

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 8 March 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, Norway, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-conference on “The situation in the Middle East (Syria)” convened on Thursday, 4 March 2021. Statements were also delivered by the representatives of 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 the 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) Linda **Thomas-Greenfield**
President of the Security Council



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

It is my pleasure to once again brief the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Office for Disarmament Affairs has continued to maintain regular contact with its counterparts at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter. In that context, as per established practice, I held a monthly call with the OPCW Director-General on Tuesday, 2 March, to receive an update and ascertain his views. The Office for Disarmament Affairs also received information from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic concerning chemical issues for this period. That information was studied carefully and forwarded to the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

I would like to note that, since I last briefed the Council one month ago (see S/2021/109, annex I), there have been limited developments in the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to impact the OPCW's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. However, the OPCW Technical Secretariat maintains its readiness to deploy, subject to the evolving pandemic. In spite of the travel restrictions, the Technical Secretariat has continued its mandated activities related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in that regard.

The OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic from 7 to 25 February for the twenty-fourth round of consultations. I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat will report the results of that deployment to the OPCW Executive Council in due course.

I would like to reiterate my appreciation for the DAT, which recently returned to The Hague and is continuing its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration to the OPCW, despite pandemic-related challenges.

As reported by the OPCW Director-General, 19 declaration-related issues remain outstanding. One such issue pertains to a chemical weapons production facility that was declared by the Syrian National Authority as never having been used for the production of chemical weapons. However, a review of all the information and other materials gathered by the DAT since 2014 indicates that production and/or weaponization of chemical warfare nerve agents did in fact take place at this facility. Consequently, the Technical Secretariat has requested that the Syrian Arab Republic declare the exact types and quantities of chemical agents produced and/or weaponized at this site. I understand from the Technical Secretariat that the Syrian National Authority has yet to respond to that request.

As a result, the Technical Secretariat continues to assess that, due to the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved at this stage, the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

I would like to remind Council members that efforts to resolve these outstanding issues have been ongoing since 2014. As it has been noted on many occasions, the confidence of the international community in the complete elimination of Syria's

chemical weapons programme depends upon these issues being finalized. I therefore reiterate my call to the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the Technical Secretariat in that regard.

The Technical Secretariat conducted the seventh round of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre from 8 to 13 November. I understand that the samples collected during those inspections were split at a OPCW laboratory in the presence of a representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and sent to designated laboratories for analysis. I look forward to the findings of this round of inspections, which will be reported to the Executive Council in due course.

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

I note that the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) is still in the process of studying all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, and continues its engagement with the Syrian Government and other States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with regard to a variety of incidents. As previously reported, further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolving pandemic.

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

With regard to the inspections mandated by paragraph 8 of Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2, entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic”, the Technical Secretariat continues to monitor the security situation and will inform the Syrian Arab Republic when it is prepared to deploy for that purpose.

Moving forward, I have been advised that the main focus for future activities of the OPCW mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will continue to be, in no particular order of priority: the Fact-Finding Mission; the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration-related issues; the inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah sites of the Research Centre and the implementation of Conference decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 and Council decision EC-94/DEC.2.

The use of chemical weapons is a grave threat to peace and security, as well as to the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture, which was painstakingly constructed over past decades. There is no justification for the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. Those who have used them must be identified and held to account. It is my sincere hope that the members of the Council will unite on this issue.

Before concluding, I wish to echo the Secretary-General’s remarks at the Munich Security Conference segment on “Priorities for Global Action”, delivered on 19 February 2021:

“Now is the time for solidarity and international cooperation to tackle our even bigger and more complex challenges. I am convinced that, if we are determined, we can achieve our shared goals”.

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

[Original: Chinese and English]

I would like to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

China has always been opposed to the use of chemical weapons by any State, organization or individual — under any circumstance and for any purpose. China hopes that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) can respect the principles of independence, impartiality and objectivity and act strictly within the framework of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction when investigating allegations of chemical-weapons use and when attributing responsibility for their use. Today I wish to emphasize four points.

First, efforts to resolve the issue of Syrian chemical weapons must proceed from facts. Investigations regarding the alleged use of chemical weapons should be science-based and comply with all the relevant rules and standards. The reliability of the sources of information, the integrity of the chain of evidence and the soundness of the analysis all affect the credibility and authority of any resulting report. States parties have the right to challenge the investigation reports. As such, in order to convince people of its findings, the OPCW Technical Secretariat should present conclusive evidence.

Secondly, there cannot be double standards if we are to resolve the Syrian chemical weapons issue. The Technical Secretariat must not selectively gather intelligence and information on the alleged use of chemical weapons by parties. On various occasions, the Syrian Government has provided information about terrorist organizations and armed groups fabricating incidents of chemical-weapons use. The Technical Secretariat should duly consider such information and include it in its monthly reports.

Thirdly, political motives must play no part in resolving the Syrian chemical weapons issue. In the past few years, some countries have repeatedly pushed the OPCW to take action despite the lack of conclusive evidence, numerous reservations about its reports and huge differences among parties. Decisions forced through in this way are often controversial and hard to implement. They have eroded mutual trust among the States Parties and hampered the resolution of this issue.

