



Security Council

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Letter dated 8 April 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-teleconference on “The situation in the Middle East (Syria)” convened on Tuesday, 6 April 2021. A statement was also delivered by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of the members of the Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, this briefing and these statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dinh Quy **Dang**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs,
Izumi Nakamitsu**

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

Since my previous briefing (see S/2021/226), on 4 March 2021, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has continued to maintain regular contact with counterparts at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter. As per established practice, I held a monthly call with the OPCW Director-General on Thursday, 1 April 2021, to receive an update and ascertain his views. I also met with the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who reaffirmed the Syrian Government's commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention and cooperation with the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

As I previously informed the Council, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to impact the OPCW Technical Secretariat's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. However, the Technical Secretariat maintains its readiness for deployments, which are being conducted subject to the evolution of the pandemic. Despite the travel restrictions, the Technical Secretariat has continued with its mandated activities related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in this regard.

Efforts to clarify the remaining outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW are ongoing. During the twenty-fourth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority, held from 7 to 25 February 2021 in Damascus, the DAT conducted technical meetings with representatives of the Syrian National Authority, visited three declared sites and conducted two interviews regarding an outstanding issue.

During that deployment, the Declaration Assessment Team also shared with the Syrian National Authority the results of the analysis of the samples collected in the Syrian Arab Republic during the twenty-third round of consultations, in September 2020. The DAT received preliminary comments from the Syrian technical experts regarding the presence of chemicals identified in those samples, some of which were unexpected. I have been advised that, on 8 March 2021, the OPCW Technical Secretariat received a note verbale from the Syrian Arab Republic containing further explanations regarding the sample analysis results. The Technical Secretariat is analysing those explanations and will engage with the Syrian National Authority accordingly.

I have also been advised that, on 9 March 2021, the Syrian Arab Republic replied through a note verbale to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's assessment pertaining to a former chemical weapons production facility that was declared as never having been used to produce and/or weaponize chemical weapons. In that note verbale, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterated that that former chemical weapons production facility was never used for the production of chemical weapons.

As a result of the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the OPCW 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. As has been stressed on multiple occasions, engagement and dialogue by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat is critical to closing these outstanding issues.

As I have previously informed the Security Council, the OPCW Technical Secretariat conducted the seventh round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre in November 2020. The outcome of that round of inspections will be reported to the OPCW Executive Council in due course.

With regard to the finding of a Schedule 2 chemical detected at the Barzah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre during the third round of inspections, held in 2018, I understand that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the OPCW Technical Secretariat to close this issue.

I note that 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 and continues its engagement with the Syrian Government and other States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with regard to a “variety of incidents”. As previously reported, further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I have also been advised that the Investigation and Identification Team continues its investigations into incidents in which the FFM has determined that chemical weapons were used, or likely used, in the Syrian Arab Republic and will issue further reports in due course. I take this opportunity to reiterate my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of the work of the OPCW.

With regard to the inspections mandated by paragraph 8 of Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2 entitled, “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic”, I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat continues to monitor the security situation and will inform the Syrian Arab Republic when it is prepared to deploy for that purpose. Those inspections will also be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although almost eight years have now passed since the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), there is still much work to be done before the resolution can be considered fully implemented. Moreover, as long as the use of chemical weapons continues, or the threat of their use remains, we must retain our focus on preventing those threats and not allow ourselves to become inured to them. Unity in the Security Council is required to re-establish the norm against chemical weapons. The vitality and credibility of the broader disarmament and non-proliferation architecture depends upon it. The use of these weapons must always be seen as a clear violation of a deeply held taboo. Accordingly, the identification and accountability of those responsible is imperative.

Before concluding, I wish to echo the Secretary-General’s remarks at the General Assembly on the situation in Syria, delivered on 30 March 2021.

“After a decade of war, many Syrians have lost confidence that the international community can help them forge an agreed path out of the conflict. I am convinced that we still can. We will be relentless in our pursuit of a negotiated political settlement in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). [...] A solution that meets the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians. The war in Syria is not only Syria’s war. Ending it and the tremendous suffering it continues to cause is a collective responsibility. Today we must all commit fully to achieving that goal.”

Annex II**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Geng Shuang**

I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

China is consistently opposed to the use of chemical weapons by any country, organization or individual under any circumstances and for any purposes. We hope that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will investigate and deal with the alleged use of chemical weapons by working under the principles of independence, objectivity and impartiality and strictly within the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

On the chemical weapons issue in Syria, a series of reports issued by the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) are still subject to different views. Regarding the questions from relevant parties, the Technical Secretariat shall provide professional, scientific and convincing responses with a view to ensuring that investigation results stand the test of time and facts. The working methods and procedures of the IIT shall be in full compliance with the provisions of CWC. The chain of evidence must be complete and closed. China objects to jumping to conclusions amid doubts. States parties and the international community must strengthen supervision over the work of the Technical Secretariat.

China commends the Syrian Government for its active cooperation with the Technical Secretariat and encourages both parties to continue their communication and cooperation to resolve the pending issues. From 7 to 25 February, the Syrian Government and the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) held the twenty-fourth round of technical consultations. With the assistance of Syria, the DAT visited three relevant facilities that had been declared by Syria and conducted two interviews. On 9 March, Syria sent a note verbal to the Technical Secretariat providing further information on the pending issues. Those interactions deserve recognition. The Technical Secretariat must handle Syria's initial declaration on chemical weapons in an objective and impartial manner, enhance coordination with Syria and refrain from the practice of double standards and politicization.

