



Security Council

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Letter dated 10 May 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 Thursday, 6 May 2021. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security 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) **Zhang Jun**
President of the Security Council



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

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

Since the previous Security Council meeting on resolution 2118 (2013), held on 6 April 2021 (see S/2021/337), the Office for Disarmament Affairs has maintained regular contact with counterparts at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter and, consistent with established practice, I held a monthly call with the OPCW Director-General on 5 May 2021, to receive an update and ascertain his views.

As I have previously informed the Council, the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has affected the OPCW Technical Secretariat's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. Nevertheless, 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 undertaken 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 by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) are still ongoing to clarify all the outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW. With regard to the issue of a former chemical-weapons production facility that was declared as never having been used to produce and/or weaponize chemical weapons, the Syrian Arab Republic has reiterated that this facility was never used for the production of chemical weapons. However, the OPCW Technical Secretariat remains of the position that the Syrian Arab Republic must declare all chemical warfare agents produced and/or weaponized at this site.

I am advised that, during the twenty-third round of consultations, held in September 2020, between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority, the DAT collected samples from several large-volume containers in the Syrian Arab Republic. On 8 March 2021, the OPCW Technical Secretariat received a note verbale from the Syrian Arab Republic containing explanations regarding the results of the analysis of those samples. I have been advised that the DAT conducted a detailed analysis of all the information provided by the Syrian National Authority and assessed that the aforementioned explanations are not sufficient to explain the results from the sample analysis.

According to the OPCW Technical Secretariat, one of the chemicals detected in these samples is a neat chemical warfare agent, the production of which has not been declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. The presence of this chemical inside storage containers of large volume at a previously declared chemical-weapons facility may imply undeclared production activities. Consequently, through a note verbale dated 16 April 2021, the OPCW Technical Secretariat informed the Syrian Arab Republic that a new outstanding issue would be opened and would be discussed at the next round of consultations with the DAT. These are currently planned to take place in mid-May 2021.

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.

The number of outstanding issues and their nature is concerning. I reiterate my call to the Syrian Arab Republic to extend its full cooperation to the OPCW Technical Secretariat to resolve all outstanding issues. As I have noted on many prior occasions, the confidence of the international community in the complete elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme depends upon these issues being finalized.

I have been advised that the outcome of the seventh round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre, conducted by the OPCW Technical Secretariat in November 2020, will be reported to the OPCW Executive Council in due course. The conduct of further deployments remains subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am advised 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 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.

With regard to the work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), I note that the 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". I have been advised that the FFM deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic between 29 March and 13 April 2021 to collect information and conduct interviews regarding an incident that took place in Kafr Zita, Hama, on 1 October 2016. The results of its activities will be reported by the FFM to the OPCW Executive Council in due course.

On 12 April 2021, the OPCW Technical Secretariat submitted to the OPCW Executive Council and to the United Nations Secretary-General the note entitled "Second Report by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team Pursuant to Paragraph 10 of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 'Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use'". The second report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) presents the findings of investigations conducted during the period between April 2020 and March 2021, focusing on the incident in Saraqib, in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 4 February 2018.

As noted in the IIT report, on the basis of all the information obtained and analysed, the IIT concluded that

"there are reasonable grounds to believe that at approximately 21:22 on 4 February 2018, during ongoing attacks against Saraqib, a military helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force under the control of the Tiger Forces hit eastern Saraqib by dropping at least one cylinder. The cylinder ruptured and released a toxic gas, chlorine, which dispersed over a large area [,] affecting 12 named individuals." (S/1943/2021/para. 3)

The findings of the IIT's second report are deeply concerning. There is no justification for the use of toxic chemicals as weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. With the submission of the IIT's second report, I want to reiterate my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of the work of the OPCW.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs has taken note of the decision entitled "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" — document C-25/DEC.9, dated 21 April 2021 — adopted at the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, suspending the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under

the Convention. According to paragraph 8 of this decision, the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic will be reinstated once the OPCW Director-General has reported to the Executive Council that the Syrian Arab Republic has completed all of the measures contained in paragraph 5 of Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2. I therefore urge the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in that regard.

Any use of chemical weapons is totally unacceptable and a serious violation of international law. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable, no matter who they are. If we cannot do so, we allow the use of chemical weapons to take place with impunity, something that must not be tolerated. It is my sincere hope that members of the Security Council will unite on this issue. The Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever support and assistance it can.

Annex II**Statement by the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Zhang Jun**

[Original: Chinese and English]

I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. China regrets that Director-General Arias cannot attend today's briefing. I wish to make the following observations.

First, with regard to respecting science and facts and upholding the technical attributes of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the investigation and handling of the alleged use of chemical weapons must strictly comply with the requirements of the Chemical Weapons Convention, honour independence, neutrality and impartiality and ensure procedural compliance, reliable evidence and credible conclusions, to avoid causing controversy. The establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team, which exceeded the mandate of the Convention, the lack of transparency in its working methods, the failure of its specific procedures to meet the standards set out in the Convention and the difficulty in restoring facts in its published reports all give rise to multiple questions. We hope that the Technical Secretariat, on the basis of respecting facts and science, will respond to the questions raised by the countries concerned, to ensure that the conclusions of its investigation are objective, truthful and impartial.

Secondly, with regard to strengthening dialogue and consultation and reverting to the tradition of making decisions by consensus, some countries have repeatedly pushed for a vote on the issue of Syrian chemical weapons, leading the parties further apart and onto the path of disagreement. If everything is decided on by a vote, the authority of the OPCW will be further questioned, and it will be difficult to implement a decision effectively. The more important the issue is, the more important it is for States parties to bridge their differences through dialogue and consultation. China calls on all parties to go back to the tradition of consensus, jointly improve the working atmosphere of the OPCW and uphold the authority and effectiveness of the Convention.

Thirdly, on respecting the rights of States parties and avoiding politicizing the work of OPCW, Syria has repeatedly expressed its willingness to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat. Its constructive attitude deserves recognition. The international community should encourage both sides to continue to resolve outstanding issues through technical consultations. At the twenty-fifth Conference of the States Parties, Some States forced the adoption of a decision to suspend Syria's rights to vote, to be elected and other privileges. China voted against the decision, and many other members of the Council did not support it, which speaks volumes. The OPCW must not be used as a geopolitical tool or weapon to suppress the legitimate Governments of developing countries.

In conclusion, I reiterate that China is firmly opposed to the use of chemical weapons by any country, organization or individual under any circumstances and for any purpose and hopes that our world will be freed from all chemical weapons at an early date. We urge all the countries in possession of chemical weapons to destroy all chemical weapons as soon as possible.

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. As always, we appreciate your strong voice in calling for accountability.

Estonia welcomes the adoption of the decision by the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention on 21 April 2021 suspending the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). This is a measured and fitting response to Syria's continued possession and use of chemical weapons. The international community could not look past any longer and sent a strong message that this abhorrent behaviour has consequences and needs to stop.