Fourthly, we must rely on dialogue and cooperation to resolve the Syrian chemical weapons issue. For some time, the Syrian Government has actively collaborated with the OPCW. The two sides have cooperated and communicated openly and, in principle, agreed to extend their cooperation agreement for an additional six months. From 7 to 25 February, the two sides held the twenty-fourth round of technical consultations. The international community should acknowledge the constructive attitude of the Syrian Government and encourage the OPCW and the Syrian Government to continue their dialogue and consultations and to work together to resolve all outstanding issues.

Annex III**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Sven Jürgenson**

I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

This March marks the tenth anniversary of the Syrian civil war. Ten years ago, when tens of thousands of Syrians peacefully gathered on the streets to protest against corruption and demand respect for their basic human rights, there was hope for political reforms and transformation. The violent crackdown on the peaceful anti-Government protests by the Al-Assad regime, however, turned it into one of the most deadly and destructive conflicts in recent history — about half a million people have been killed and many more injured, maimed or tortured, and millions have been displaced and their homes destroyed.

One of the defining features of the Syrian conflict has been the repeated and systematic deployment of chemical weapons against civilian populations — we saw it in Ghouta, Douma, Sarmin, Khan Shaykhun and elsewhere. The Syrian regime's responsibility for the use of chemical weapons has been confirmed, on seven separate occasions, by independent investigative mechanisms of the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). In addition, the Joint Investigative Mechanism has confirmed that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant has also used such weapons on two occasions.

Estonia fully trusts the independent, impartial and professional work of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its investigative bodies, as well as the credibility of their reports.

There is no justification for the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. It is imperative to hold accountable all those who have used such arms, often against defenceless men, women and children. We owe it to each and every one of the victims. We need it to heal the country and build peace in Syria. We need accountability to preserve the credibility of the norm against chemical-weapons use.

Regrettably, all attempts in the Security Council to move towards accountability have thus far been blocked by a veto. It is encouraging to see, however, that the first criminal inquiries on the use of chemical weapons in Syria have reached courts in Germany and France. There is still hope for justice.

There are still gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the Syrian declaration. Syria's persistent lack of cooperation means that we do not have clarity on its chemical weapons stockpiles and production facilities. The situation continues to pose a threat to international peace and security. We hope that, once the Conference of the OPCW States parties resumes in April, it will take appropriate action to address Syria's violations of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Estonia continues to stand up for international law and the fundamental principles of human rights. Three years ago today, Sergei Skripal and his daughter were poisoned with a Novichok chemical nerve agent in Salisbury, United Kingdom. The same poison was used again in August last year in an attempt to assassinate Russian politician Alexei Navalny. We condemn in the strongest terms the targeted killings of those who dare to speak out against the Government and criticize the ruling regime.

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

[Original: English and French]

I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

We have to look at the situation squarely — no progress has been made. The Syrian regime is still lying, hiding the truth and evading its international obligations.

The initial declaration is incomplete, as we all know. More than seven years have passed since the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), and 19 issues are still pending. Among those is an undeclared production site, for which the regime has provided no explanation. To claim that the matter is closed is to deny the evidence. We look forward to the results of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Declaration Assessment Team's mission on the ground conducted in February.

I will not retract our position on the culpability of the Syrian regime. Everyone knows the despicable acts for which it is responsible and must be brought to account. That is why France will pay close attention to the conclusions of the forthcoming reports of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team.

The regime has not carried out any of the actions expected of it. France, together with its partners, has drawn the appropriate conclusions. That is why we submitted a draft decision to the OPCW Technical Secretariat on behalf of 46 delegations in November, specifically to deprive the regime of its voting rights. That initiative has only one objective — to ensure that Syria finally complies with its international obligations.

I would like to commend the work that the OPCW is carrying out with complete rigour and independence. I deplore the unfounded accusations that are being levelled at it. They are undignified and, above all, they are irresponsible. The Security Council has a historic responsibility for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the re-emergence of chemical weapons in the world is a major threat. We cannot allow such weapons to become commonplace. Their use should remain an absolute taboo. The OPCW remains a pillar of our collective security and must be preserved.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the need to fight impunity. Earlier this week, survivors of chemical-weapon attacks filed a complaint in France against Syrian regime officials for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The complaint contains a very simple message: criminals will not get away with it. Evidence continues to be collected and will be used. Those are the messages that we reiterated in the General Assembly on Tuesday (see A/75/PV.56) and that we defend alongside our partners within the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

Annex V**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative and Political Coordinator of India to the United Nations, Ravindra Ragutthalli**

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

We have taken note of the monthly report submitted by the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), entitled “Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme” (see S/2021/200), which provides information about the activities of the OPCW in implementing resolution 2118 (2013), as well as the activities of its Fact-Finding Mission, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Investigation and Identification Team.

We are encouraged to learn that the twenty-fourth round of consultations between the DAT and the relevant Syrian authorities took place from 7 to 25 February. We hope that those consultations will help in addressing the reported gaps and inconsistencies in the declaration. We have also taken note of the extension of the tripartite agreement among the OPCW, Syria and the United Nations Office for Project Services. We hope that the six-month extension agreement will be signed soon.