At present, the international community is facing sharp differences over the investigations on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria. The OPCW and the Syrian Government are still continuing their cooperation in an effort to resolve issues relating to the declaration. In that context, forcing the Conference of the States Parties to take actions in haste will only make the States parties even more divided and the work of the OPCW more politicized. That will further undermine the authority and effectiveness of the international architecture on the prohibition of chemical weapons and harm the common interests of the international community. China is deeply concerned. The investigation and handling of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria must be brought back to the framework of the CWC. It is our hope that the OPCW will go back to its tradition of making decisions by consensus. This is a joint responsibility of all States parties and will serve the common interests of all.

Annex III**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Gert Auväärt**

I thank High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. We greatly appreciate your calls for Syrian cooperation and for the unity of the Security Council to ensure accountability for the use of chemical weapons.

The monthly report (see S/2021/305) of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the progress in the elimination of the chemical weapons in Syria remains largely unchanged. There is no progress. This is the ninetieth report since 2014, and the outstanding issues with regard to the initial declaration remain in place. Worryingly, one of them pertains to a chemical weapons production facility, which Syria still denies to have ever used for that purposes, contrary to the facts and evidence that prove otherwise.

A decade-long conflict in Syria reflects the Al-Assad regime's blatant disregard for international norms and obligations. We welcome the OPCW member States' determination to take action. The OPCW Executive Council adopted a decision in July 2020 to respond to the findings of the first report of the Investigation and Identification Team. That report concluded that Syrian armed forces used chemical weapons against its own people in three instances in Ltamenah in March 2017.

Due to the Syrian non-compliance with the Executive Council decision, a draft decision was put forward in November 2020 to the OPCW Conference of the State Parties on behalf of 46 States, including Estonia. We hope that, once the Conference reconvenes later this month, it will take appropriate action to show that there are serious consequences for the use of chemical weapons.

Estonia is convinced that a robust response from the Security Council is essential to hold those responsible to account, seek justice for the victims and prevent such attacks from happening again. The Security Council and all its members have a responsibility to protect the international non-proliferation regime, which underpins our collective security. The use of a weapon of mass destruction by anyone anywhere is not, and cannot become, acceptable.

To conclude, let me reiterate Estonia's full confidence in the professional, independent and impartial work of the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat. We firmly reject attempts to discredit that body in order to hide the Al-Assad regime's crimes and avoid accountability. We call on the Syrian regime to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat and its investigative mechanisms actively and fully. We also call on the Russian Federation to urgently, fully and in a transparent manner disclose the circumstances of the poisoning of Mr. Navalny with a chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group and to inform the Security Council in that regard.

Annex IV**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nathalie Broadhurst Estival**

[Original: French]

I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

With the deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team on the ground in February, there was an opportunity for the regime to clarify its initial declaration. I am not surprised to see that no progress has been made. Clearly, the regime continues to lie, to hide the truth and to evade its international obligations.

The initial declaration is incomplete, as we all know. Yet Syria continues to deny the evidence. It has tried to explain that the undeclared production site was a civilian infrastructure. No one is convinced by those explanations.

Everyone knows the responsibility of the Syrian regime and the abject acts for which it is responsible. France will therefore pay close attention to the conclusions of the upcoming reports of the Investigation and Identification Team of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). I say that with great firmness, we will ensure that the regime is held to account.

The regime has not done anything that was expected of it. That is why France, with its partners, has invoked the consequences. Last November, we submitted a draft decision to the OPCW Technical Secretariat on behalf of 46 delegations, essentially to suspend the voting rights of the Syrian regime and prevent it from standing for election to the OPCW Executive Council until Syria complies with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). That draft decision will be submitted in the second part of the twenty-fifth Conference of the States Parties to the CWC, which will open at The Hague on 20 April. We call on all States Parties to support the draft decision in order to reaffirm that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and that repeated violations of the Convention cannot go unanswered.

I would also like to pay tribute once again to the very professional work of the OPCW. I regret that some States continue to make unfounded accusations against it. They are unworthy and, above all, absolutely irresponsible.

I say this with gravity: the re-emergence of chemical weapons in the world is a major threat to international peace and security. We cannot allow chemical weapons to become a new reality. The use of these weapons is inhumane and must remain an absolute taboo. That is the responsibility of the Council.

The fight against impunity and a total ban on the use of chemical weapons remain our priorities. That is what the Minister for Foreign Affairs, together with 17 other European Foreign Ministers, reiterated very clearly last week in a joint statement. We owe it to the victims, some of whom are now turning to national courts to open up new avenues of access to justice.

Annex V**Statement by the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations**

I would like to thank Under Secretary General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing.

We have taken note of the update on the twenty-fourth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority, which took place from 7 to 25 February 2021. The DAT conducted technical meetings with representatives of the Syrian National Authority, visited three declared sites — one chemical weapons production facility and two chemical weapons storage facilities — and held two interviews on an outstanding issue. The Technical Secretariat also received additional explanations from the Syrian Arab Republic on results of samples collected during the twenty-third round of DAT consultations. We take note of the cooperation displayed by the Syrian authorities in all those developments.

India recognizes the efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Technical Secretariat in the Declaration Assessment Team and the Fact-Finding Mission. We will await further updates on these mechanisms, including the inspections of the facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre that were conducted between 8 and 13 November 2020.

We hope that the ongoing engagement and cooperation between Syria and the OPCW Technical Secretariat will progress further in the coming months towards an early resolution of all outstanding issues. In that regard, we welcome the in-principle agreement at the beginning of this year for a further six-month extension of the tripartite agreement among the Government of Syria, the OPCW and the United Nations Office of Project Services to facilitate the mandated activities in Syria. We hope that extension agreement will be signed soon.