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict, the regime has terrorized its people by using toxic substances against them, in grave violation of international law. Last month, on 12 April, the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team released its second report, which found that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force is responsible for a chemical-weapon attack in Saraqib in February 2018. This is now the eighth case of chemical- weapon use attributed to the Al-Assad regime in five years. We strongly condemn each one of them and hope that, in the face of clear evidence, the Security Council will take action to uphold its resolutions and the Charter of the United Nations. The victims of the Syrian regime's war crimes deserve to see those responsible held accountable for their heinous actions. Accountability is needed to build peace in Syria.

Resolution 2118 (2013) stipulates that the Syrian Arab Republic shall cooperate fully with the OPCW. We have now received the ninety-first monthly report (see S/2021/422) of the Director-General, and the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the Syrian declaration stubbornly persist. We note with worry that, against evidence to the contrary, Syria continues to deny having ever used a chemical-weapons production facility. New, previously undeclared findings of a neat chemical warfare agent have triggered the need to open another outstanding issue. Estonia once again states that the Al-Assad regime must declare its entire supply of chemical weapons so that they may be verifiably destroyed, as required under the Chemical Weapons Convention and the resolution 2118 (2013).

To conclude, allow me to reiterate our full trust in the independent, impartial and professional work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its investigative bodies and in the credibility of its reports. Attempts to undermine the OPCW and weaken the international architecture against the use of chemical weapons is deeply concerning and unacceptable. We continue to call on the Russian Federation to cooperate with the OPCW and to disclose — urgently, fully and in a transparent manner — the circumstances of the poisoning of Mr. Navalny with a chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group and to inform the Security Council in this regard.

Annex IV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière**

[Original: French]

I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for the briefing and once again commend her work and that of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

France welcomes the adoption, by a very large majority, of the decision that it submitted on behalf of 46 delegations at the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is an important decision by responsible States parties. But let us be clear: we do not welcome the suspension of some of the rights and privileges of a State party. It is the repeated and flagrant violations of its international commitments that compel us to do so.

The issuance of the second report of the Investigation and Identification Team, on 12 April, once again highlights the crimes of the Syrian regime. It identifies the perpetrators of an attack by dropping at least one cylinder of chlorine from a military helicopter on the town of Saraqib on 4 February 2018. The attack resulted in 12 casualties. We are now certain that the perpetrators of those attacks are members of the Syrian Arab Air Force under the control of the 25th Special Mission Forces Division. The Syrian regime's use of such weapons, which has once again been documented and is beyond dispute, is unacceptable and will not go unpunished.

If it is to reinstate its rights and privileges, Syria must comply with its international obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which it has chosen to accede. It must behave as a responsible actor and finally shed full light on its initial declaration. Unfortunately, however, I note that new outstanding issues continue to be added to the old ones, as the Secretariat's communication of 16 April confirms. How can it be explained that we are still in this situation more than seven years after the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013)?

I say this with gravity: the use of chemical weapons cannot go unpunished. The perpetrators of chemical-weapons attacks must be held accountable for their crimes. Prosecutions will take place, including in national courts. They are necessary to deter anyone from continuing to use such weapons. An international convention cannot be violated without consequences. That would encourage others to violate it.

In that spirit, in January 2018 in Paris we launched the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which today brings together 40 States and the European Union.

Annex V**Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurti**

Let me begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu for updating the Security Council in respect of the mechanisms of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) with regard to Syria and the ninety-first monthly report of the Director-General of the OPCW (see S/2021/422).

India views the Chemical Weapons Convention as a unique, non-discriminatory disarmament instrument that serves as a model for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. India therefore attaches great importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. India believes that it is important to maintain the credibility and integrity of the Convention.

Furthermore, India has been firmly against any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anybody, under any circumstances, and firm on the fact that such acts cannot be justified. All investigations of the alleged use of chemical weapons should be conducted in an impartial and objective manner and strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We have noted the contents of the latest report of the Director-General on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. India notes the efforts of the OPCW Technical Secretariat with regard to the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) in resolving the identified gaps and inconsistencies in the initial declaration and the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on the alleged use of chemical weapons. The Syrian authorities are cooperating with the DAT and the FFM, as evident from the ongoing deployment of the FFM and the next round of consultations with the DAT next week.

India has consistently supported the need for an impartial and objective investigation by the OPCW to establish the facts and reach evidence-based conclusions regarding incidents of any use of chemical weapons, in strict accordance with the provisions and procedures embedded in the Chemical Weapons Convention and in conformity with the delicate balance of power and responsibility enshrined within it. We have seen both the first report and now the second report of the Investigation and Identification Team on incidents in Syria. The current report falls short of those expectations.

We support the resolution of all issues through consultation, dialogue and cooperation. We encourage Syria to continue engagement and cooperation with the OPCW mechanism to resolve all pending issues expeditiously.

India remains concerned about the possibility of chemical weapons falling into the hands of terrorist entities and individuals. The latest report of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (see S/2021/419) mentions the repeated successful deployments of chemical weapons by ISIL against civilian populations between 2014 and 2016. That is a cause for serious concern given the fact that the core area of operations of ISIL has been in both Syria and Iraq. It is deeply concerning that the involvement of external actors in Syria has given a fillip to the growth of terrorism in Syria and the region. We are concerned by the frequent reports of the resurgence of terrorist groups in the region. The international community cannot afford to lower its guard against terrorists. We have learned many lessons from the past of the consequences of misplaced complacency against terrorism.

Lastly, 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 reiterate our support for the United Nations-led efforts to find 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 High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing today.

Ireland believes that the use of chemical weapons anywhere and at any time is abhorrent and unacceptable. It is only through firm, concerted action in response to their use that we can effectively uphold the international prohibition against those terrible weapons.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has an essential role to play as the impartial and technical body mandated by the international community to address chemical weapons. Ireland has full confidence in the work of the OPCW and in its investigations and its conclusions on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The latest OPCW report (see S/2021/422) makes for disquieting reading. We had hoped to see progress in addressing Syria's initial declaration. Instead, what we find is that the long list of issues that need to be resolved has expanded yet again.

The alarming new issue concerning the Hafer 1 facility underlines the significant problems with Syria's declaration and its failure to cooperate seriously with the OPCW. As the report sets out in paragraph 12, the presence of a "neat chemical warfare agent" from several large-volume storage containers at a facility declared as unused may imply substantial undeclared production activities by Syria.

Since we last met to discuss this file (see S/2021/337), the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team has published its second report, which concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force used a chemical weapon in Saraqib in February 2018. Regrettably, the Syrian response to all such findings has continually been characterized by unacceptable obfuscation, misinformation and misdirection.