India has provided a financial contribution of \$1 million to the OPCW trust fund for activities relating to the destruction of chemical stockpiles and related facilities in Syria. We believe that the continued engagement and cooperation between Syria and the OPCW Technical Secretariat is critical to the early resolution of all outstanding issues. India has consistently underlined the need for an impartial and objective investigation into any alleged use of chemical weapons, scrupulously following the provisions and procedures laid down in the Chemical Weapons Convention. Any concerns or differences should be addressed on the basis of consultations among all the parties concerned. In our view, politicization of the issue will result in parties taking extreme positions, jeopardizing ongoing efforts towards resolution.

Whether it be the alleged use of chemical weapons, humanitarian issues or political processes, we need greater efforts in seeking a congruence of positions, both within the Security Council and beyond, in order to see meaningful and tangible progress on the ground in Syria. India is willing to work with other like-minded delegations towards fostering unity in the Council on all issues concerning Syria.

As one of the worst sufferers of the scourge of terrorism, India continues to call on the Council to remain cognizant, at all times, of the dangers of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of terrorist groups. We have consistently underlined the need to prevent terrorist groups from taking advantage of the decade-long conflict in Syria and entrenching themselves, thereby posing a threat to the entire region. Reports of the resurgence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Shams in the region are being heard with increasing frequency. The Secretary-General’s latest report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh) (S/2021/98) alludes to the incubation of the terrorist threat in displacement camps and detention facilities in north-eastern Syria. Undoubtedly, the role of certain players in the Syrian conflict has re-energized terrorist activities in the region.

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. We have also contributed to the return of normalcy and the rebuilding of Syria through humanitarian assistance and human resource development, most recently through the delivery of 2,000 metric tons of rice

in February. We have also called on all parties not to link the humanitarian and development work with progress on the political track. We stand ready to work with humanitarian relief agencies, led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme, in devising a suitable vaccination relief programme for the country and West Asia as a whole.

Let me conclude by reiterating our support for efforts towards attaining lasting sustainable peace in Syria.

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

I would like to thank Under-Secretary General Nakamitsu for her briefing today. It is good to see her with us.

Once again, Ireland unequivocally condemns any use of chemical weapons at any time and anywhere. As the instances of their use in Syria and elsewhere make clear, they have a devastating and indiscriminate impact on their victims and on communities. We must act together to uphold the established global norm against the use of those appalling weapons. Today I would like to make three points.

First, Ireland is unwavering in its view that the role of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is crucial in addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons. For us, it represents an essential and effective part of the global disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. It serves to protect all our interests, including, I would like to underline, those of the people of Syria, in ensuring the global elimination of chemical weapons.

We are therefore seriously concerned by the ongoing efforts of some members to question the professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its investigation mechanisms. In our view, that risks lasting damage to this vital organization and undermines the multilateral approach to disarmament and non-proliferation, which is enshrined in the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In the case of Syria, the OPCW, through the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), has provided factual, evidence-based and impartial conclusions on numerous reported instances of chemical-weapons use in Syria. It has been clear where evidence was insufficient to come to a conclusion. It has also been clear where evidence points to use by terrorist groups.

On several occasions to date, the OPCW found that the evidence warranted attribution of use to the Syrian authorities. Given the OPCW's technical expertise and experience, as well as its mandate, we do not believe that we should seek to second-guess those findings. Rather, the international community, and the Council in particular, should act urgently, in unity, to address the issue of such documented use of chemical weapons in Syria.

My second point is that we remain deeply concerned by the gaps and inconsistencies in Syria's initial declaration. Those are particularly important given the documented, repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian authorities since 2013. Such gaps and inconsistencies by Syria have increased in number and substance over the past seven years. Overall, that paints an unfortunate picture of evasion by Syria, with an ongoing effort to avoid its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), OPCW Executive Council decisions and resolution 2118 (2013).

We note the recent consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and Syria, which took place between 7 and 25 February, and we really hope to hear of progress having been made in addressing the 19 outstanding issues under Syria's declaration. Again, we must be really clear: the Syrian authorities bear the responsibility to fully address and answer those issues. I would today again urge the Syrian authorities to cooperate actively, openly and in good faith with the OPCW.

My last point is in response to the findings of the Fact-Finding Mission and the IIT on the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Air Force in Ltamenah in March 2017. The OPCW Executive Council set out clear actions for Syria to take to return to compliance with the CWC. Ireland deeply regrets that Syria chose not

to act on those. We would again today urge Syria to act immediately to comply with that decision.

Given such circumstances, Ireland has supported the decision put to the Conference of the States Parties to the CWC for its meeting in April. In the absence of any action on the part of the Syrian authorities to meet the international community's concerns, we believe that the Conference of the States Parties must take all appropriate actions to address Syria's non-compliance.

Annex VII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, Martin Kimani**

Allow me to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her updates on the ongoing activities of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), as well as the regular reports on the ongoing investigations on the use of chemical weapons. Kenya also takes note of the report of the OPCW of 24 February (see S/2021/200).

Kenya appreciates the fact that, despite the coronavirus disease pandemic leading to the postponement of planned deployments and missions, the OPCW has found ways to ensure continuity in the technical consultations with Syria.