India has consistently underlined the need for an impartial and objective investigation into any alleged use of chemical weapons, diligently following the provisions and procedures laid down in the Chemical Weapons Convention. Any concerns or disagreement should be addressed on the basis of consultations and cooperation among all the parties concerned and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW. There is a need for an objective analysis among Council members of what has been achieved since the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), following the accession of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

India attaches high importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is a unique, non-discriminatory disarmament instrument and serves as a model for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. India has provided a financial contribution of \$1 million to the OPCW trust fund for activities relating to the destruction of chemical stockpiles and related facilities in Syria.

India remains concerned about the possibility of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorist entities and individuals. It is deeply concerning that the involvement of external actors in Syria has given a fillip to the growth of terrorism in Syria and in the region. We are concerned at the frequent reports of the resurgence of groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and the Shams in the region. We cannot afford to dilute the fight against these terrorist groups.

India has consistently called for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict through a Syrian-led dialogue, taking into account the legitimate aspirations of the people of Syria, facilitated by the United Nations in line with

resolution 2254 (2015). We have contributed to the return of normalcy and rebuilding of Syria through humanitarian assistance and human resource development.

Let me conclude by reiterating our support to both the Geneva and the Astana processes for finding an expeditious resolution to the decade-long conflict in Syria.

Annex VI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason

I would like to thank Under-Secretary General and High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing today.

Ireland unequivocally condemns any use of chemical weapons anywhere and at any time. But clearly, that type of rhetoric does not get us anywhere. What we need to do is to act — to act together. The first act is relatively simple: we need to unambiguously uphold the international prohibition against the use of these appalling weapons.

When Syria acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and its annex on implementation and verification, it took on clear legal obligations. The decision of 27 September 2013 by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) instructed the OPCW to conduct inspections, including of sites and facilities as necessary, to ensure that Syria was meeting these obligations. OPCW inspections have since become dedicated mechanisms, notably the Declaration Assessment Team, the Fact-Finding Mission, the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Investigation and Identification Team.

However, over time as well, as the OPCW conducted its mandated work, a clear pattern has emerged of Syrian evasion. Items have gone undeclared and mis-declared. Syrian cooperation has been sporadic and limited. After seven years, the initial declaration has only grown in length, as have the seriousness of its gaps and inconsistencies. The OPCW Executive Council and the members of the Security Council have repeatedly expressed their concerns, but these concerns have been ignored by Syria.

What makes this so serious is another clear pattern: that of documented, repeated use of chemical weapons in Syria since 2013. The OPCW has on seven occasions to date found that the evidence warrants attribution of use to the Syrian authorities. Further incidents are under investigation. Syria's response is to seek to undermine the professionalism and authority of the OPCW. We find this unacceptable.

The OPCW is fundamental to addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons. It has the primary mandate, the technical expertise and the experience to authoritatively advise on these issues. It is for the international community, and for this Council in particular, to act urgently and in unity to address the issue of this documented use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The Syrian authorities, in turn, have the responsibility to fully address and answer issues relating to Syria's compliance with the CWC. Syria must do what it promised to do, what it is legally obliged to do: declare and destroy all of its chemical weapons stocks and facilities.

The OPCW Executive Council set out in July 2020 the clear actions Syria must take to return to compliance with the CWC. Ireland deeply regrets that Syria chose not to act on these. We again urge Syria to act immediately to comply with this decision.

Given these circumstances, Ireland will support the proposed decision on Syria at the Conference of States Parties later this month. Given Syria's continued refusal to meet its obligations and the international community's concerns, we believe that Conference must take all appropriate actions to address Syria's non-compliance.

Annex VII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Michael Kiboino**

I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing and for her regular updates, on the ongoing activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), including the investigations on the use of chemical weapons.

We also take note of the Director-General's ninetieth monthly report (see S/2021/305) concerning the prohibition of chemical weapons.

Let me reaffirm Kenya's conviction and belief that the use of chemical weapons anywhere and by anyone constitutes a clear and unacceptable violation of international law. Indeed, no cause can ever justify the use of a weapon of mass destruction by any actor, under any circumstance whatsoever. Thus, any claims of the use of such weapons must be investigated in a professional and transparent manner, consistent with applicable international instruments and standards.

We take note of the submission by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Council of its eighty-eighth monthly report regarding the activities in its territory relating to the destruction of its chemical weapons and production facilities.

Kenya welcomes the deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to Syria and takes note of the subsequent diplomatic note from the Syrian Arab Republic, containing further explanations regarding the results of the sample analysis. We look forward to further updates on the outcomes of the deployment, with the anticipation that they will bear reports of progress.

Kenya also welcomes the regular briefings by the OPCW to the States parties on the status of the mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, including the work of the DAT, the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team. Such briefings are encouraged, as they constitute a critical component for ensuring transparency in the investigative role of the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat.

As stated in our previous statements, Kenya believes that an expeditious conclusion and closure of these investigations will allow the Council to direct its full attention to helping the Syrian people reach a sustainable solution to the decade-old political crisis. We therefore call for closer coordination between Syria and the OPCW, particularly in resolving the pending identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies.

Kenya reiterates its solidarity with and support for the people of Syria as they continue to seek a sustainable solution, through an inclusive Syrian-led dialogue aimed at a political resolution that is truly responsive to the will and needs of the millions of the Syrian people who have endured suffering for far too long.

Annex VIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

We thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing on the investigations carried out by the various mechanisms established by the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to clarify the events related to the use of chemical weapons in Syria. I welcome the Permanent Representative of Syria to this meeting.

For Mexico, the objective of these reports is to communicate progress in compliance with resolution 2118 (2013) towards reaching a solution. The Security Council cannot continue pursuing an exercise of mutual accusations or automatic disqualification on such a delicate matter. We should try to encourage dialogue rather than polarization.

