmament regimes at the global level. Albania reiterates its full support for the unbiased, impartial and professional work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We reject all attempts to politicize the work of the OPCW. Such an attitude serves only to slow down Syria's implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), which damages the reputation of the Security Council as well.

For those reasons, we call on Council members to act in a unified manner for the implementation of the resolution. Albania reiterates its firm condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor, under any circumstance. We support collective efforts to ensure that the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks are held to account. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons must not and will not be tolerated. The perpetrators need to be brought to justice.

Finally, we remain convinced that the swift conclusion of investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria will help the country and its citizens and will allow the Council and, in a broader sense, the international community to effectively support the Syrian people, who now more than ever need to see and commit to a clear vision of peace and prosperity. The key to the future is in the hands of the authorities.

**Mr. De Rivièrè** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing. Nine years ago, Bashar Al-Assad killed more than 1,000 Syrians in the suburbs

of Damascus. That has never been disputed by anyone. Following that massacre, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013). I want to reiterate that resolution 2118 (2013) was adopted unanimously, including by those who have contested Syria's use of chemical weapons today.

It has been almost nine years since Syria joined the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In spite of that, we must once again deplore the complete lack of progress that has been made. The situation is not evolving. Syria's initial declaration remains incomplete. The report we just heard from the Director-General of the OPCW is very clear. In particular, he informed us that cylinders containing chemicals were destroyed in a place where they should not have been. We have to keep on saying it: Syria must be completely transparent about its entire stockpile.

The Syrian regime continues to obstruct the work of the OPCW. In the total absence of cooperation from it for more than a year, and after six refusals, the Technical Secretariat finally gave up deploying the Declaration Assessment Team to the territory. That attitude of systematic obstruction is unacceptable. We appeal firmly to the Syrian regime to respond in writing and as soon as possible to the 20 questions that are still pending. Syria must comply with its obligations if it wants to restore the rights and privileges that were suspended by the decision taken by the Conference of the States Parties in April 2021.

Despite the obstacles, the OPCW teams have continued their investigation with independence and professionalism, and I want to commend them once again. Any attempts to question the legitimacy and working methods of the Technical Secretariat are impermissible. We will pay very close attention to the conclusions of the next two reports of the Investigation and Identification Team on the Douma and Marea incidents.

The fight against impunity and the total ban on the use of chemical weapons remain our priorities. This fight is the foundation of the effectiveness and credibility of the prohibition regime. It is essential to ensure that the perpetrators of chemical-weapon attacks are identified and held to account. That is why we continue to mobilize in support of the international partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons.

**Mr. Gallagher** (Ireland): I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing today.

Ireland welcomes today's meeting. Through the Council's consistent engagement, these meetings remain important in holding Syria to its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and in supporting the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in its mandated task. That is vital, as it has been more than a year since we have seen any progress on this file. During that time, Syrian cooperation with the OPCW has gone into reverse. Twenty issues remain outstanding regarding Syria's declarations. While Syria continues to claim that it is cooperating with the Technical Secretariat, we have seen no real effort from Syria to comply with its obligations.

OPCW requests for information go unanswered. They include requests about the chemical agents produced at a mis-declared chemical-weapon production facility, the schedule 2 chemicals from Busra and chlorine canisters, which form part of the evidence from Douma and were moved without the OPCW being informed and supposedly destroyed. That is against a background of multiple chemical-weapon attacks documented by the OPCW and the United Nations and attributed to the Syrian authorities. At the same time, Syria has blocked or sought to place conditions on the OPCW's work. That is contrary to its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013) to accept personnel designated by the OPCW or the United Nations and to provide immediate and unfettered access. In response to Syria's obstructive actions, the OPCW has continued to demonstrate flexibility and willingness to make progress, most recently by seeking to continue the work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) through written correspondence.

We are also concerned about the fact that arrangements for a bilateral meeting between Director-General Arias and Mr. Fayssal Mekdad, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, are still outstanding after more than a year. Syria's stated interest in the meeting does not match the six-month wait for a response to OPCW proposals on the agenda.