We welcome the submission by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Security Council of its eighty-seventh monthly report regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and production facilities. We emphasize the need for coordination between Syria and the OPCW to conclude the 19 identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved in Syria and ensure a quick conclusion of the investigations. We also welcome the deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team to the Syrian Arab Republic in February for the twenty-fourth round of consultations, and we look forward to positive outcomes and updates on that visit.

Kenya welcomes the extension of the tripartite agreement for a period of six months and takes note of the importance of the agreement in the facilitation of the work of the Technical Secretariat. Kenya believes that the use of chemical weapons anywhere and by anyone constitutes a clear and unacceptable violation of international law. No cause can ever justify the use of a weapon of mass destruction by any actor, under any circumstances. We support credible and transparent investigations that lead to a timely resolution of any accusations of the use of such weapons.

The Security Council should support all efforts to strengthen the OPCW in order to ensure full transparency and professionalism in its investigations. Its sensitive and important work is reflected in the expectation of the international community that its work always remain above reproach. We believe that the expeditious conclusion of the investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria will allow the Council to more meaningfully help the Syrian people in their quest for a political solution. That political solution is the only way to bring an end to their suffering, impoverishment and victimization.

Kenya stands with the people of Syria by calling for an inclusive Syrian-led and Syrian-owned dialogue, seeking a political resolution reflecting their will. We urge the States involved in one way or another in the conflicts that are afflicting Syria to understand that their actions are visible to the global community and that their conduct there reflects on them. The world expects the Council to offer solutions regarding Syria and to show that interests can be set aside for the sake of a people who have suffered too much for too long and multilateralism turned into a tool for the people and for peace.

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

[Original: Spanish]

Mexico thanks the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing pursuant to resolution 2118 (2013). Subject to further comments during the consultations, I would now like to highlight three points.

First, we acknowledge modest progress in Syria's cooperation. However, given the existence of incomplete or contradictory information on the use of chemical weapons, my country believes that the technical and impartial assessment of the case should be made by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), together with the specific mechanisms that were created to clarify the facts and identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We believe that such enquiries should be pursued further.

Secondly, the Chemical Weapons Convention and its monitoring body are the most robust and effective of all the disarmament treaties and regimes. The universally applicable international monitoring, obligations and verification system represent the optimal verification standard, the so-called "golden rule".

Thirdly, in that same conviction, yesterday in the General Assembly my delegation voted in favour of resolution 75/265, on cooperation between the United Nations and the OPCW. We believe that the strong support for that resolution reflects the relevance and importance of the relationship and cooperation between the two organizations. That interaction should be strengthened.

My country reiterates its call on Syria to continue to cooperate with the OPCW and make progress on the tasks ahead. Diplomatic dialogue and the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law are the only way forward.

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

I would like to thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing. The Security Council meets every month to discuss this issue of the utmost importance.

However, I regret to note that the lack of progress towards the full disarmament of Syria's chemical weapons programme makes us repeat ourselves. This month marks 10 years since the start of the conflict in Syria. The sheer length of the conflict does not make the issue any less relevant, or mean that we should stop discussing it. On the contrary, the lack of accountability and the deterioration of trust remind us of the importance and the urgency of the issue.

Yet the monthly report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme (see S/2021/200) once again clearly states that there is no progress. Again, 19 of the 22 issues from Syria's initial declaration remain outstanding.

However, we note that the Declaration Assessment Team was deployed to Syria in February for its twenty-fourth round of consultations. We look forward to hearing its findings as soon as possible. Again, we urge the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW and resolve all outstanding issues from its initial declaration. I would also repeat that Norway remains aligned with the European Union's restrictive measures on persons and entities involved in the development and use of chemical weapons.

Let me also reiterate our full confidence in the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat.

Norway firmly rejects any attempts to discredit or bring into disrepute the OPCW and the work of the Technical Secretariat. The use of chemical weapons in Syria contravenes international law, and accountability for those responsible must be ensured. It is untenable that no one has been held accountable for those actions.

We deeply regret needing to come back to the Council month after month to repeat this call, yet we will continue to do so until progress is made:

The Syrian Arab Republic must fulfil its obligations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Those responsible must be held accountable through credible national or international criminal justice mechanisms, and the issue must be addressed seriously by the Council.

Annex X**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia**

[Original: Russian]

Madam President, I should like to indicate at the outset that we noted your reference to the note by the President of the Security Council contained in document S/2017/507. However, that note is not a Council resolution. Its provisions are guidelines rather than binding rules. Of course, we should be concise, because brevity is known to be the “sister of talent”, but there are situations when it does not seem possible.

Madam President, since today is the first opportunity for you to delve into the Council’s discussions of the Syrian chemical file, I will give a brief — yet I believe useful to everyone here — retrospective account of this topic and related Council discussions.

With Russia’s support, Syria voluntarily joined the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted its initial declaration under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and got rid of all its chemical-weapon stockpiles. In 2014, Syria’s chemical-weapons programme was fully shut down, all chemical-weapons stockpiles were eliminated and production capacities were destroyed. The OPCW has proved that on many occasions. Since then, Syria has engaged in comprehensive cooperation with the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat, including the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and all investigative missions on the ground. By the way, as concerns the fact-finding mission, it was the Syrian authorities that first invited it to visit the country.