The Security Council could seek new avenues for cooperation. Among these, I offer the following for the Council's consideration.

First, we commit ourselves to strengthening the unity and leadership of the Council in condemning the use of chemical weapons by any actor and under any circumstance. That is to say, we must defend the norm against chemical weapons and their inhuman effects, support the mandate of the OPCW and endorse the call on all its parties to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Secondly, we must facilitate a more regular informal dialogue between the members of the Security Council and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in an inclusive manner that sheds light on the decision-making process within the Council and allows us to review and objectively analyse the pending issues. All of this must be done without prejudice to our continuing to receive the reports mandated by resolution 2118 (2013).

Thirdly, we call on the Secretary-General to redouble his good offices between Syria and the interested parties and to discuss with objectivity and rigour the reports on the use of chemical weapons in that country in order to defuse the political polarization that they generate and to continue supporting Syria in fulfilling its obligations as a State party to the CWC.

The delegation of Mexico is ready to discuss and specify these and other proposals that would allow us to advance the diplomatic and political dialogue, since that is the only way that can help us to get out of the impasse in which we find ourselves.

Annex IX

Statement by the Permanent Mission of the Niger to the United Nations

[Original: French]

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

The Niger reiterates its support for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) whose work, it should be noted, is essential to preventing and deterring the use of these weapons, in accordance with international standards, in particular the Convention on Chemical Weapons (CWC), and other relevant multilateral or bilateral treaties.

We hope to see a full resumption of the deployment of OPCW missions to Syria once the restrictive measures taken due to the coronavirus disease pandemic are lifted. It is important that such investigations be carried out in a transparent and inclusive manner in relation to all identified and suspected incidents.

The final resolution of the Syrian chemical weapons issue will require the Security Council to demonstrate unity with respect to the direction and objectives of the OPCW's work in Syria. It also implies frank and closer cooperation between the Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Government in order to shed light on the use of these weapons on its territory. Such ongoing frank dialogue between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Government will help resolve questions regarding Syria's initial declaration and ultimately to make progress in the work of the Declaration Assessment Team, in line with the Chemical Weapons Convention, Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 and resolution 2118 (2013).

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate its firm rejection of all use of chemical weapons, regardless of the circumstances, motivation or actor.

Annex X**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Trine Heimerback**

I thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing. And I also thank Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for their monthly report (see S/2021/305) on the progress towards the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

Disappointingly, we regret to note again that there have been few developments on this critical issue. Even against the backdrop of grim anniversary of Syria having just marked 10 years of the conflict. And now tomorrow we mark three years since the deadly Douma chemical attacks. Every anniversary and every day that passes, we are allowing the once-strong global norm against the use of chemical weapons to erode. We must not tolerate this impunity.

Turning to the recent report, we welcome the Director-General's updates from February's technical meetings with the Syrian national authority and the visits to three declared sites. We are pleased to see the Technical Secretariat has been able to continue its mandated activities and engagements, despite travel difficulties during the pandemic. However, worryingly, evidence collected from inspections remains largely unanswered by Syrian authorities. Nineteen out of 22 issues remain unresolved. Such a large number of outstanding issues, gaps and inconsistencies are of sincere concern.

We are particularly troubled by the factual disagreement regarding the presence of a chemical nerve agent in site samples taken in September 2020. As the OPCW's monthly report makes clear, Syria's recent explanations "cannot be considered accurate and complete". The Syrian experts do not sufficiently explain or justify the presence of chemical nerve agents found in the former chemical weapons production facility.

We remain deeply concerned by the continuing failure of Syria to provide information that would resolve this issue, as well as the 18 other outstanding issues. Syria must declare all chemical warfare agents produced or weaponized at this site. We again call on Syria to fully cooperate with the OPCW and resolve all outstanding issues. And we reiterate that the Syrian Arab Republic must fulfil its obligations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable through credible national or international criminal justice mechanisms. We owe it to the victims and the survivors to ensure that those who perpetrated such heinous attacks are held responsible.

I would like to conclude by confirming Norway's steadfast confidence in Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat of OPCW. We firmly reject any efforts to discredit their important work.

Annex XI**Statement by First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyanskiy**

[Original: Russian]

At the outset, let me highlight that all delegations to the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) are now watching what can be called the final act of a performance directed by our Western colleagues and staged at The Hague. In two weeks, the twenty-fifth session of the CWC Conference will resume its work. For several months on end, the Conference has been home to attempts to push through an unprecedented draft decision that would incapacitate Syria at the OPCW. This draft decision was introduced to the Conference counter to CWC norms and without prior consideration by the Executive Council. This proposed incapacitation would deprive Syria of its right to vote at the CWC Conference of the States Parties and in the Executive Council, be elected to the Council or host any events related to the Conference, the Executive Council and its subsidiary mechanisms.

I will tell you frankly: it was clear from the very beginning that this entire idea had been premeditated. This theatrical performance had several acts. First, in violation of the long-standing norms and practices of the OPCW — first of all the principle of consensus — the Technical Secretariat created the illegitimate Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The IIT defied the principles of investigation, including the so-called “chain of custody”, and produced a report rich in factual and technical mistakes. The report accuses Syrians of having used chemical weapons on two occasions. This report was well and truly discredited by independent experts. We shared our detailed argumentation on that matter in the General Assembly and the Security Council as early as June last year.

However, the leadership of the Technical Secretariat remains deaf to this criticism. Apparently, it is a sign that, prior to the grand theatrical finale, the IIT will give us yet another surprise by reporting another “pseudo investigation” and its anti-Syrian results. We have little doubt about it. Neither do we doubt that our Western colleagues will rush to interpret that unscrupulous product as alleged proof of the use of chemical weapons by Damascus. Let me discourage you by saying that it would truly prove only one thing. It would prove that your methods of besmirching Damascus, without providing any substantiated or trustworthy evidence, have remained pretty much the same and that you will hardly score any extra points on that.