As Ireland stated at the July OPCW Executive Council meeting, Syria cannot continue to claim that it is actively cooperating with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and at the same time hinder the progress of its work by blocking access for the DAT and delaying the holding of bilateral meetings with the Director-General. Progress in resolving the serious gaps and

inconsistencies in Syria's declarations is essential. The bottom line remains that Syria must engage seriously with the OPCW to resolve these issues, urgently and without prevarication. It is also essential that we, as the international community, can be assured that Syria no longer holds or produces chemical weapons. That can only be done through the OPCW. Syria must stop seeking to undermine the authority and independence of the OPCW. The diligence, professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW and the Technical Secretariat are clear to all. The Council should support the Organization's work and uphold the legal norm against chemical weapons. Closing the Syrian case file and investigating any use of chemical weapons must remain a priority for the international community. There can be no impunity for those who use those illegal and abhorrent weapons. Ireland will continue to support all efforts, including through its membership of the OPCW Executive Council, to resolve outstanding issues on this file.

**Mr. Mathur** (India): I would like to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her detailed briefing. We have taken note of the latest monthly report by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2022/530), and we also note the recent monthly submission by Syria to the OPCW.

We encourage continued engagement between Syria and the OPCW Technical Secretariat to resolve the outstanding issues. We hope that the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian national authorities, which has been pending since April 2021, will be organized as soon as possible, and that the OPCW and Syria will continue to work together to overcome the impediments.

We attach high importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention and stand for its full, effective, and non-discriminatory implementation. We support the collective efforts of all the parties to ensure that the credibility and integrity of the Convention is maintained to the full. India is against the use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere, at any time and in any circumstances. India has consistently maintained that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, credible and objective. Such an investigation should follow scrupulously the provisions and procedures embedded in the Convention and should be in conformity with the delicate balance of power



and responsibility enshrined in it to establish facts and reach evidence-based conclusions.

India has also repeatedly cautioned against the possibility of terrorist entities and individuals gaining access to chemical weapons, including in the region in question. The reports of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) have also referred to the repeated deployments of chemical weapons by United Nations-proscribed terrorist groups and those affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant against civilian populations between 2014 and 2016. The international community's collective fight against terrorism will be strengthened by ensuring accountability for the grave and inhuman acts of terror committed by those terrorists and their affiliated groups. To that end, India has made a contribution of \$200,000 to support UNITAD investigations.

India continues to believe that progress on other tracks would also help in facilitating the overall political peace process in Syria. In order to realize that, all parties, in particular external players, need to show their commitment in tangible terms to a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned United Nations-facilitated political process, in line with resolution 2254 (2015).

**Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful for the briefing by High Representative Nakamitsu, and I also welcome the presence of the delegations of Syria, Iran and Türkiye.

We take note of the report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2022/530).

We once again note that, despite the repeated requests of the Security Council, the Syrian authorities continue to fail to provide all the information necessary to clarify the discrepancies with respect to 20 outstanding issues that date from their initial declaration. In addition, no progress been recorded on clarifying the unauthorized transfer of cylinders related to the April 2018 Douma incident.

On the other hand, we are pleased to note that the Syrian authorities accepted the Technical Secretariat's proposal to address the discrepancies in their initial declaration through an exchange of correspondence. While such exchanges may not offer the same results as the deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team

(DAT), we believe they can be used to build trust in order to move forward in clarifying the outstanding issues.

We regret that conducting a new round of consultations remains impossible given Syria's refusal to issue the necessary visa to one of the DAT members. A technical issue must not become a political issue. We urge Syria to comply with its obligations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and the relevant Security Council resolutions and provide immediate and unrestricted access to OPCW-designated personnel. My country, Mexico, expresses its full support for the professionalism and impartiality of the organization, which is not only made up of a multinational team of experts in various fields but also observes the strictest international standards in carrying out its analyses.