Unfortunately, hopes that it would help leave behind the allegations that Syria’s leadership had used chemical weapons against its own people were not realized. During all these years, some States have continued to play that chemical-weapons card as a tool to exert pressure on the Syrian Government. Again and again they have brought up grave accusations against Damascus backed up by unconvincing evidence such as video footage on social media or the testimony of knowingly biased witnesses, or falsified facts. At the same time, they reject the counter-arguments provided not only by Russia and Syria but also by independent experts and organizations, and do not give any coherent explanation as to why they do so.

Unfortunately, the Technical Secretariat assumed the role of transmitter of the anti-Syrian claims of the Western countries and from the very beginning started to churn out reports that would fit into that paradigm.

All evidence traditionally was rather “lame”, rich in technical discrepancies that would often run counter to all laws of physics and rules of logic. Either projectiles would land in vent shafts tailored precisely to accommodate their diameter, or unguided air bombs would fly a 5-kilometre distance to hit their target instead of falling to the ground, or the White Helmets would collect samples of sarin with nearly bare hands.

The Technical Secretariat stopped even pretending to observe the normal practices and procedures of collecting evidence, inter alia the principle of the secure preservation of physical evidence. When some freethinkers among the Technical Secretariat employees raised the alarm and refused to take part in a blatant forgery, the Technical Secretariat leadership started to oppress, intimidate and suppress the dissidents and to distort facts.

As a result, the bulk of the proof of the direct forgeries, manipulations and internal violations in the OPCW Technical Secretariat reached a critical level. The most vivid examples are the blatant violations that occurred during investigations of incidents in Khan Shaykhun, in April 2017, and Douma, in April 2018. I call on those who would like to form an objective idea of this to study the materials provided by independent experts T. Postol and A. Maté at the Arria Formula meeting held on 28 September 2020 that we circulated as official documents of the Security Council and the General Assembly. I also recommend that you pay attention to the testimony of a former OPCW expert who had taken part in the Douma investigation, I. Henderson. He claimed that the Technical Secretariat leadership had falsified conclusions regarding the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic under direct pressure from Western states.

I will not go into detail on the activities of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which is illegitimate per se because the Team was established once a corresponding decision had been pushed through the OPCW Executive Council, thus contravening the principle of consensus and violating the CWC. No wonder its final products can withstand no criticism owing to political bias, factual falsity and technical illiteracy. We have already shared our detailed position on this and circulated our arguments regarding the IIT report on the Al-Lataminah incident of 2017 as an official Council document as early as in June 2020. We will not be surprised if IIT steps forward soon with more commissioned pseudo-revelations, as unconvincing as those regarding Al-Lataminah. It is like releasing a new sequel in a series of books that readers were already bored with. Everyone realizes that it will hardly make the headlines. However, IIT's efforts are just the tip of the iceberg. The root cause of the problem is that our Western colleagues have long turned Syria's chemical file into a means of punishing the unwanted authorities in Damascus. Therefore, attempts to establish a connection between the file and the actual use or non-use of chemical weapons are absolutely senseless.

That is most clearly illustrated by the episode involving an accusatory anti-Syrian decision by the OPCW Executive Council. That decision was taken in July 2020 by the minimum required number of votes and prescribed that Syria must meet knowingly unrealistic conditions: declare the allegedly remaining chemical weapons and related facilities that Syria simply did not have. Of course, Damascus was not able to meet that ultimatum. Now our Western colleagues are seeking to incapacitate Syria in the OPCW by initiating a corresponding process. Hopefully the majority of delegations at the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention in April will refuse to participate in that provocation and the West-initiated punitive decision will not be taken. It is painfully obvious that there is nothing that would require such steps — nothing extraordinary about Syria's chemical file in general or its initial declaration in particular. At the previous Security Council meeting on that agenda item (S/2021/109), we mentioned that the dialogue between the OPCW and Damascus on those issues was of a normal, routine character. Many states, including Western ones, had to deal with the same issues in the context of their initial declarations.

I will not dwell further on this topic, although there are more and more examples proving that the Technical Secretariat is being used for the purposes of the "political commissioning" I mentioned earlier. They have already damaged the reputation of the OPCW as an international organization. I anticipate our colleagues addressing to us further accusations of shattering and undermining the authority of the OPCW. The fact is that such accusations are completely baseless. On the contrary, Russia aspires to restore the good name of the organization and seeks to receive from Director-General Arias answers to the questions that everyone is concerned about.

I will stop here and, as my final point, I would like to draw your attention to the following.

Now that a new Permanent Representative of Syria to the United Nations, Ambassador Bassam Sabbagh, has arrived in New York, the Security Council has a good opportunity to receive first-hand information about the situation around Syria's chemical file. I say so because, in one of his previous posts, Ambassador Sabbagh for many years served as Syria's representative to the OPCW, which gave him vast expertise on all nuances of Syria's interaction with this mechanism, including the progress on chemical weapons issues reached at The Hague platform. There is no one who could give a better account of that than he could. That is why I call on you to give all your attention to his statement when he speaks at the end of this meeting.