Anyway, in summer 2020, Western delegations referred to the aforementioned politically biased and unconvincing IIT report to push through the OPCW Executive Council a knowingly unrealistic ultimatum for Syria, which demanded that it declare chemical weapons and production facilities that Syria simply did not have. It is obvious that these demands cannot be met. What comes next is a mere technicality. The Director-General ascertains Syria’s alleged incompliance with an Executive Council decision. Now the Conference of the States Parties is offered to “punish” Damascus by incapacitating Syria at the OPCW.

Nevertheless, the Syrian authorities have continued cooperating with the OPCW all this time — despite the colossal pressure and terrible accusations coming from Western colleagues and the blatant acts of manipulation on the part of the Technical Secretariat, to say nothing of the emergency conditions of the pandemic.

The current report of the Secretary-General is further proof of this. I would like to stress that its paragraphs 11 and 12 address the consultations that the

Declaration Assessment Team and the relevant Syrian authorities held in February. These contacts included visits to the facilities, meetings with Syrian experts and surveys. The Syrian side provided explanations with regard to all the “outstanding issues”. Unfortunately, the response was that the Syrian initial declaration was “incomplete”, “imperfect” and so on. But still, the fact remains that the dialogue is under way and there is progress in Syria’s interaction with the OPCW, inter alia, in terms of the initial declaration.

Besides, as we learned from the report (see S/2021/200) of the OPCW Director-General at the March session of the Executive Council, the pandemic brought to a standstill almost all inspection activities by the organization. For example, the visit by the Executive Council to the United States has been rescheduled twice and is now expected no sooner than in 2022. The OPCW made only five country visits to the States that declared the discovery of some old stockpiles. Syria is almost the only country with which the Technical Secretariat maintains regular dialogue. How can it be the main “violation”, as our Western colleagues would try to assert?

I urge you to give it a thought — if Syria can no longer take part in OPCW decision-making, what is the point for Damascus to keep cooperating with the organization? What is the ultimate goal, after all? Is it to “crush” Syria, as was the case with Iraq after the United States Secretary of State here at the United Nations personally promoted a fake about Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), or is it to make sure that nobody on Syrian soil has any chemical weapons?

Let me avail myself of this meeting of the Security Council, which reaches a broad public, to call on all delegations, both here and at The Hague, to act responsibly and stand up against the proposed draft decision, as it threatens to undermine the authority of the OPCW and of the Security Council, which is responsible for the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). Neither the OPCW nor any other respectful venue must turn into a tool to “punish the unwanted” by hurling at them baseless allegations of the use of weapons of mass destruction. Any country could end up in Syria’s place, should our Western colleagues decide to use the “chemical-weapon leverage” to pressurize them. By rejecting Syria’s incapacitation at the OPCW, you will reject double standards and protect an equitable world order, which has no place for the dictate of force. All States must be equal in terms of upholding international law.

I stress that Russia, as a responsible OPCW member State, in strongest terms condemns the use of chemical weapons by whomever, wherever and for whatever purposes. We are determined to have all developments clarified, and both we and our Syrian colleagues have numerous facts at our disposal that point to the use, or attempted use, of chemical weapons by the so-called Syrian opposition. As the Secretariat is perfectly aware, Damascus has shared relevant findings with the OPCW.

But in order to find out the truth, we need the OPCW Technical Secretariat to do what it is supposed to: unbiased monitoring of States’ compliance with the CWC. Only then will we be able to expect professional and impartial investigations from it. The Technical Secretariat must not create inflated demands for one country while turning a blind eye to the shortcomings of others in analogous situations, and ignoring questions to non-State actors that inevitably pop up in this context. Unfortunately, the Technical Secretariat still has a long way to go until it embarks upon truly unbiased work.

Besides, the bulk of proof of direct forgeries, manipulations and internal violations in OPCW Technical Secretariat with regard to Syria’s chemical file has reached a critical point. It is the blatant violations during investigations of incidents in Khan Shaykhun in April 2017 and in Douma in April 2018. It is testimonies of

former OPCW employees about the Fact-Finding Mission falsifying its conclusions under pressure from Western states. It is the practice of oppressing and intimidating the “dissidents” who refused to take part in this forgery. I will not cite all these facts again, because we gave a detailed account of this in our earlier statements.

In December 2020, we submitted a list of questions to the Director-General of the OPCW, Mr. Fernando Arias, but got no answers to any of them, either during the Security Council meeting (see S/2020/1202) or afterwards. Our Western colleagues like to underscore the need for transparency in the work of the OPCW and to commend the leadership of the Technical Secretariat for upholding this principle. Do you think it is transparent to have Mrs. Nakamitsu trying to give answers to the concrete questions that are posed by a Security Council Member State, and which have to do with the topics discussed at The Hague platform? Is it transparent to have Mrs. Nakamitsu trying to answer to them, rather than the head of the specialized mechanism?

In the meantime, the number of questions is growing, and they are coming not only from States. Let me give you a recent example. A group of prominent public actors addressed Director-General Arias in a letter published on 8 February by a well-known non-governmental organization — the Courage Foundation — calling on the Technical Secretariat to investigate numerous malfunctions, including reported falsifications in the Douma report. We call on the Technical Secretariat to give a public response to this letter, because silence and understatement can only foster suspicions that the Technical Secretariat might have things to conceal. The fact that Director-General Arias hides behind Mrs. Nakamitsu’s back does not add to the authority of the OPCW in the light of the accusations that I mentioned earlier.