In that regard, a significant step forward was taken at The Hague on 21 April when the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) overwhelmingly decided to take action against Syrian non-compliance. This was not a decision taken lightly by anyone. It reflects the gravity of Syria's actions and the international concerns that they have raised. It is a necessary and proportionate response to the failure of the Syrian authorities to meet their basic obligations under the CWC. The decision adopted by the Conference of the States Parties and that of the OPCW Executive Council last July make crystal clear the actions that Syria must take to comply with the CWC.

The OPCW has fulfilled its responsibilities by investigating and clearly attributing responsibility for chemical weapons use in Syria. The States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention have fulfilled their responsibility by taking appropriate and proportionate action against the Syrian Government. The Security Council must work together to uphold the international prohibition against chemical weapons in the face of that threat to international peace and security.

Put simply, Syria must fulfil its legal obligations. It must cooperate fully with the OPCW and ensure that its entire stocks of chemical weapons are declared and verifiably destroyed. Ireland unequivocally condemns the confirmed use of chemical weapons in Syria and calls for accountability for the perpetrators.

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

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

Kenya continues to strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons, toxic chemicals as weapons and any weapons of mass destruction by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstance. We consider them atrocities that constitute a threat to international peace and security and are a flagrant violation of international law.

Kenya reaffirms its support for the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its responsibility as the technical body overseeing the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We take note of the Director-General's ninety-first monthly report (see S/2021/422) concerning the prohibition of chemical weapons. We also take note of the submission by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Security Council of its eighty-ninth monthly report regarding the activities in its territory relating to the destruction of its chemical weapons and production facilities.

It has been seven years since resolution 2118 (2013) was adopted. Unfortunately, there has so far been little movement towards the conclusion and closure of those investigations. We believe that, for meaningful progress to happen, honest dialogue, transparency, trust and unity of purpose must be cultivated among all the relevant parties and stakeholders.

The OPCW bears a profound responsibility as the guardian of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is therefore critical that all its investigations be conducted in a comprehensive, impartial and professional manner, consistent with the applicable international instruments and standards.

We encourage continued coordinated collaboration, which would facilitate an expeditious conclusion of the investigations and allow the Council to focus its attention on the provision of humanitarian assistance and helping the Syrian people to reach a sustainable solution to the political crisis.

Kenya strongly believes that a long-term solution to Syria's crisis is an inclusive political dialogue, but one that is careful to not reward terrorist groups with political legitimacy. Kenya stands in solidarity with the people of Syria in that endeavour.

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

[Original: Spanish]

I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her presentation on the ninety-first monthly report of the OPCW Director-General (see S/2021/422).

It is regrettable that, despite the verified destruction of the 27 chemical weapons production facilities initially declared by Syria, inconsistencies with the initial declaration still remain. The Declaration Assessment Team identified one chemical warfare agent whose production had not been declared by Syria, raising new questions for the next round of consultations between Damascus and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in May. We will await the results of those investigations and others that remain outstanding.

We have closely followed the findings of the second report of the Investigation and Identification Team that “there are reasonable grounds” to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force carried out a chemical attack with chlorine in Saraqib in February 2018, as well as the recent developments regarding the action taken by the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mexico reiterates its call on Syria to continue to cooperate with the work of the OPCW and with all the mechanisms established by the organization to conduct investigations into the use of chemical weapons on Syrian territory, in compliance with its obligations as a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

My country reaffirms its full confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW, as well as in the work of the Investigation and Identification Team, which not only is composed of a multinational team of experts in various fields, but also observes the strictest international standards in its analysis. It should be remembered that this international organization is independent, and we therefore reiterate the importance of strengthening collaboration between the United Nations and the OPCW.

Given the current situation, Mexico once again appeals to and urges the other members of the Security Council to unite in unrestricted condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor under any circumstances and in their support for compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and the work of the OPCW, based on a transparent, constructive dialogue, supported by facts, not by political opinions, and even less so as to further polarize a chronic and critical situation.

Diplomatic dialogue is the way in which we all support the resolution of disputes and conflicts. I want to be clear: Mexico does not support actions that generate the exclusion of some parties. All are necessary at the negotiating table. But what is really urgent at the moment is greater cooperation among the OPCW, the Security Council and Syria. However, it is up to the Council to encourage such cooperation. Mexico is confident that we can achieve that.

Annex IX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Abdou Abarry**

[Original: French]

At the outset, let me thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran at this meeting.

The difficulties in implementing resolution 2118 (2013), despite it having been unanimously adopted by the Security Council, show the complexity of the mechanism for determining responsibility for incidents of chemical weapons use by actors in the Syrian conflict. Any delay in resolving that issue can only prolong the plight of the Syrian victims, who are waiting for justice to be done, and that must spur us to act consistently. Having said that, let me highlight the following three points.

First, all incidents of chemical weapons use in Syria must be given the same attention and treated with the same diligence in reaching a general conclusion with regard to establishing responsibility. The differences of opinion among Council members must be replaced by a calm and technical analysis of the results of the investigations in order to guarantee the integrity of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

Secondly, the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW Technical Secretariat must cooperate in good faith to resolve the outstanding issues of the initial declaration. We therefore take note of the note verbale dated 16 April from the Technical Secretariat informing the Syrian Arab Republic that a new outstanding issue would be opened and discussed at the next round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team, which are currently planned to take place in mid-May. Similarly, rigorous attention must be paid to all allegations of chemical weapons use by any actor and anywhere in Syria.

Thirdly, we take note, of the second report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) Pursuant to Paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” in Saraqib (Syrian Arab Republic) — 4 February 2018 (S/1943/2021). It is unfortunate, however, that the IIT teams did not have access to the sites on the ground to corroborate their findings.

My delegation also takes note of decision C-25/DEC.9 of 21 April, entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic”, which was adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention at its twenty-fifth regular session, to suspend the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic to vote in the OPCW Conference of the States Parties and the Executive Council, to stand for election to the OPCW Executive Council and to hold any office in the Conference, the Executive Council or any subsidiary body.

While this decision is in line with OPCW texts, it is feared that it will affect the already difficult cooperation between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian Government.

In that regard, we call on the Syrian Government to further engage with the OPCW teams by providing the requested information in order to redress any irregularities raised by the organization. That will provide answers to questions that could help lift the suspensions imposed by the Conference of the States Parties.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the need for the Security Council to demonstrate real unity of purpose if progress in the treatment and elimination of

Syrian chemical weapons is to be effective and verifiable. This unity is essential, because the way we deal with this issue will not only determine the credibility of the OPCW, but also the credibility of the Security Council as the principal organ with the mandate to eliminate threats to international peace and security.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Mona Juul**

I thank you, High Representative Nakamitsu, for your briefing, and Director General Arias for the monthly report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2021/422). Unfortunately, we meet again without major positive developments since last month on the full elimination of chemical weapons in Syria.

We have received a second report from the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), and we applaud it for collecting, comparing and scrutinizing evidence amid the challenges posed by the global pandemic. The IIT, in its rigorous, evidence-based analysis, unfortunately concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force was responsible for an attack with chlorine on Saraqib in February 2018.