Second statement by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia

In response to the Permanent Representative of Great Britain, I would like to comment on some statements that were made during this meeting.

We thank our British colleagues for a reminder of the third anniversary of the notorious Skripals case. It is indeed 4 March today. I have to say that this is a strange case, which our Western colleagues believe to have been closed based on the infamous "highly likely" notion that has taken hold in their active vocabulary. But closed it is not. We still have received no answers to the dozens, if not hundreds, of questions that we posed to our British colleagues. The official website of the Russian Embassy in the United Kingdom has posted a full list of those questions. I strongly recommend that those who have an interest in this episode, which looks like a mysterious case but is in fact a provocation, to pay attention to that list. As for us, within corresponding chemical weapon-related discussions, we will find a way to make those questions public again. And we will do our best to have those questions answered.

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

I thank you, Madam President, and I also thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

I reaffirm Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' well-established, principled position that the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances constitutes a reprehensible violation of international law. Impunity for chemical-weapons atrocities should not be encouraged through inaction. Accordingly, allegations of the use of chemical weapons must never be dismissed, and investigations should always be comprehensive and capable of withstanding scrutiny.

In this regard, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) plays a critical role and bears the tremendous responsibility of ensuring the full and effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. All activities of the organization and its subsidiary bodies must therefore be characterized by transparency, impartiality and non-politicization for it to remain fit for purpose and an effective multilateral body. We remain supportive of its mandate and all efforts aimed at strengthening its capacity to make certain that the quality of its work remain of the highest standard.

We continue to encourage dialogue between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian National Authority to resolve the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in the initial declaration. We recognize the efforts by both parties thus far, notwithstanding the impediments created by the global pandemic, and we urge them to maintain the constructive engagement. On this point, we take note of the deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team to conduct the twenty-fourth round of consultations. We look forward to receiving the results of this deployment as well as all other pending reports.

Despite the many diverging views, cooperation must be fostered and sustained to make tangible progress in every aspect of this file and to ensure the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). In this context, we restate the importance of OPCW Member States pursuing consensus-based decisions to thwart further polarization.

The Security Council and the OPCW Technical Secretariat ought not to overlook the many notifications by the Syrian Government regarding the preparations by armed groups to fabricate incidents of the use of chemical weapons. This is indeed concerning, and we have an obligation to give this matter due attention to make an objective assessment.

In our deliberations on this file, we should always keep the collective goal of achieving a world free of chemical weapons at the forefront and remain steadfast in preserving the norm against chemical warfare.

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

[Original: Arabic]

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

Tunisia condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the use of chemical weapons anywhere, under any circumstances and by any actor, regardless of the motives and justifications, and emphasizes that the perpetrators of these terrible crimes must be held to account.

The use of toxic chemicals as weapons is a threat to international peace and security. It also violates the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, and resolution 2118 (2013).

My country is committed to the chemical-weapon non-proliferation regime, which comprises the Convention and its implementing body, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The regime constitutes a comprehensive framework founded on multilateralism, consensus and cooperation with the aim of ending the possession and use for hostile purposes of toxic chemicals and completely preventing the proliferation of that type of weapon of mass destruction.

Tunisia supports the important technical activities of OPCW, in line with its mandate, which led to the elimination of the chemical stockpile declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. We have taken note that the coronavirus disease pandemic continues to create challenges and obstacles for the OPCW Technical Secretariat as it strives to carry out its mandated tasks in the Syrian Arab Republic. Tunisia welcomes the efforts made by the Technical Secretariat and the Government of Syria to continue their cooperation, despite the current circumstances. Indeed, the Declaration Assessment Team and the Government managed to hold a twenty-fourth round of consultations in Syria from 7 to 25 February.

We urge the Government of Syria to continue its cooperation and dialogue with the OPCW in a spirit of constructive engagement in order to accelerate the resolution of all outstanding issues and ensure full compliance with its obligations under the Convention.

All allegations of the use of toxic chemical substances as weapons, including by non-State actors, must be investigated in a thorough, impartial, independent and transparent manner.

In conclusion, we reaffirm that it is the responsibility of the international community, in particular the Council, to act collectively, in a coordinated manner and in a spirit of unity on the Syrian chemical issue. In our view, that is the best way to settle the issue and help to resolve the Syrian crisis.

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

I thank you, High Representative, for your insightful and thorough briefing this morning. We greatly appreciate your sober analysis and clear calls for accountability.

As I prepared for today's discussion, I was struck by the magnitude of the atrocities committed by the Al-Assad regime. After 10 years of civil war, tens of thousands of innocent civilians are now dead, and far more, far too many of them were slain with Al-Assad's lethal, horrific chemical weapons.

The use of chemical weapons by any State constitutes an unacceptable threat to every State. We all know and understand this, and the United States remains committed to holding those who use these horrific weapons to account.

We all know the Al-Assad regime has repeatedly used chemical weapons. So why has not the Syrian Government been held accountable? The answer is sadly simple — the Al-Assad regime has tried to avoid accountability by obstructing independent investigations and undermining the role and work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). And the regime's ally, in particular Russia, has also sought to block all efforts to pursue accountability. Russia has defended the Al-Assad regime despite its chemical weapons attacks, it has attacked the professional work of the OPCW, and it has undermined efforts to hold the Al-Assad regime accountable for its use of chemical weapons and numerous other atrocities.