It is incumbent upon the Council to ensure accountability for the use of chemical weapons, and there can be no exception in the case of Syria. We must work together to encourage developing measures that will enable Syria and the OPCW to resolve all outstanding issues. Diplomatic dialogue and a United Nations-sponsored political process represent the only option for resolving all aspects of the conflict in Syria.

**Mr. Eckersley** (United Kingdom): We would like to thank the High Representative once again for her briefing and for clearly reminding us of the facts.

We must keep those facts in mind and not allow ourselves to be distracted by the blizzard of disinformation that surrounds Syria's chemical weapons programme. The Declaration Assessment Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has a mandate to ensure the Syrian Arab Republic fulfils its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Team has been working since 2014 to resolve the many gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in Syria's initial chemical weapons declaration. Since April, it has made extensive efforts to deploy to Syria to continue its vital work and has also proposed meeting outside Syria. However, the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to take place. As the High Representative said, the responsibility for that rests with the Syrian side, which has failed to respond to letters and notes verbales from the Technical Secretariat and has continued to refuse to issue a visa for the lead technical expert.

As we heard today, the Syrian Arab Republic has also failed to comply with numerous other commitments, including with the June 2018 decision of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention that it should declare all chemical weapons it possesses, including sarin and its precursors, as well as the OPCW Executive Council decision of July 2020 that it should declare the facilities related to the chemical weapons used in the sarin and chlorine attacks in Ltamenah on 24, 25 and 30 March 2017.

Those facts are not academic; they are deadly serious. As we have heard many times, the 20 unresolved issues in Syria's initial declaration include the location of several hundred tons of chemical weapons agents and thousands of munitions. The OPCW Investigation and Identification Team has found the Syrian Arab Republic responsible for chemical-weapons attacks against its own people. In total, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission has identified 20 incidents involving the use of chemical weapons in Syria, and there are well-documented reports of many more.

We must keep a spotlight on those issues, not just because of our responsibilities under Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations but also because we owe it to the victims of those horrific weapons in order to ensure that their use does not go unchallenged. There must be no impunity for any State that develops, acquires or deploys chemical weapons, anywhere, under any circumstances.

**Mr. Agyeman** (Ghana) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to deliver this joint statement on behalf of the three African countries members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Gabon, Ghana and Kenya.

I thank High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Nakamitsu for her briefing on the chemical weapons in Syria file. We welcome the participation of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Türkiye at this meeting.

Chemical weapons pose a serious threat to international peace and security in their use for non-peaceful purposes. Their toxic fallout can have devastating consequences and irreversibly harm human life and property. In acknowledging such risks, 193 States joined the Chemical Weapons Convention, including the Syrian Arab Republic, which has been a State party to the Convention since 2013.

Through their accession, States parties committed to upholding the provisions of the Convention, while ensuring their inclusion in national legislation and subsequent implementation at the national level. Therefore, by acceding to the Convention, the Syrian Arab Republic undertook to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and provide the necessary support to its Technical Secretariat, as provided for in article VII of the Convention.

(*spoke in English*)

In that regard, the A3 reaffirms its commitment to the provisions of the Convention, as well as those of resolution 2118 (2013), which provides a framework for the rapid and verifiable destruction of chemical weapons in Syria and calls on the country to honour its obligations. In that respect, the A3 reiterates its full support for the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, including its Technical Secretariat, which is being prevented from implementing its mandate in Syria. We take note of the 105th monthly report of the Director-General of OPCW on activities relating to the destruction of chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic (see S/2022/530).

Once again, we are concerned about the Technical Secretariat's assessment that the statements submitted by the Syrian authorities cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the provisions of the Convention, resolution 2118 (2013) and the decisions of the Executive Council. Furthermore, we are concerned about the fact that the Secretariat has yet to receive a declaration from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding all the undeclared types and quantities of nerve agents produced or militarized at a former chemical-weapon production facility that was declared as never having been used to produce or militarize chemical warfare agents.