With this, the IIT and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism have now attributed a total of eight cases of chemical weapons use to the Syrian authorities and two cases to the so-called Islamic State. Norway condemns the use of a chemical weapon in Saraqib, just as we condemn any use of chemical weapons, under any circumstances, by anyone.

Norway welcomes the April decision of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention to suspend certain rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention. As you know, the decision was made in response to the conclusions in the IIT's first report from April last year (S/1867/2020). We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to fulfil its obligations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013).

Turning now to the monthly report from the OPCW, Norway welcomes the deployment of the Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic to collect information and conduct interviews regarding incidents in Kafr Zita, Hama, in October 2016. And we look forward to a report of their findings in due time.

However, we note with concern the opening of a new outstanding issue on top of the 19 issues which have remained outstanding now for far too long. This latest issue regards the detection of a neat chemical warfare agent found in samples collected by the Declaration Assessment Team's last September. The Syrian authorities must provide information to resolve this finding immediately and at the latest during the next round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Norway's steadfast confidence in the OPCW. We firmly reject any efforts to discredit their important work. We must not tolerate this impunity or allow the essential global norm against the use of chemical weapons to erode.

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

[Original: Russian]

First of all, let me say how disappointed we are to be having this meeting in video-teleconference format once again. We are firmly convinced that there is nothing preventing us from returning to in-person meetings. The best location for meetings is the Security Council Chamber, which meets all social distancing requirements related to the coronavirus disease pandemic. Meeting there in person would send an important and much-anticipated signal to the global community. We kindly request the Chinese presidency to take immediate steps so that we can resume our traditional forms and methods of work.

Unfortunately, what we predicted at the previous meeting on this agenda item (see S/2021/337) has come true. At its twenty-fifth session, held in April, the Conference of the State Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, with the encouragement of Western delegations, adopted the decision to suspend the rights of the Syrian Arab Republic in the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). To achieve that, our Western colleagues once again violated the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) norms and the OPCW's long-standing practice of consensus. This draft decision was presented to the Conference of the States Parties and put to vote there without prior consideration by the Executive Council, as required under the Chemical Weapons Convention. Our Western colleagues are already boasting about the statistics, as we have just heard from the representative of the United States, but in fact fewer than a half of OPCW member States voted in favour of this document.

With regard to support for Russia's position, dear Richard Mills, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States, I would like to underscore that only six members, all of whom represent Western States, of the current composition of the Security Council voted in favour of the decision. The others either abstained or voted against it. Quite a number of former members of the Council who were present at Council discussions of the Syrian chemical issue last year and know the situation well took the same position. As the saying goes, no comment is necessary.

This was a totally unprecedented decision. It is the first time a sovereign State that faithfully complies with the CWC has been incapacitated by the OPCW. It severely undermines the credibility of the OPCW, and the consequences of this reckless step have yet to be realized. Could it be that the instigators of the anti-Syrian campaign intended to make Syria a pariah in the OPCW? After all that has happened, are they planning to conduct business as usual with Damascus? The goal of the Western sponsors of this decision has now become even clearer. No, they do not want to ensure that no one ever uses chemical weapons on Syrian territory. Their real goal is to provoke Damascus to take rash steps and, in so doing, achieve their own political objectives.

We have warned that this idea was carefully premeditated. Over the course of several years, the work of the Technical Secretariat's inspection teams has been paving the way for this punitive decision of the Conference of the States Parties. As we know from the witnesses — former OPCW inspectors, who have spoken of that in the Security Council and elsewhere — the leadership of the Technical Secretariat has been doing this under the pressure from Western delegations. As a result, outrageous violations were committed, as repeatedly attested to by the independent experts, during the investigations of the incidents in Khan Shaykhun in April 2017

and Douma in April 2018; the findings of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) regarding this incident were blatantly falsified, and the dissidents who refused to participate in this fabrication were openly suppressed and intimidated.

The culmination of these intrigues is the creation of an illegitimate Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) in the Technical Secretariat, thereby defying the long-standing norms and practices of the OPCW — first and foremost, the principle of consensus. Like the FFM, the IIT has disregarded the principles of investigations, especially those pertaining to the collection of evidence and preservation of physical evidence and has produced a report replete with factual and technical errors, accusing the Syrian authorities of using chemical weapons on two occasions. The report does not stand up to criticism. Nevertheless, the Technical Secretariat leadership turns a blind eye to the opinions of renowned experts about this report and about the report on Douma as well. And so this document was the formal basis for the decision to suspend the rights of Damascus in the OPCW.

Let me draw your attention to another prediction of ours that has also come true. You may remember that, since early 2021, we have been saying that by the time the April session of the Conference of the States Parties begins, the IIT will have come up with another propaganda product so as to stir up anti-Syrian sentiment. That is exactly what has happened. Prior to the vote in The Hague, the IIT “threw in” another report — on the incident in Saraqib in February 2018. In order to get an idea of the quality of the report, it is enough to say that it repeats all the mistakes that have been repeatedly ripped apart in the FFM report on Douma and the first IIT report. I will offer specific examples.

First, based on the report, it appears that the IIT never visited the scene of the incident. All the evidence was collected by the infamous “White Helmets” non-governmental organizations. What chain of custody can we talk about? Half of the witnesses who were questioned are “White Helmets”.

Secondly, chlorine causes more damage when used on a massive scale. During the First World War, in order to inflict greater damage on the French army, Germany had to use 180 tons of chlorine. In its Saraqib investigation, the IIT cites the use of just one cylinder of chlorine, which allegedly caused minor injuries to 12 people, all of whom were discharged from the hospital within two hours of admission. From the point of view of basic common sense, let alone military tactics, why would Damascus use chlorine in Saraqib and set itself up for international criticism if it would yield no military or other advantage?

And I am not even raising other small, but glaring inconsistencies. Suffice it to mention the cylinder, half of which corroded within 12 hours after hitting the ground. We have many such questions, and we will present them in detail once our experts have completed their analysis.

Let me remind you of the quote by former OPCW spokesperson Michael Luhan, to which independent journalist Aaron Maté referred at a Security Council Arria Formula video-teleconference on 16 April. Mr. Maté recalled a statement by Mr. Luhan in 2013 that the OPCW would never study samples that had been collected by anyone other than OPCW inspectors in the field. What do we see today? The Technical Secretariat is openly violating its own principles and does not hesitate to admit it in its report. How then can we trust its work at all?

As if all that were not enough, the new IIT report contains an element that goes beyond any conceivable limits. One paragraph of the report states that one of the most probable motives for the launch of the chlorine airstrike was to establish “a ‘punishment’ for the downing of the Russian aircraft Su-25”. The IIT draws this conclusion with reference to an anonymous military expert. We expect the leadership

of the OPCW to provide exhaustive explanations of why the Technical Secretariat, which is said to deal with purely technical analysis, would so blatantly go beyond its mandate and engage in unabashed speculations.