The United States firmly supports the impartial and independent work of the OPCW. We recognize their leadership, and we commend the professional manner in which the organization carries out its mission. We eagerly anticipate future reports from the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT).

The IIT's first report (S/2020/310, annex) — released last April — concluded that Syria used chemical weapons in March 2017 during three separate attacks. The OPCW Executive Council, in response, adopted a decision in July of last year asking Syria to take measures to redress the situation. Unsurprisingly, as reported by the OPCW Director-General in October, Syria failed to complete any of the measures set forth in the decision. It is unsurprising, but unacceptable.

In response to this failure to comply, the United States, along with 45 co-sponsors from across the world, have submitted a draft decision to the OPCW Conference of the States Parties. We call upon the Conference to take appropriate action when it reconvenes in April to send an unequivocal message to the Al-Assad's regime that the use of chemical weapons has real and serious consequences.

Let me remind everyone that we already agreed, as a united Council, to stop the use of chemical weapons in Syria. In 2013, the Security Council decided in resolution 2118 (2013) that the Al-Assad regime shall not use, develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons. The Council further decided that the Al-Assad regime must cooperate fully with the OPCW and the United Nations. We must not abandon that decision. The Security Council must ensure that there are serious consequences for the Al-Assad regime's use of chemical weapons.

The United States supports these and other efforts to hold the Al-Assad regime responsible for the use of chemical weapons and other ongoing atrocities against the Syrian people. The horrific list includes mass detention, torture and attacks destroying civilian infrastructure.

Accountability will bring long-overdue justice to the victims and their families who need and deserve the international community's support. Accountability is also vital to build confidence in the broader political process, as called for in resolution 2254 (2015), to bring lasting stability and peace to Syria.

It is time for the Al-Assad regime to uphold its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). The regime has acted with impunity for far too long.

The truth is, we have obligations too. We have an obligation to hold those who use weapons of mass destruction accountable. We have an obligation to listen to the OPCW, whose integrity is unimpeachable and whose objective, technical expertise does not deserve to be politicized. And most important, we have a global responsibility — a sacred responsibility — to protect our people from the inhumanity of chemical weapons.

Very few issues would unite all nations. But the horror of chemical weapons must remain one of them. We cannot let that norm disintegrate. We cannot give up on the dream of a world free from these weapons of mass destruction.

So, we ask that the Security Council unite once more. Let us put aside short-term political calculations. Let us finally put the needs of the Syrian people, and of all people, first. And let us place the use of chemical weapons where it belongs: in the dustbin of history.

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

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu for her monthly briefing on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Syria and the representative of Turkey at this meeting.

Allow me to focus my intervention today on the following points.

First and foremost, with regard to the importance of continued cooperation between the Syrian National Authority and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), my delegation takes note of the eighty-ninth report of the OPCW Director-General on the issue of chemical weapons in Syria (S/2021/200, annex).

We recognize the efforts of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and Syria to continue their engagement given the immediate impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic from last year until now. It has been recently illustrated by the organization of the twenty-fourth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian National Authority during the month of February 2021. We will appreciate further update on the results of this round.

We have confidence that this collaboration is the best way possible to resolve the remaining outstanding issues. We therefore call on the two sides to continue their technical cooperation and consultations in a most constructive manner. We also look forward to the full resumption of OPCW activities in order to further its cooperation with the Syrian Government in this regard.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the need to support to the work of the OPCW, which is mandated to assist Member States in the implementation of the Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC).

Secondly, regarding the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria, my delegation shares the concern of the international community over this matter. We are also troubled by the information regarding the possession and use of chemical weapons by armed groups.

The use of chemical weapons in any form, by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances or for any reason is a clear violation of international law. Viet Nam strongly condemns this inhuman act.

We believe that an investigation of alleged uses of chemical weapons would help preventing recurrence. In doing so, it is also important to require incontestable facts and evidence attained through a comprehensive, transparent and impartial investigative process.

In conclusion, there is, without doubt, a substantial and long-standing divergence on this matter. For that reason, it is fundamental that all sides engage in a constructive and non-politicized manner with a view to finally putting an end to this protracted dossier.

Our mutual goal is the full implementation of the CWC and resolution 2118 (2013). This goal can only be pursued through a joint and united effort of the international community in supporting the ongoing cooperation between Syria and the OPCW.

Viet Nam will continue to engage constructively in the work of the OPCW Conference of the State Parties and follow closely the work of the Executive Council on this matter.

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

[Original: English and Arabic]

I listened attentively to the briefing of Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, and to the interventions of fellow members of the Council. Given that I have been the Permanent Representative of my country to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) since its accession in 2013 to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and given my involvement over the past seven years in working with its Director-General and the various Technical Secretariat teams, I would like to clarify some important related aspects. I hope that fellow Council members will indulge me and allow me ample time to make my comments:

First, the Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly condemned the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, and has repeatedly emphasized that it did not use chemical weapons at all.