We regret that so far the convening of the twenty-fifth round of consultations on Syria is still suspended, owing to the denial of entry visas to the lead technical expert of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). We stress that the on-site operations of the DAT are vital for implementing its mandated responsibilities and the relevant Executive Council decisions, and we echo the appeals to the Syrian authorities to grant unfettered access into the country for all members of the team. In that regard, we encourage increased

cooperation between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian authorities in order to make meaningful progress and bring closure to the issue. We believe that high-level direct exchanges between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Director-General of the OPCW could help to restore confidence and give the necessary impetus for moving forward with the various aspects of the programme and encouraging greater commitment to strengthening cooperation.

We also welcome the extension to 31 December this year of the tripartite agreement between the OPCW, the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Nations Office for Project Services, which will help facilitate the Technical Secretariat's mandated activities with regard to the total elimination of the Syrian chemical-weapon programme. We note the continued efforts of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria and the Investigation and Identification Team, in accordance with the relevant decisions of the Executive Council, and reiterate the importance of ensuring that they remain independent, transparent and impartial in the execution of their respective mandates. We also take note of the Fact-Finding Mission's forthcoming deployment to the Syrian Arab Republic and await the outcome of its work.

The A3 will continue to support measures that are aimed at ensuring accountability and will help strengthen deterrence and reinforce established norms against the use of chemical weapons.

In conclusion, we reiterate our request for the support of the Council in addressing the issues impeding progress in the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) more constructively.

**Ms. Matar** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing. In my statement today, I would like to reiterate what we have repeatedly said on the chemical dossier, while stressing once again the principled position of the United Arab Emirates, which rejects and forthrightly condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and in any circumstances. Their use constitutes a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and of international law.

Considering that a round of limited consultations between the Syrian authorities and the Declaration Assessment Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was not held in Beirut, we reiterate that such consultations and

constructive dialogue are critical to assessing the status of outstanding issues and making progress on this dossier. That requires that the parties concerned reach a compromise. We hope that the obstacles to holding the consultations will be overcome before the next meeting of the Council on the matter. We underscore once again that chemical weapons must be eliminated and that no one should have access to or use them, inside or outside Syria. If obtained by terrorist groups that seek to use them for their dangerous purposes, such weapons pose a serious threat to regional and international security and stability. We underscore the importance of promoting our efforts in the fight against the Da'esh organization to prevent it from reorganizing its ranks or acquiring chemical weapons, especially since we have recently witnessed its ongoing attempts to launch attacks and develop fighting capabilities.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of making progress on the chemical dossier and on all other dossiers related to resolving the Syrian crisis.

**Mr. Xing Jisheng** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing. I deeply regret the fact that Mr. Arias has declined our invitation once again.

I would first like to reiterate that China firmly opposes any country, organization or individual using chemical weapons under any circumstances. China has always called for the settlement of the outstanding issues regarding Syria's initial declaration on its chemical weapons through dialogue and consultations. We encourage the Technical Secretariat to maintain communication with Syria regarding the inspection of Syria's Scientific Studies and Research Centre and the meeting between the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and Syria's Foreign Minister, among other things. The twenty-fifth round of technical consultations has been delayed for half a year due to the visa issues of one expert. China calls on the Technical Secretariat to respect the State party's concerns about the visa and to demonstrate flexibility in the matter.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is the basis and yardstick for resolving issues related to chemical weapons. The OPCW should strictly adhere to the requirements of the Convention when investigating and attributing responsibility for incidents involving the alleged use of chemical weapons. The relevant

work must abide by the principles of independence, impartiality and objectivity and ensure respect for science and the facts in order to guarantee procedural compliance, the collection of reliable evidence and credible findings. I want to reiterate that from the very beginning several countries, including China, opposed the OPCW's adoption by a vote of its decision entitled "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use", which goes beyond the scope of the CWC. We also opposed the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team. China is deeply concerned about the currently highly politicized work of the OPCW and the deep divisions among its States parties. We hope that the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat will make earnest efforts to effectively uphold the OPCW's technical nature, return to the tradition of consensus-based decision-making and not allow the OPCW to be reduced to a geopolitical tool.