It would only be logical if this and many other questions that we asked in December 2020 and that received no response were answered by the Head of the OPCW, Director General Arias himself. By the way, he was scheduled to participate in today's meeting, but he declined on the pretext of being busy. In the light of this, I would kindly request the upcoming Estonian presidency to send Mr. Arias an invitation to the next meeting on resolution 2118 (2013) in June well in advance, and to find a date that would fit into his schedule.

In the absence of Director General Arias, I would request Ms. Nakamitsu to address the issue I raised.

We cannot let the OPCW or any other specialized international platform become a tool to punish the undesirable by making baseless accusations with regard to the use of weapons of mass destruction. Any State can end up in Syria's place if Western colleagues decide to use the chemical leverage against them. One must only look at the most recent report of the United States Department of State on the implementation of the CWC. The report cites not only Syria, but also Iran, Myanmar and even China among the violators. However, while assuming the role of judge, our American colleagues do not mention that the State that possesses the largest chemical weapon stockpiles, and is in no hurry to get rid of them, is the United States itself. There is an outrageous double standard with regard to Syria and unacceptable politicizing of independent mechanisms designed to promote the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Let me stress that Russia, as a responsible State member of the OPCW, categorically condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and for any purpose. We have supported the OPCW since its creation, which we were part of. That is why we are determined to ensure that all developments are clarified. There have been too many questions. The widespread violations, particularly with regard to the Douma investigation, call into question the validity of any further conclusions of the Technical Secretariat inspection missions.

Mr. Aaron Maté, whom I already mentioned today, briefed the Council twice regarding the Douma incident. During our Arria Formula video-teleconference in April, he addressed the representatives of the United States of America and the United Kingdom, asking if they would support the fraud around the FFM report being taken up by the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board, with the participation of the original team of experts. I recall that, under paragraph 45 of article VIII of the CWC, the OPCW Director-General is responsible for the activities of that Board. We promised Aaron that we would repeat his question at a formal Security Council meeting. Hopefully, our colleagues will answer it today.

In conclusion, let me underscore that it would not take much to improve the prevailing dire situation in the OPCW. It would be enough if its Technical Secretariat dealt with its mandated tasks — namely, monitoring observance of CWC provisions and carrying out professional and unbiased investigations — and if States parties did not interfere with the work of the Technical Secretariat. In other words, strict compliance with the CWC would be enough, because its provisions clearly state what I just said.

Observance of the CWC is all Russia is calling for. That is why it is even stranger to hear our Western colleagues blame us for “shattering and undermining the OPCW authority”. According to their logic, the organization would harm itself if it observed the Chemical Weapons Convention. Rather twisted logic, is it not?

We are striving to restore the OPCW's good name and seeking answers to questions relevant to everyone. The Security Council cannot afford to be a passive bystander, watching as one of the pillars of the non-proliferation regime for weapons of mass destruction is destroyed by politicization. Restoring trust in the OPCW and strengthening its authority must be our shared goal. We hope that all sensible members of the Council will support us to that end. As for the anti-Syrian decision so vigorously promoted by our colleague from the United States, it is a step in the opposite direction.

Second statement by the First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Dmitry Polyanskiy

[Original: Russian]

In response to the representative of the United States, I would like to react to the attempt by my colleague from the United States to shift responsibility — a good try, if unconvincing.

To be frank, when he took the floor I rejoiced, because I thought he was going to answer the question I had asked regarding the words of Mr. Aaron Maté, who, by the way, is a fellow United States citizen and a competent expert. However, the representative preferred not to answer, instead seeking to cast a shadow, totally unsuccessfully, over my statement.

On the contrary, what he said only proves that he sought to depict the decision adopted by the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention as one of consensus among almost the entire global community. I call on our colleagues from the United States to stop these attempts, because they are unconvincing and pitiful. Yes, the decision formally complied with Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) requirements. But it must be understood that, apart from being adopted, the decision will need to be implemented. In fact, fewer States supported it, which means there will be problems at the implementation stage. Consensus is not mandatory, but it is a good tradition, and consensus-based decisions are far more likely to be successfully implemented.

Instead of seeking consensus, the United States and the co-sponsors did their best to destroy it. In my statement I mentioned the catches and provocations that were employed to adopt this decision in violation of the CWC norms and practices. They ruined the consensus instead of “mending” the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and helping it carry on with its mandate. It is they, not we, who politicize the OPCW.

Again, all we are calling for is observance of the CWC. Is the United States against the CWC being effective? Their words imply as much.

What they said about the Douma incident was a very weak attempt. The report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) is not the only one to which we draw attention. In my statement, I addressed at least three reports that we have questions about, and, in fact, there are more. All of them have one and the same problem: they were prepared in violation of the working principles of the Technical Secretariat that I mentioned. First of all, those are principles relating to the collection of data and evidence. For example, the Saraqib report contains the same irregularities as the Douma report. Of course, it will be just as unconvincing and useless as the one on Douma.

My colleague from the United States blamed us for impeding the visit of the FFM team. That is simply not true. We repeatedly refuted those allegations,

as is well known. In the meantime, it would be great if they could explain why the United States, the United Kingdom and France had hit the alleged chemical weapons-production facilities in Syria before the inspectors could work with it. If the inspection team was about to arrive, would it not have been better to ensure the best possible conditions for its work? Instead, in the absence of any facts or concrete evidence, they bombed the facilities they alleged were used to manufacture chemical weapons. Thus, in the first place, they may have destroyed evidence. Moreover, if we suppose for a second that there were chemical weapons at that location, by bombing it they exposed Syria to the risk of a chemical disaster. Of course, there were no chemical weapons there, and everything that followed was meant to twist the facts and make them fit the Western agenda.

I call on the United States to adopt a constructive approach and to stop politicizing the OPCW and using it as a tool to punish.

Again, only six Security Council members supported their decision. And that is not a bad result for them, because real scepticism about what Western States are up to regarding the OPCW is only growing. It is not one or two unknown specialists who have questions for Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat. My colleagues know about the letter of the “Courage Foundation”; they are aware of the position of former Director-General Bustani, whom they tried to deprive of a say at the Security Council. As we are seeing, the truth is hard to hide — it will come to light all the same. Thus their tricks, including those used today, will lead to nothing. Instead, let us enhance trust and cooperation within the OPCW. To repurpose a phrase of an American President, let us make OPCW great again.

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

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

The development, production, stockpiling and use of weapons of mass destruction are fraught with serious consequences for international peace and security. Accordingly, complete disarmament must continue to be a priority for the international community, and it requires an enduring commitment to the fulfilment of obligations enshrined in core multilateral instruments, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention. Undoubtedly, the Convention remains an integral part of the global disarmament architecture, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons is critical to its full and effective implementation, without which it would simply be reduced to ceremonial pieces of paper.