I anticipate the traditional remarks from our Western colleagues blaming Russia for attempts to shatter and undermine the authority of the OPCW. These allegations are not backed up by anything. On the contrary, Russia struggles to revive the good name of the organization and seeks answers to the questions that are relevant to everyone. The Security Council cannot afford being a silent witness to how one of the pillars on WMD proliferation is ruined by politicization. It is our shared goal to work towards restoring trust in the OPCW and recovering its authority. We count on support of all Council members on that matter, *inter alia*, in terms of a response to the anticipated “political commissioning” of the Investigation and Identification Team, pending a vote at The Hague, and other devastating steps that might follow to undermine the OPCW and the non-proliferation regime on WMD.

If Syria’s opponents who at the same time oppose real eradication of chemical weapons throughout the whole of its territory achieve their goal, we will be living through very hard times, promising no good to the OPCW and international cooperation in this and many other areas.

Annex XII**Statement by the Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, Diani Jamesha Prince**

I also thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

The weaponization of toxic chemicals remains one of the great threats to international peace and security. The use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances constitutes a reprehensible violation of international law and necessitates condemnation by the international community. Chemical weapons do not discriminate between combatants and civilians, and their effects are horrifying. Perpetrators must not be allowed to operate with impunity; they must be held accountable.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) remains a critical component in our quest to ensure that applied science and technology is utilized only for the peace, progress and prosperity of all humankind. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines therefore reaffirms our support for the mandate of the OPCW. We furthermore support all efforts aimed at strengthening the organization's capacity to make certain that the quality of its work remains of the highest standard. It must always be characterized by impartiality, independence and non-politicization and be capable of withstanding rigorous scrutiny. Anything less serves to erode trust in the organization and thereby precludes it from being a well-functioning and effective multilateral body.

We continue to stress the importance of resolving all the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies contained in the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic. We recognize the continued engagement between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and Syria in this regard, despite the impediments created by the coronavirus disease pandemic. We continue to encourage dialogue and constructive engagement between the parties to make tangible progress on this particularly important matter.

As we continue our deliberations on this file, the collective goal of achieving a world free of chemical weapons ought to remain at the forefront. As such, the Security Council and the OPCW Technical Secretariat ought not to overlook the notifications by the Syrian government concerning the preparations by armed groups to use and/or fabricate incidents of the use of chemical weapons. This matter requires urgent attention, and we have an obligation to make an objective assessment.

Undoubtedly, there are many diverging views on this file. However, we must seek to foster and preserve cooperation to ensure the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention, thereby safeguarding the norm against chemical warfare. In this context, we ought to consider the perspectives of the Syrian Government, in respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Furthermore, OPCW member States should prioritize the pursuit of consensus-based decisions, to thwart polarization and divisiveness.

In conclusion, we commend the OPCW for ensuring that the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties continues notwithstanding the global pandemic. We look forward to a productive part 2, which is scheduled to begin on 20 April.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb**

[Original: Arabic]

I thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable and impermissible anywhere, under any circumstances and regardless of the motives and justifications. It is also a serious violation of international law and a grave threat to international peace and security. We reiterate our condemnation, in the strongest possible terms, of the use of such weapons and emphasize that the perpetrators of these terrible crimes must be held to account.

My country is committed to the chemical-weapon non-proliferation regime, which comprises the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and its implementing body, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The regime, which is based on rules and consensus, is an asset for the international community in ending the possession and use of toxic chemicals for hostile purposes and preventing the proliferation of that type of weapon of mass destruction. We must work together to strengthen the regime and maintain its sustainability and stability in the service of global peace, security and development.

Tunisia welcomes the resumption of the dialogue in Damascus between the OPCW and the Government of Syria on the chemical question through the twenty-fourth round of technical consultations, held in February 2021 by the Declaration Assessment Team and the Government, and the associated field assignments conducted by the Technical Secretariat team.

We urge the Technical Secretariat and the Government of Syria to continue their cooperation and dialogue in a spirit of constructive engagement in order to accelerate the resolution of outstanding issues and ensure that Syria fully complies with its obligations under the Convention, taking into account the continuing restrictions imposed as a result of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

Tunisia reaffirms that all allegations of the use of toxic chemicals as weapons, including by terrorist organizations, must be investigated in a thorough, impartial, independent and transparent manner.

In conclusion, we reaffirm that the international community, in particular the Security Council, has a duty to take collective and concerted action on the Syrian chemical question. In our view, that is the best way to settle the matter and help to resolve the Syrian crisis.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Senior Policy Adviser of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Ben Roberts**

I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing today. I also thank the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, (OPCW), as always, for his latest monthly report (see S/2021/305).

The recent anniversaries of the Ltamenah and Khan Shaykhun chemical-weapon attacks and tomorrow's anniversary of the Douma attack remind us of why we are here. We are here because of the repeated use of chemical weapons during the Syrian conflict. We are here because, by Syria's own admission, its initial chemical-weapons declaration was not accurate and because of Syria's failure, over a seven-year period, to resolve the outstanding issues in that declaration.

As the Director-General noted in his 9 March statement to the OPCW Executive Council, the Declaration Assessment Team process has led to the subsequent declaration by Syria of one additional chemical-weapons production facility, four additional research and development facilities, five previously undeclared chemical warfare agents and several thousand large calibre chemical munitions. Syria has now amended its declaration 17 times.

Nineteen issues with that declaration remain outstanding. As the Director-General told the Executive Council, these relate to the fate of several hundred tons of chemical warfare agents and/or thousands of chemical munitions, indicators of three undeclared chemical warfare agents, and unknown, potentially significant, quantities of chemical warfare agents. While the detail on some of these issues is undoubtedly of a technical nature, their significance is unambiguous and squarely within the Security Council's mandate under resolution 2118 (2013) and its duty to maintain international peace and security.