In conclusion, China again calls on the Security Council to focus on efficiency and to carefully consider holding less frequent or combined deliberations on Syrian issues.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

We again note that no progress has been made on this file since our last meeting (see S/PV.9026). Syria has still not fulfilled its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). The lack of progress is concerning not only for Syria, but for all of us in upholding the global prohibition against the use of chemical weapons. Norway remains steadfast in its confidence in Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and we firmly reject any effort to discredit their important work.

We regret the fact that the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and Syrian authorities has not been held, due to the Syrian authorities' refusal to issue a visa to the DAT's lead technical expert. We continue to remind Syria of its obligation to cooperate with the OPCW and accept and provide access for the OPCW's personnel. Furthermore, we will continue to urge Syria to provide sufficient information to the OPCW in order to resolve the 20 issues outstanding from Syria's initial declaration.

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

At the outset, I would like to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing. I would also like to thank the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for his latest report (see S/2022/530). As we can infer from reading it, little has changed in the situation on the ground or in the relationship between the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW. We hope that, in the near future, we will see positive developments in the file and the Director-General will be able to brief the Security Council in person.

We welcome the recent understanding to address the shortcomings in the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration through the exchange of correspondence, even if such exchanges cannot replace consultations between Syria and the Declaration Assessment Team. We hope that may constitute a further step towards the resumption of a constructive dialogue.

Brazil continues to advocate for the need to restore trust between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the need to overcome the regrettable politicization that has undermined the culture of consensus in the OPCW and its decision-making bodies.

Finally, as my delegation has noted on previous occasions, while the Council should pay close attention to progress in the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria and enforcing accountability for their use, the periodicity of these meetings needs to be urgently reassessed. Not having held a meeting on the topic in June did not affect the Council's work on the file in any way. That reinforces our perception that the ideal frequency for such exchanges is quarterly. Holding monthly meetings when there is little or no relevant development on the ground does not seem efficient in terms of either time or resources.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would like to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

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

**Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Syrian Arab Republic acceded to the

Chemical Weapons Convention voluntarily and in good faith and began implementing the Convention even before its ratification, notwithstanding our difficult circumstances. My country has cooperated fully with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We destroyed our stockpiles of chemical weapons and their production facilities in record time, as confirmed in OPCW reports.

Despite the politicization of the chemical weapons file in previous years, the hostile approach of certain States and the deliberate procrastination of the Technical Secretariat in dealing with some aspects of the file, my country has maintained its constructive approach and positive engagement. In that context, I would like to mention several positive developments that were not mentioned by Mrs. Nakamitsu.

The Syrian Arab Republic submitted its 104th monthly report on the elimination of its chemical weapons and their production facilities. It also agreed to the extension of the tripartite agreement among the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services for an additional six months until 31 December 2022, which should facilitate the tasks and activities of the OPCW in Syria. A report was also issued recently on the eighth round of inspections of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre, confirming the absence of any prohibited activity under the agreement and commending Syria's full collaboration and excellent facilities during that round.

It is unfortunate that the Syrian National Committee's cooperation with the OPCW, as well as the fact that it has been upholding its commitment under the Convention, was met with ingratitude and denial. The monthly reports of the OPCW Director-General, especially the most recent one (see S/2022/530), have focused on negative developments and ignored any positive developments. They also provide only a partial account of certain issues in a way that undermines the OPCW. Therefore, in recent months the Chair of the Syrian National Committee has sent several letters to the Director-General, explaining the inaccuracies included in the reports of the Technical Secretariat and asking for them to be rectified.

I would like to address some of the issues raised in today's discussion.

First, with regard to the proposed high-level meeting between the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates and the OPCW Director-General, I wish to

underscore that my country immediately welcomed the invitation to convene that meeting. We were keen to hold it as soon as possible, and the two parties were asked to agree on a venue and agenda for the meeting.

During consultations, the Syrian party suggested holding the meeting in Damascus. The Director-General, however, did not respond positively to that proposal, for which he gave an excuse unprecedented in the history of the OPCW. In his introductory statement to the OPCW Executive Council earlier in the month, he claimed that he could not hold the high-level meeting in Damascus, stating that:

*(spoke in English)*

"In any event, as Director-General, I cannot justify travelling to a State party that has been deprived of certain rights by the Conference of the States Parties".