Allegations of the use chemical weapons ought to be given immediate attention, and investigations should be comprehensive and in keeping with international best practices. The OPCW's indispensable role in this regard dictates that all of its activities be characterized by impartiality, transparency and non-politicization. This is crucial to promote trust and cooperation and ensure accountability for acts committed in violation of the Convention. In support of the mandate of the organization, we encourage all efforts aimed at strengthening its capacity to ensure that the quality of its work remains of the highest possible standard.

We note with concern the findings contained in the 12 April 2021 report of the Investigation and Identification Team. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines maintains the principled and well-established position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances constitutes an abominable violation of international law. Chemical-weapon atrocities cannot be ignored, and impunity cannot be encouraged.

We have also taken note of the recent decision by the Conference of the States Parties related to Syria. Indeed, diverging views exist. However, we should prioritize pragmatic action that builds consensus, thwarts further polarization and fosters cooperation among States parties. We must work together to ultimately achieve the collective goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

We underscore the importance of clarifying the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the initial declaration, and we recognize the continued efforts of both Syria and the Technical Secretariat in this regard, despite the global pandemic. We note that a new outstanding issue has been opened and will be discussed at the next round of consultations. It is our hope that the positive engagement and a continued commitment to dialogue will allow for a final resolution to all of the outstanding matters.

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, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

Tunisia once again expresses its support for the regime governing the prohibition and non-proliferation of chemical weapons, which comprises the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and its executive body, as a means of promoting global peace, security and development.

Along with resolution 2118 (2013), that regime has helped address the chemical threat by mobilizing efforts to neutralize it through the destruction, outside the country, of the declared Syrian chemical weapons arsenal and by ensuring that the international community verifies the destruction of that arsenal. These are gains that must be preserved.

At the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention convened at The Hague from 20 to 22 April 2021, States parties to the Convention adopted a decision to suspend some of the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention. My delegation would like to emphasize the following points in order to move forward on that issue.

First, the letter and spirit of the Chemical Weapons Convention must be upheld fully in the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and in other situations, as well as in the event of any disputes that may arise in relation to the scope, purpose or implementation of the Convention.

Secondly, collective measures should be taken to redress and remedy any situation arising from problems with regard to compliance, as stipulated in the Convention.

Thirdly, it is important to stay the course throughout the technical consultations between the Syrian Government and Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in a spirit of cooperation, constructive engagement and mutual trust, in order to resolve outstanding issues promptly and ensure that Syria fully upholds its obligations under the Convention. We take note of the ongoing efforts to schedule the next round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian Government in mid-May.

Fourthly, the OPCW Technical Secretariat should continue its important technical work in Syria, in accordance with its mandate, to ensure that allegations of the use of toxic chemicals be investigated in a thorough, transparent and impartial manner, leaving no room for doubt, interpretation or confusion.

Fifthly, the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team should be able to gain full and regular access to Syrian territory to finalize its investigations and conclusions.

Sixthly, in accordance with resolutions 2118 (2013) and 1540 (2004), it is necessary to effectively combat the chemical threat posed by non-State actors, particularly terrorist organizations that do not legally or morally recognize the prohibition of chemical weapons.

In conclusion, Tunisia once again condemns the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances and for any reason. The perpetrators of such abhorrent crimes must be held accountable.

There is no alternative to a collective and coordinated effort by the international community, and the Security Council in particular, in order to eliminate the chemical threat to international peace and security and to ensure that the regime governing the prohibition of chemical weapons remains stable and sustainable. For nearly a quarter of a century, that regime has proved effective and vital in comprehensively prohibiting and eliminating an entire category of weapons of mass destruction in a verifiable manner, including in the case of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward**

May I start by thanking High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing today. I would also like to thank the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as always for his latest monthly report (see S/2021/422). The report raises issues of serious concern.

First, we note the discovery by the Declaration Assessment Team in September 2020 of an undeclared neat chemical warfare agent in samples collected from large volume storage containers at a previously declared chemical-weapons production facility. This has led to the opening of a new outstanding issue by the Declaration Assessment Team.

Secondly, the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team concluded in its second report, dated 12 April 2021, that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force under control of the Tiger Forces dropped a canister containing chlorine on Saraqib on 4 February 2018. This brings to eight the number of occasions on which the United Nations and the OPCW have found the Syrian regime responsible for the use of chemical weapons.

The implications are clear. Syria is a country that, by its own admission, had an extensive chemical-weapons programme. It failed to declare this programme in full. It retained a chemical-weapons production capability beyond the 2014 destruction of its declared programme, and it has been found to have used those retained chemical weapons on numerous occasions throughout the conflict. It continues to fail to comply fully with the OPCW Technical Secretariat. This has all been independently established by both the United Nations and the OPCW.

In the light of this catalogue of breaches of Security Council resolutions, the Chemical Weapons Convention and fundamental international norms, the action taken by the OPCW Conference of the States Parties on 21 April was minimal, proportionate and entirely in accordance with articles VIII and XII of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the obligation on the Conference of the States Parties to take necessary measures to ensure compliance with the Convention. This is a clear case of the situation that these provisions are designed to address.

The next steps for Syria are clearly set out in the decision: its rights and privileges will be reinstated by the Conference of the States Parties once the Director-General has reported to the Executive Council that Syria has resolved all the outstanding issues in its declaration and declared all outstanding production facilities and stockpiles, including those used in the 24, 25, and 30 March 2017 attacks.

While these issues remain unresolved, and particularly in the light of Syria's identified use of chemical weapons, there is an extant threat to international peace and security, on which basis the Council should remain seized of this matter.

Annex XV**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Richard Mills**

Thank you, High Representative Nakamitsu, for your briefing today.

As we just heard from the High Representative, on 12 April the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Investigation and Identification Team (ITT) released its second report, attributing yet another chemical weapons attack in Syria to the Al-Assad regime. This time it was a chlorine attack in Saraqib on 4 February 2018. This latest horrific finding should come as no surprise to those familiar with the abuses committed by the Al-Assad regime against the Syrian people.

The United States assesses that the regime's innumerable atrocities — some of which rise to the level of war crimes and crimes against humanity — include at least 50 chemical weapons attacks since the conflict began. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism — together with this latest report — have now attributed eight chemical weapons attacks to the regime. The United States concurs with the OPCW's conclusions cited in this second report. We continue to assess that the Al-Assad regime retains sufficient chemicals to use sarin, to produce and deploy chlorine munitions and to develop new chemical weapons.

Despite the OPCW's efforts to engage and assist Syria in adhering with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and resolution 2118 (2013), the Al-Assad regime continues to ignore calls from the international community to fully disclose and verifiably destroy its chemical weapons programme. The IIT's second report is but the latest reminder of Al-Assad's flagrant repudiation of the rule of law. Predictably — just four days after the release of the second IIT report — Russia held an informal meeting of the Security Council, on 16 April, designed to impugn the OPCW and push a false narrative that the OPCW's efforts to investigate and attribute the use of chemical weapons in Syria are part of a Western plot to attempt regime change in Damascus.