Syria's failure to meet its obligations led to the Executive Council to recommend a suspension of Syria's rights and privileges at the OPCW until it takes steps to redress the situation. We support the proportionate, measured action that will be considered by the Conference of the States Parties this month, as do many other States parties.

Finally, as we said last month (see S/2021/226), we support the investigation of any incidents of chemical weapons use by any party. This is fundamental to upholding the prohibition on their use. We are therefore reassured by a note from the OPCW Technical Secretariat dated 10 March indicating that the Technical Secretariat considered and analysed all 197 notes verbales submitted by Syria. While no links between the information provided and actual incidents under review could be found, we welcome that the OPCW will maintain a repository of the information for future comparison as necessary.

Annex XV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield**

I thank you, High Representative Nakamitsu, for your briefing today.

The United States strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, anytime and by anyone. These are weapons of mass destruction, and their use by any State constitutes an unacceptable threat to every State.

This week we recall two tragic chemical weapons attacks in Syria. On 4 April 2017, the Al-Assad regime deployed chemical weapons on the town of Khan Shaykhun, in Idlib governorate, killing Syrian children, women and men. One year later, on 7 April 2018, in the city of Douma, the Al-Assad regime again used these horrific banned weapons on innocent people.

Unfortunately, the chemical-weapon attacks in Khan Shaykhun and Douma were not the only ones; they represent a pattern. They represent a pattern of use and abuse by the Al-Assad regime. The regime then tries to avoid accountability by obstructing independent investigations and failing to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Meanwhile, Russia continues to defend the Al-Assad regime without reservation. It does this by spreading disinformation, attacking the integrity and professional work of the OPCW and impeding the efforts by responsible nations to hold the Al-Assad regime accountable for its use of chemical weapons.

Let me say again that the United States firmly supports the impartial and independent work of the OPCW and its investigative bodies. That includes the Investigation and Identification Team, the Fact-Finding Mission and the Declaration Assessment Team. We applaud the OPCW's leadership and the Technical Secretariat for the professional manner in which it carries out its mission.

Because of Russia's irresponsible and dangerous enablement, the Al-Assad regime continues to flagrantly ignore our calls to fully disclose and verifiably destroy its chemical weapons programmes, year after year. Twenty-four consultations. Nearly eight years of engagement. Again, and again and again, independent experts have identified significant gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in Syria's declarations.

Recently, the Declaration Assessment Team discovered that nerve-agent-weapons activity occurred at yet another facility the regime had declared as never having produced or handled chemical weapons. To date, Syria has not declared the exact types and quantities of agents produced at this site in line with its obligations under the Convention, as requested by the Technical Secretariat. These failures of accountability are not exceptions; they have become the rule.

Last month (see S/2021/226), I recounted the timeline of events that led to us, along with 47 co-sponsors representing nearly every region of the world, submitting a strong and serious draft decision to the OPCW Conference of the States Parties. This month, the OPCW Conference of the States Parties convenes. We call upon them to take the necessary and appropriate actions to send a strong message to the Al-Assad regime that the use of chemical weapons is simply unacceptable and comes with grave consequences.

This Conference is of the utmost importance. The credibility of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and of this very Council, is at stake. After all, it was the Security Council in 2013 that declared that the Al-Assad regime shall not use, develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons. The Council further decided that the Al-Assad regime must cooperate fully with the

OPCW and the United Nations. So, we urge the States parties to take decisive action. Vote in favour of the proposed decision. Suspend Syria's rights and privileges under the Convention until it completes the measures set forth in the July 2020 Executive Council decision.

Sometimes, with all of these declarations and decisions and resolutions, it abstracts away from why we feel so strongly about this. I would remind everyone of what Dr. Amani Ballour told us last week (see S/2021/315). In her many years in Syria, treating the most horrific wounds and staring death in the face on a daily basis, she said the worst night of her life was when she arrived at a hospital where children were suffocating after being exposed to sarin — hundreds of innocent people dying before her eyes.

The women and children of Syria are waiting. They know the Security Council has said that chemical-weapon attacks are unacceptable. They know we have the power to hold the Al-Assad regime accountable. So, let us act. And let us show them that we are worthy of our charge.

Annex XVI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Syria at this meeting. With regard to today's subject, allow me to emphasize the following points.

First, it has always been Viet Nam's consistent policy to support non-proliferation and disarmament of all weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons. We therefore categorically condemn uses of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone and under any circumstances. The use of these weapons is a flagrant violation of international law and presents an immediate threat to the lives and living environment of civilians. As State parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), 193 States share the same goal of ridding the world of chemical weapons. They bear the obligations to fully implement the Convention to truly achieve that goal.

Secondly, as a committed advocate of multilateralism and international law, Viet Nam supports the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is entrusted by the CWC. We recognize the important role played by the OPCW in support of the implementation of the CWC. At the same time, we would like to stress that it is also imperative that its work strictly abide by the Convention. Investigations of alleged violations in that regard should be carried out in a most comprehensive, objective and impartial manner, based on verified information and without any politicization. These high standards help establish irrefutable facts and evidences in order to ensure justice as well as to prevent the recurrence of violations.

Thirdly, with regard to the issue of chemical weapons in Syria, we share the concern of the international community over the alleged use of these weapons. In finding solutions, we take note of the continued engagement between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian National Authority, as outlined in the ninetieth report (see S/2021/305) of the OPCW Director-General.