*(spoke in Arabic)*

Ironically, no one knows where the Director-General found that explanation. There is no mention in the Convention or in any document of the OPCW, either directly or indirectly, of such a justification. It is clear that the Director-General has gone too far in submitting to the policies of Western countries and has started to implement the Convention based on the political agendas of those States, demonstrating that he has not been professional in carrying out his mandate.

The decision of the Conference of the States Parties to suspend the rights and privileges of Syria as a member of the OPCW — which was imposed by Western countries through pressure and blackmail — does not in any way mean that the Director-General can ignore his duties to communicate with the Syrian authorities concerned and seek lasting solutions to the outstanding issues between the two parties. Therefore, a visit by the Director-General to any State party is not a privilege that he grants to that State party but rather a duty that falls within his tasks and mandate.

The question that has to be asked is: would Mr. Arias have visited Damascus and tried to find a solution to those outstanding issues even before the decision of the Conference of the States Parties to suspend Syria's rights and privileges as an OPCW member State? The answer is simply no.

Secondly, as to the work of the Declaration Assessment Team, my country welcomes the holding of

the twenty-fifth round of consultations and the visit of the team to Syria, with the exception of one individual, and that is due to valid reasons that we have already explained. The fact that the Technical Secretariat continues to insist on that individual at the expense of the team as a whole, although they have other equally qualified technical experts, reinforces us in our position and increases our suspicions as to the professionalism that the Technical Secretariat should show.

In that context, I would like to mention that the Syrian National Committee has agreed to the recent proposal of the Technical Secretariat to exchange correspondence about the work of the team for the time being, although we are aware of the limited results that can be achieved through such correspondence. The Syrian Arab Republic expresses its concern over the hindrances that are created by the Technical Secretariat, which prevent the resolution of outstanding issues. That is in Syria's highest interests. We therefore call on the Technical Secretariat to give up those harmful tactics and that negative behaviour and go back to constructive work and fruitful cooperation.

Thirdly, regarding the work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), the Syrian Arab Republic, while repeatedly condemning the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anytime, anywhere and under any circumstances, had notified the Technical Secretariat of several incidents perpetrated by terrorist organizations using chemical weapons and asked the FFM to investigate those incidents. Unfortunately, the mission has to date not submitted any reports regarding those incidents, although more than five years have passed. It has also persisted in ignoring the professional working methodologies provided for in the Convention.

My delegation denounces that procrastination and calls for an end to be put to that manipulation. It calls on the mission to issue its report on those incidents and to respect the terms of reference and the provisions of the Convention while undertaking its tasks.

My delegation would like to recall that it has been keen on providing the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW with information pertaining to access by terrorists from Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front and their affiliated entities to chemical weapons and chemical toxins in order to launch chemical attacks or fabricate scenes so as to accuse the Syrian Arab Army.

In that context, I would like to mention that my delegation took part in the comprehensive review open consultations for the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004) and has called for reinforcing international cooperation to prevent weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, from falling into the hands of terrorist groups, thus threatening regional and international peace and security.

Allow me, before concluding, to respond to some of what has been said in the statements made by some countries. My colleague the representative of the United States used in his statement the term "regime" several times to talk about the Syrian Government. I would like to ask the colleague representing the United States if the resolutions of the Security Council or the decisions of the OPCW mention Member States as regimes or as Governments?

The United States of America, as a permanent member of the Security Council and as a member of the Executive Council of the OPCW, must respect the language that is being used in those resolutions and decisions and must not encourage others to use its language.

My colleague the representative of France accused us falsely, without any grounds or evidence. His accusation is part of the hostile policy that has been adopted by France towards my country for 10 years now, including by supporting terrorist organizations and violating the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. Therefore, he must, before inviting others to respect resolutions, make sure that his country is respecting them.

