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**Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East  
Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons  
of Mass Destruction**

**Fourth session**

New York, 13–17 November 2023

**Explanatory memorandum submitted by the Syrian Arab  
Republic to the fourth session of the Conference on the  
Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons  
and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction**

The Syrian Arab Republic wishes to comment on certain points contained in the background document prepared by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) dated 19 October 2023 ([A/CONF.236/2023/BD.3](#)), which was submitted for the consideration of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction at its fourth session.

**Declaration Assessment Team (paras. 37–39)**

- At the outset, the Syrian Arab Republic wishes to clarify that it submitted its initial declaration within a short period of time, with limited experience. That is why the Declaration Assessment Team came to help Syria, with its consent, bring its initial declaration into line with the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction. The issues being addressed by the Syrian National Committee and the Team are still under discussion, and no definitive conclusions have been arrived at in that regard. It is therefore too early to prejudge them.
- The Syrian Arab Republic has cooperated with the Team. Over the past nine years, the Syrian National Committee has granted more than 500 visas to the staff of the Technical Secretariat of OPCW for all OPCW teams that have worked in Syria. In addition, it facilitated 24 rounds of consultations with the Team that led to the resolution of several outstanding relevant issues. Moreover, the Syrian Arab Republic welcomed the convening of the twenty-fifth round of consultations, and agreed to all options proposed by the Technical Secretariat of OPCW in order to facilitate the convening of that round. In the aforementioned background document, OPCW fails to mention that, at the 104th session of the Executive Council of OPCW, Syria had declared that it agreed to convening the twenty-fifth round of consultations for all members of the Team, despite the fact that it had given its consent before the date on which the background document was published.



**Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons–United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (paras. 43 and 44)**

- The Syrian Arab Republic is surprised to see that there is a reference to the Joint Investigative Mechanism, which was terminated six years ago, in the contribution of OPCW to the work of our conference. The Mechanism employed unprofessional working methods, including remote investigations, and relied on open sources and information provided by terrorist organizations and their affiliates, such as the White Helmets. In addition, it violated the rules set out in the Convention concerning the collection of samples and maintaining the chain of custody for samples. As a result, the Mechanism reached dubious conclusions that were not accepted by the Security Council. Accordingly, its mandate was not renewed, and its work was formally terminated in November 2017. The Syrian Arab Republic therefore rejects and does not recognize the outputs of the Mechanism.

**Investigation and Identification Team (paras. 45–49)**

- The Syrian Arab Republic notes that, after the failure of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, several States known for their hostility to the Syrian Arab Republic sought to establish a mechanism within the framework of OPCW entrusted with the task of identifying those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, despite the absence of any provision in the Convention allowing OPCW to do so. As a result of the manipulation and distorted interpretation of the provisions of the Convention, on 27 June 2018, the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction voted, under pressure from several States, to adopt decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, which is devoid of legitimacy because of the severe division among the States members of OPCW and the fact that it was adopted with the support of less than half of the membership. This illegitimate decision gave the Director-General a mandate, for the first time in the history of OPCW, to establish a team within the Technical Secretariat to investigate and identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, thereby establishing a dangerous precedent.
- OPCW is a technical agency the work of which is limited strictly to verifying the presence or use of chemicals in incidents involving the alleged use of chemical weapons. The manipulation by certain Western States of the provisions of the Convention has given OPCW a role that exceeds its mandate under the Convention by granting it a mandate to determine which is the party that used toxic chemicals. That action constitutes a clear assault on the mandate of the Security Council.
- To date, the Team has issued two reports on the basis of the unprofessional reports of the Fact-Finding Mission, using the same erroneous methods and methodologies. These reports are based entirely on open sources that spread misinformation pushed by intelligence services that are hostile to Syria or on misinformation provided by such terrorist organizations as the White Helmets.
- From the day on which that Team was established, Syria and several other States Parties to the Convention on Chemical Weapons declared that they do not recognize the legitimacy of the Team, would not have any contact with it and would not accept the results of its investigations. The States Parties to the Convention established OPCW in order to achieve the object and purpose of the Convention and ensure implementation of its provisions. Accordingly, OPCW must not be a source of unsubstantiated reports, or a tool used that is used for the dissemination of fabricated or falsified information, nor should it be transformed from a technical agency into a political tool that is used by certain Western States to target other States.