The Security Council and the States Members of the United Nations are not fooled by this Russian disinformation tactic. As we heard on that day, the majority of Security Council members and other Member States refuted the arguments of Russia and its hand-selected presenters. Most Member States reaffirmed their widespread condemnation of Syria's chemical weapons use and called for accountability. Days later, on 21 April, many of these same States reaffirmed their commitment to the CWC by voting to adopt a decision of the OPCW's Conference of the States Parties that condemned the Al-Assad regime for its possession and use of chemical weapons, and which held the regime accountable by suspending Syria's voting privileges at the OPCW until it completes certain measures, including declaring any chemical weapons and related production facilities it currently possesses, and resolving all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of its chemical weapons stockpile and programme.

As it upholds the international norms against the use of chemical weapons, the United States welcomes the historic decision of the Conference of the States Parties to condemn Syria's use of chemical weapons and suspend its rights and its privileges under the CWC until such a time as it completes the measures set forth in the OPCW's decisions. The adoption of this latest decision — supported by an overwhelming majority of those States that participated — sends a clear and collective message that the use of chemical weapons has consequences and repeated failures by Syria to adhere to its obligations will not be tolerated. It is time for the Al-Assad regime to adhere to its obligations under the CWC and resolution 2118 (2013).

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

At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran in our meeting today.

First of all, our delegation takes note of the ninety-first monthly report (see S/2021/422) of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We note that there is continued engagement between the organization and Syria, especially between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian National Authority in addressing the outstanding issues. It is important that the next round of consultations will take place as planned during the course of next month.

We have always attached great importance to fruitful collaboration between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in efforts to champion the full implementation of the Convention. We call on the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian authorities to further enhance dialogue and technical consultations, in a most constructive manner, in order to resolve all “the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies”. This is an important step to facilitate the continuation of full cooperation between the two sides with a view to fulfilling obligations under the CWC and resolution 2118 (2013).

Secondly, Viet Nam reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances. This is clearly prohibited under international law, especially under the CWC. We share the deep concern over the alleged uses of chemical weapons in Syria, which pose immediate threats to the lives and living environment of innocent civilians. We are also concerned over the reported information regarding the possession and use of chemical weapons by armed groups. Conclusive evidence and irrefutable facts must be established to bring about a decision that can ensure justice and prevent violations in the future. This goal can be attained only through a comprehensive, objective, impartial and non-politicized investigation process.

My last point is about the need to have a unified approach and to promote meaningful cooperation in order to achieve the goal of completely ridding the world of chemical weapons. The OPCW is a universal organization charged with that responsibility. It is regrettable to see that the OPCW remains very divided on some issues. On a recent decision, the number of States parties considered not “present and voting” was even greater than that of those casting affirmative votes. To effectively implement the CWC and achieve the above goal, unity is a must. Viet Nam calls for the prioritization of constructive engagement and renewed dialogue and cooperation efforts, as well as strict and full implementation of obligations under the CWC.

Annex XVII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, Majid Takht Ravanchi

I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council this month.

Today multilateralism faces numerous challenges. One such challenge is the exploitation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) as well as the politicization of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the abuse of its processes, which have, unfortunately, seriously undermined the Convention; resulted in a deep legitimacy and credibility crisis for the OPCW; sowed the seeds of division among its member States; challenged the long-standing consensus decision-making tradition in disarmament and non-proliferation forums; and catalysed the increase in the existing deficit in trust and confidence in the multilateral disarmament machinery and disarmament and non-proliferation instruments, which had already begun as a result of non-compliance by nuclear-weapon States with their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as well as two alarming and regressive trends, namely, a new nuclear arms race and new nuclear arms modernization race.

The recent politically motivated decision of the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC on Syria is the result of years of insincere attempts of Western countries in order to advance their narrow national interests regarding Syria, including through undermining the OPCW's independence; providing it with false and fabricated information; disregarding its consensual decision-making tradition; creating the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which is at odds with the Convention, through a flawed procedure; as well as compelling the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission and the IIT to use unreliable open sources, invalid information, defective methodologies, as well as an improper and broken chain of custody in their activities. It is clear how that process would lead to misjudgements and erroneous conclusions.

The Conference's one-sided and partial decision is based on those flawed conclusions and even totally fails to acknowledge Syria's strategic decision to accede to the Convention, as well as its unprecedented cooperation and efforts to fulfil its relevant obligations, including by expeditiously presenting its initial declaration amid the conflict in Syria, destroying all its 27 chemical-weapons production facilities — which was confirmed by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Mission on the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons and, later, by the OPCW itself, submitting 89 monthly reports, holding 23 rounds of consultations with the OPCW's Declaration Assessment Team, receiving numerous OPCW teams and providing the Technical Secretariat with copious information.

The intentional disregard of this high degree of cooperation, including during the coronavirus disease pandemic, is a clear regression from the very basic norms of impartiality and professionalism, which will continue to further polarize the OPCW member States and adversely impact the overall multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament architecture in the current turbulent international atmosphere.

We voted against that decision, primarily because it is inconsistent with the provisions and purposes of the Convention, undermines the CWC's authority and erodes the OPCW's integrity and credibility.

As a major victim in modern history of the most systematic use of chemical weapons, Iran once again condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances.

As we approach the twenty-fifth anniversary of the CWC's entry into force and the OPCW's establishment, we call for enhanced efforts to universalize the

CWC, including through compelling the Israeli regime to accede to it, and the materialization of the Convention's main objective, namely the elimination of chemical weapons, which has yet to be realized due to the blatant failure of the sole major possessor State party — the United States.

We once again call for the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the CWC, as well as respect for the authority of the OPCW, and we stand ready to actively and constructively contribute to that end.

Annex XVIII

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

[Original: English and Arabic]

At the outset, I congratulate you and your friendly country on presiding over the work of the Security Council for this month, and I express our deep appreciation for the positions of the People's Republic of China, which are based on the principles of international law and the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) witnessed a dangerous development in its course of work at the end of last month as the second part of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) adopted a hostile decision against my country, Syria, as a result of pressure and blackmail by the United States, France, Britain and Germany. That action constitutes sets a precedent in the history of this Organization of suspending the rights of a Member State that joined it voluntarily and cooperated with its Technical Secretariat in a transparent, effective and constructive manner over the past eight years.