My colleague the representative of Albania said that Syria wants to choose the experts. I would like to tell him that such a description is wrong. Syria does not want to choose the experts, but Syria has the right to accept or reject with whom it is going to be dealing, especially if Syria has information proving that some experts are biased and non-objective.

Those kinds of hostile and non-constructive discussions leads nowhere, but only to more complications. I therefore call on colleagues to refrain from such hostile declarations and to adopt a positive approach, thus allowing the Council to shoulder its responsibilities in line with the Charter of the United Nations and in total respect of the sovereignty and independence of Member States and the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs.

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

**Ms. Ershadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran): As a major victim of the use of chemical weapons, Iran once again condemns in the strongest terms the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances.

We believe that only the complete destruction and elimination of all chemical weapons on a global scale, as well as the implementation of all essential measures to prevent their production, can ensure that chemical weapons are never used again.

Meanwhile, we call for the complete, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention as well as the preservation of the authority of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Politicizing the implementation of the Convention and exploiting the OPCW for politically driven national goals brings about major negative consequences for the Convention's authority and credibility as well as those of the organization. Therefore, the OPCW must not be used to accomplish politically motivated national objectives.

While Syria has fulfilled its obligations under the Convention and continues to cooperate with the OPCW, it has been subjected to such attempts by some State parties in recent years.

We commend Syria's efforts in submitting its 104th monthly report to the OPCW regarding activities in its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and their production facilities on 15 July.

Syria has also agreed to extend the tripartite agreement between the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services for six months, until 31 December 2022, in order to facilitate planning for the organization's tasks and activities in Syria.

The Government of Syria regularly provides information to the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW about the possession and use of chemical materials by some terrorist organizations as well as the fabrication of chemical incidents in order to blame the Syrian Army for such heinous acts.

The proposed meeting in Damascus between the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Director-

General of the OPCW is a proper move in the right direction, as it will the parties' discussions forward. We note that the Syrian Government has welcomed this meeting and hope that the Director-General of the OPCW will do the same.

Keeping in mind the Syrian Government's cooperation and its fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention, we would expect the Security Council not to devote its meetings to the repetition of position and unfounded allegations against the Syrian Government, which is not conducive to Council efficiency.

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

**Mr. Keçeli** (Türkiye): We thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing, and we commend the independence, professionalism and impartiality of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The latest report of the OPCW Director-General (see S/2022/530) shows that the outstanding issues in relation to the Syrian regime's initial and subsequent declarations persist. The OPCW Secretariat is still waiting for responses to its enquiries sent to the regime with regard to its chemical-weapon production facilities and chlorine cylinders used in the attack in Douma in 2018. The regime continues to use delaying tactics to avoid meeting with the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) by refusing to issue a visa to one team member and setting the exclusion of the same DAT expert as a condition for holding the next round of consultations. We expect concrete action from the Security Council to ensure that the regime fully cooperates with the DAT and immediately declares the full extent of its chemical-weapons programme to the OPCW.

The current investigations by the Fact-finding Mission in Syria (FFM), and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) are important to establishing the truth about the chemical weapons used in Syria. We note the reports of the FFM establishing the use of chemicals as weapons in in Marea on 1 September 2015 and in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016. We await the results of the further investigations carried out by the IIT with regard to those attacks for the identification of the perpetrators.

Let us reiterate that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances

is a grave violation of international law. We strongly condemn the repeated and well-documented use of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime against its own people. It is our collective responsibility to ensure accountability for the crimes committed in Syria. We owe this to the victims.

It is high time that the members of the Security Council left their political differences behind and acted in accordance with international law. The Syrian regime must be urged to cooperate with the OPCW without any further delay. This is key to prevent the recurrence of chemical-weapons use, be it in Syria or elsewhere in the world. Ending impunity is critical if we are to achieve peace in Syria.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu to respond to comments and questions raised.

**Mrs. Nakamitsu:** I had a specific request from His Excellency Ambassador Polyanskiy of the Russian Federation on some of the issues for further information. I will therefore try to respond.