We note with encouragement that the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian National Authority have continued their engagement through technical meetings, field visits and exchanges of letters, both during and after the recently held twenty-fourth round of consultations. It is our strong belief that this spirit of cooperation is the best way forward to resolve the remaining gaps and inconsistencies. We therefore call on the two sides to enhance their cooperation in a most earnest and constructive manner in order to fully address the remaining issues and work towards the full implementation of the CWC and resolution 2118 (2013).

Last but not least, in support of the ongoing efforts by the OPCW Technical Secretariat and Syria, it is crucial that the international community be united, including at The Hague and in New York. Our delegation calls for constructive and non-politicized engagement by all parties so as to achieve a lasting solution to this issue, including at the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the State Parties to the CWC, to be resumed later this month.

Annex XVII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Syria to the United Nations, Bassam Sabbagh**

[Original: Arabic and English]

At the outset, I congratulate you, Sir, and your friendly country, Viet Nam, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We have full confidence in your successful stewardship of the work of the Council.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, at any time and place and under any circumstances, and reiterates that it did not use chemical weapons and that it voluntarily joined the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2013 and worked with the organization in a diligent, credible and transparent manner to implement its accession obligations, which resulted in the destruction of its chemical weapon stockpiles and production facilities.

We listened to Mrs. Nakamitsu's briefing, and I met her a few days ago and conveyed to her our concerns about not including in her briefings the information and updates that we provide her. Today we also heard some repeated statements from Western countries, led by the United States, which were dominated by politicization and unfounded accusations. Therefore, I would like to confirm and clarify some points as follows.

First, the Syrian Arab Republic has committed itself to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to settle the remaining outstanding issues in its initial declaration and to close this matter permanently and as soon as possible. In this regard, Syria categorically rejects the persistence of some countries in casting doubt on its initial declaration and affirms its determination to continue to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat of the organization within the framework of organized dialogue. Syria's monthly report No. 88, covering the period from 16 February to 15 March, included confirmation of the Syrian Government's readiness to continue consultations and work with the Technical Secretariat.

Secondly, the Syrian Arab Republic has continued to cooperate with the Fact-Finding Mission, welcomed the visit of its teams during the month of March — in addition to its upcoming planned visits — and affirms that it will provide all facilitation for the success of its tasks. In this regard, Syria renews its serious concerns about the *modus operandi* of the mission, over which many countries have also expressed concerns.

Syria expresses its regret that the OPCW ignored the statement of the Courage Foundation issued on 8 February and signed by a large group of experts and prominent scientific figures, led by Mr. José Bustani, the organization's first Director-General, regarding the investigation into the alleged Douma incident, especially for neglecting the fundamental and serious concerns about the manner in which the investigation was conducted and the occurrence of serious "procedural irregularities and scientific flaws".

Thirdly, the Syrian Arab Republic demands that due attention be given to the information it provides to the United Nations, the relevant Security Council committees and the OPCW about the ongoing attempts by terrorist organizations and their arm, the White Helmets group, in cooperation and coordination with intelligence services of well-known countries, to stage incidents of chemical-weapons use to accuse the Syrian Arab Army and its allies. I refer here to the statement of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation on 8 March 2021 regarding the preparation and fabrication of terrorists of the Al-Nusra Front, in cooperation with

the White Helmets, of incidents of using chemical weapons in the countryside of Idlib and Latakia provinces.

Fourthly, some delegations have referred to the French-Western draft decision submitted for the second part of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties, scheduled to be held before the end of this month, and which was based on the inaccurate and unprofessional conclusions of the illegitimate so-called Investigation and Identification Team.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns the frantic pursuit by some Governments to promote allegations and fabrications about the so-called “non-compliance” of Syria with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The aforementioned draft resolution is further evidence of the continuation of these countries’ aggressive intentions against Syria and their violation of the procedural rules for working in the organization once again by rejecting the proposal of the Russian Federation to include this draft decision on the agenda of the ninety-sixth session of the Executive Council for discussion before referring it to the Conference of the States Parties.

In that regard, my country renews its call to all Member States that adhere to the principles of international law and to reject the draft decision to protect the OPCW from the risk of transforming it from a technical organization with noble goals to a platform for the United States and its allies to exert pressure and target a State party to the Convention. Such a practice will have dangerous repercussions on the future of the OPCW’s work and cooperation with it.

Whoever claims to be keen on accountability and preventing impunity should not turn a blind eye to the crimes of terrorist groups and the aggressive practices of some countries against Syria. Those concerned with accountability should demand that the United States be held accountable for its crimes in the city of Raqqa and for its flagrant violation of the sovereignty of Syrian territories on this day in 2017 with its missile aggression against the Shayrat air base, which was targeted with 59 Tomahawk missiles under the pretext of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun, even before any investigation took place.

In order to justify this aggression, the United States later resorted to the exploitation of the inaccurate and unprofessional conclusions of the Joint Investigative Mission, whose work was full of grave flaws that led to the termination of its mandate.

The advocates of ensuring accountability must not ignore the aggression of the United States, along with France and Britain, against my country in April 2018, under the same false pretexts surrounding another alleged incident in Douma, the subsequent investigations of which revealed major scandals.

The pledge made by the States Member of the United Nations to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”, including preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and promoting other noble values represented by respect for international law and the principles of justice and equity, has unfortunately today become an arena for manipulation and exploitation by the United States and its Western allies and a tool to impose their agendas based on dominating the political decisions of Member States, controlling their national wealth and distorting the choices of their peoples.

In conclusion, I renew our demand that these States stop politicizing this file, remove it from political games and stop the practices of pressure and blackmail. I assure that Syria, despite all the grave challenges posed by acts of foreign military aggression, terrorist organizations’ crimes, unilateral coercive measures and, recently, the spread of the coronavirus disease, will remain committed to defending

its sovereignty and independence and the rights of its people and will continue to implement all its international obligations.