Logic entails that false hypotheses inevitably lead to wrong conclusions. Consequently, this wrong decision is the embodiment of a flawed report full of misleading and fabricated conclusions of the so-called "Investigation and Identification Team" related to the alleged incidents in Ltamenah in 2017. In fact, the Team represents an illegal mechanism established by manipulating the provisions of the Convention and based on an unprofessional report of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), which investigated alleged incidents in Syria in a manner inconsistent with its terms of reference and without complying with the basic principles stipulated in the CWC by completely ignoring the working methods and methodologies contained in its annex on implementation and verification, which stresses that the Technical Secretariat teams should visit the site of alleged incidents and that their experts should collect samples and maintain the chain of custody. Furthermore, the FFM relied entirely on open sources that spread misinformation from anti-Syrian intelligence services or on misleading information provided by terrorist organizations such as the White Helmets.

Voting on the decision of France and the Western States at the Conference of the States Parties instead of adopting it by consensus is inconsistent with the decision-making mechanisms in place since the start of the organization's work in 1997. The voting result — only 45 per cent of the total number of States parties to the CWC voted in favour — affirms beyond a reasonable doubt that this decision is not accepted or supported by the majority of the organization's States parties. That makes it an illegal and unconventional decision. In that regard, the Syrian Arab Republic expresses its thanks and appreciation to the countries that have chosen to take the right stance and not vote in favour of this politicized Western decision and to reject all methods of pressure and blackmail imposed on them out of concern for the future of collective work and in order to preserve peace and security in the world.

This illegal decision falls within the framework of an aggressive scheme against Syria. That is why its main sponsors intended to ignore Syria's full cooperation with the organization and accuse it of a baseless accusation of "failing to comply with the Convention". But have those sponsors thought about the status of Syrian cooperation with the organization in the future? Or is it merely to justify their aggressive agendas?

This political decision par excellence will not serve the goal of achieving the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and it will have serious

repercussions on the future work of the OPCW and the cooperation of its States parties with the organization; it represents a rather bad example of the organization's dealings with the States party to it and its submission to the influence of some Western countries that perceive it as a tool to serve their foreign policy aims.

It was not a coincidence that the illegal so-called "Investigation and Identification Team" issued a second misleading report on an alleged incident in the city of Saraqib only a few days before the convening of the Conference of the States Parties. It is a clear indication that this team is serving its operators to help them mobilize the largest number of countries to pass the Franco-Western decision. The Syrian Arab Republic rejects — in form and substance — what was contained in the team's report about the alleged Saraqib incident, and denounces the accusations included therein. The report continued the same misleading approach by claiming that the team adhered to the procedures in place for the OPCW. Nevertheless, the team did not visit the location of the alleged incident and did not collect evidence and samples but received them from representatives of the White Helmets terrorist group. In addition, it relied on open source information, most of which has no connection with the subject of the investigation, and I note too the many contradictions in the testimonies of the alleged witnesses.

The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that it has never used chemical weapons and renews its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, at any time and place, and under any circumstances.

My delegation thanks the delegations of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China for their initiative to organize an informal meeting of the Security Council on protecting developing countries from political pressure and upholding the integrity of the non-proliferation regime. It also reiterates its request to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Director-General to pay due attention to the calls to address the concerns raised by a large number of experts and academics about the reports of the Fact-Finding Mission in relation to the alleged use incidents in Syria, foremost of which is the Douma incident report, and to take the necessary immediate measures to correct the grave defects in them.

The organization's disregard for the fundamental observations and legitimate inquiries of important players, specialized experts and prominent academics is unacceptable and jeopardizes the credibility of the organization's work. It also raises doubts about the keenness of those in charge of the organization to maintain the professionalism and objectivity of its work.

Our colleague from the United States noted the delay in reaching the site of the alleged incident in Douma, and this is true, but it happened because his country, France and Britain had launched a military aggression with missiles on Syrian territory, which prevented the Technical Secretariat from allowing the investigators of the Fact-Finding Mission team to enter Syrian territory.

In conclusion, the Western countries that claim today to be keen on strengthening the non-proliferation regime are the ones that invented weapons of mass destruction of all kinds and used them in the First and Second World Wars. Those countries continue to this day to develop various types of weapons of mass destruction, and they added another weapon — the use of lying and deception in order to spread chaos and destruction by creating pretexts for launching acts of aggression against countries that respect their international obligations and defend the independence of their national decisions. Those Western countries cannot be entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security or with the evaluation of other States' fulfilment of their international obligations.

Annex XIX**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Feridun H. Sinirlioğlu**

I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

The ninety-first monthly report (see S/2021/422) of the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) yet again points to the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the Syrian regime's chemical-weapons declaration. The report confirms that the declaration cannot be considered accurate and complete.

The presence of an undeclared chemical weapons production facility continues to be a matter of great concern. The regime still fails to declare the chemical warfare agents produced and/or weaponized at that site, in violation of its obligations.

The analysis of the samples collected during the twenty-third round of inspections by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) in September 2020 revealed the existence of a chemical warfare agent previously not declared by the regime. The analysis by the DAT hints at further undeclared production activities by the regime, strengthening the suspicions about its clandestine chemical-weapons programme. This may well add another item to the long list of outstanding issues regarding the Al-Assad regime's chemical-weapons declaration.

It is unacceptable that the regime has not yet made a complete and accurate declaration of its chemical weapons programme. That constitutes a serious violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Security Council must act in unity to compel the regime to fully cooperate with the OPCW and immediately declare the full extent of its chemical-weapons programme.

Turkey supported the OPCW Executive Council decision of July 2020, which required the Syrian regime to declare the chemical weapons it used during the Ltamenah attacks in 2017 and the production facilities in which they are developed, as well as the chemical weapons it currently possesses. It also urged the regime to resolve all of the outstanding issues regarding its initial declaration.

The regime's failure to fulfil its obligations under that decision warranted further measures. Accordingly, during the second part of the OPCW's twenty-fifth Conference of the State Parties, co-sponsored by Turkey, a decision was adopted with an overwhelming majority.

That decision provides a measured response in the face of the Syrian regime's persistent non-compliance with its obligations. We welcome its adoption as an important contribution to accountability in Syria.

The use of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime against its own people is well documented, with an ever-growing track-record. Most recently, the report issued by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) identified that on 4 February 2018, chlorine was used by the regime air force in an attack against civilians in Saraqib. That report proved that the Al-Assad regime is responsible for at least eight chemical-weapon attacks. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the regime.

The IIT has a unique role in identifying the perpetrators of chemical weapons use. The lack of cooperation with the IIT, including visa denial and the refusal to grant access to confidential information related to its chemical military programme proves the regime's attempts to hide the truth.

Turkey reiterates its support for the independent, professional and impartial work carried out by the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its investigative bodies.

Last week marked the twenty-fourth anniversary of the Chemical Weapons Convention's entry into force. We should continue our efforts to ensure that the Convention is upheld and effectively implemented. The Syrian case presents a litmus test in that regard.

The regime's violation of international law and its crimes against humanity cannot go unanswered. Ending impunity is a pressing task for the international community, particularly for the Security Council. It is the only way to honour the victims of chemical-weapon attacks and achieve peace in Syria.