First, with regard to the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), whose mandate, as we know, is to verify Syria's initial declaration through means of bilateral consultations with Syrian national authorities; it is therefore a means for verification. But it is also a means to assist Syria in its implementation of its obligations under Chemical Weapons Convention.

Why are we insisting on this particular DAT expert whose visa has not been granted by the Syrian Republic? I have been advised that the DAT expert has been part of the team and in direct contact with Syrian experts and officials ever since the DAT was established, that is, ever since April 2014. This DAT expert has deployed to Syria more than 20 times, so the expert is familiar with all details provided by the Syrian experts throughout the entire history of the assessment of the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration of its chemical-weapons programme, including all outstanding and also resolved issues. It should also be noted that the expert is fluent in Arabic. Accordingly, the OPCW considers this expert to be an indispensable member of the DAT.

Now, while the issuance of a visa is normally a matter of national sovereignty, as Council members are all aware, paragraph 7 of resolution 2118 (2013)

established very special arrangements in this regard. The Security Council decided that

“... the Syrian Arab Republic shall cooperate fully with the OPCW and the United Nations, including by complying with their relevant recommendations, by accepting personnel designated by the OPCW or the United Nations, by providing for and ensuring the security of activities undertaken by these personnel, by providing these personnel with immediate and unfettered access to and the right to inspect, in discharging their functions, any and all sites, and by allowing immediate and unfettered access to individuals that the OPCW has grounds to believe to be of importance for the purpose of its mandate, and [...] that all parties in Syria shall cooperate fully in this regard”.

This is the reason why it is important that this member of the DAT be part of the rounds of consultations.

Of course, the Director-General has stated that he cannot justify travelling to a State party to the OPCW that has been deprived of certain rights by the Conference of States Parties to pursue a meeting that the Secretariat proposed in the first place. However, at the 100th session of the OPCW Executive Council, which was recently held — between 5 and 7 July — he also stated:

“When the Syrian Arab Republic is ready to back its declarations of commitment with actions, including by engaging constructively on the venue and agenda, the Secretariat will be ready to engage accordingly.”

I have also been informed that the Director-General's Office is maintaining regular and direct contact with the Foreign Minister's Office, so their engagements are still continuing.

Let me end my further remarks by stating my hope that such meetings will be able to take place as soon as possible and contribute to the resolution of these unresolved discrepancies.

**The President:** I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her clarifications.

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

**Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I merely wanted to comment on the observations made by Mrs. Nakamitsu just now on the mandate



of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). She said that it is an investigative team.

The fact is quite otherwise. At a formal meeting of the OPCW, the head of the DAT was asked whether his team was an investigative or inspection team. He replied quite clearly that it is neither one nor the other. The DAT is therefore not an investigative team, nor an inspection team. It is a team that was created to assist the Syrian Arab Republic, with its consent, to enable it to provide its initial declaration.

My second point is that the issue is not related to the visa. Mrs. Nakamitsu clearly said that the visa is a sovereign right of any State. That is correct. However, it is an issue of dealing with an expert who has lost professionalism and objectivity. Even when the Technical Secretariat suggested another location outside Syria for consultations, our position was that we agreed, but without the participation of that one expert. The issue therefore relates to the participation of an expert who has lost his professionalism and objectivity. It is therefore not a matter of visa, and it is not a matter of whom we choose. The organization has the right to choose whomever it wants, and I stress that it has sufficient experts to do the job.

**The President:** I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

**Mrs. Nakamitsu:** I simply want to say that I did not use any words such as “investigation” or “inspection”. I said that the Declaration Assessment Team’s mandate is to verify Syria’s initial declaration through means of bilateral consultations with the Syrian national authorities. I added that it was a means to assist Syria in that regard. I did not use the words “inspection” or “investigation”.

**The President:** I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her clarifications.

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

**Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I apologize for asking for the floor for a second time. However, I object to what Mrs. Nakamitsu said again. The mandate of the Declaration Assessment Team is not to verify Syria’s initial declaration; it is to assist Syria in presenting its declaration. The term used should be exact. The Team has no mandate to verify; its mandate is to assist.

*The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.*