Secondly, the Syrian Arab Republic voluntarily acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2013. It has concluded the destruction of its chemical weapons stockpiles and production facilities in full cooperation with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Technical Secretariat in an unprecedented exemplary achievement, within a record time and under difficult and complex circumstances. Syria has also been keen to fulfil all its obligations under the Convention and has persevered in continuing consultations with the Technical Secretariat on various issues. The monthly reports submitted to the Security Council — the latest of which is the eighty-ninth report (S/2021/200, annex) — refer to all ongoing cooperation activities between Syria and the OPCW.

Thirdly, with regard to questions raised about the initial Syrian declaration, I would like to point out that this declaration was submitted within a short time and under exceptional and pressing circumstances. That is why Syria responded in 2014 by working with the Technical Secretariat to provide some supplementary clarifications to it. This is a right guaranteed by the Convention and a common practice with the OPCW. Incidentally, the United States of America is still to this day, more than two decades after joining the OPCW, submitting supplementary declarations to its initial one.

Syria has committed to an organized dialogue with the Declaration Assessment Team in order to address the remaining outstanding technical issues, which actually led to the achievement of tangible progress and closed a number of issues. In this regard, I would like to inform the members of the Council that the Declaration Assessment Team conducted the twenty-fourth round of consultations with the Syrian National Authority during the second half of last February and obtained full support for the success of its mission.

I would like to point out that some of the technical issues that are being discussed have variant scientific explanations; therefore, it is a process that cannot be resolved selectively or hastily. However, what is truly regrettable is that some countries' dealings with the subject of the initial Syrian declaration arise from two issues. The first is bad faith and ongoing scepticism and the second is a glass-half-empty perspective — that is, that they criticize instead of expressing appreciation for what has been achieved so far and encouraging its continuation.

Of course, I can respond to what some have raised, but I only remind them that the production facility they focused on is indicated in the report of the Director-General of the OPCW to be declared by the Syrian Arab Republic; meaning that this facility is included in the initial Syrian declaration. As for the discussion of the samples analysis result, this is a scientific and technical issue that requires a deep discussion between the experts of the OPCW and those of the Syrian National Authority. I will not go into further detail on this point, given the confidentiality of the topics of the initial declaration on the one hand, and so as not to turn this session into a technical discussion, whose natural place is The Hague.

Fourthly, since the commencement of the accusations and allegations of cases of use of chemical weapons — the countries behind their fabrication and release have become well known — Syria took the initiative to request the Director-General of the OPCW to send a team from the Technical Secretariat to investigate the facts and to refute these allegations. Unfortunately, this team did not implement the terms of reference document agreed upon and the rules stipulated in the verification annex to the Convention during its work. Hence, the Team deviated from the professionalism and impartiality that some members of the Security Council are praising today, specifically in terms of not visiting the actual sites where alleged cases of use took place, not collecting samples and preserving the chain of custody, relying on information coming from open sources and so on. The Team proceeded to conduct its investigations remotely, received samples whose source and collector were not known, and interviewed anonymous witnesses who were either unidentified or brought from an environment of terrorist groups and their arm, the White Helmets.

In that regard, I would ask Ms. Nakamitsu and the colleagues who praise the OPCW's professionalism for their explanation of a strange paradox in the work of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM). This paradox manifests itself in the Mission's completion of its investigations of alleged incidents which are fabricated and published in open source and reported by suspicious parties, in record time — that is, only a few months — while it takes more than three years to investigate incidents reported by the Syrian Government. By the way, to this day there have been five incidents reported by the Syrian Government since the year 2017. The reports of the Mission have not yet been completed, which indicates an inconsistency in the methodology of FFM's work and its use of different and selective working methods.

As for the resounding scandal of the OPCW's professionalism was the Team's investigations into the alleged incident in Douma in 2018. What was revealed by one of the experts who participated in those investigations is clear and strong evidence of the extent of the distortion, the great lack of professionalism and objectivity, and complete bias of the OPCW towards theoretical assumptions that are not based on any scientific or concrete evidence.

In this context, I would like to draw your attention to the statement issued by the Courage Foundation on 8 February, signed by a large group of experts and prominent scientific figures, at the forefront of which is Mr. José Bustani, the first Director-General of the OPCW. The statement indicated that there were some fundamental and serious concerns about the manner in which this investigation was conducted and the occurrence of grave procedural and scientific violations, as well as the organization's failure to address the investigators' concerns, and its punishment of them for undermining the organization's credibility and attempt to impugn them. The statement also warned that the issue could damage the reputation and credibility of the OPCW, stressing that the report of the alleged Douma incident raises suspicions and inspires a lack of confidence in all similar OPCW reports, including the report of the alleged Khan Shaykhun incident in 2017.

I would like to point out that the Syrian National Authority, despite its reservations on the methods of work of the Fact-Finding Mission and based on serious and real concerns related to the implementation of its mandate, confirmed its continued cooperation with the FFM and welcomed the visit of its team to complete its investigations into the alleged incident in Kafr Zita. The team is expected to arrive on 22 March, and the National Authority will provide it with the available information and witnesses to enable it to complete its investigations.

Fifthly, the failure of the Joint Investigative Mechanism to fulfil its mandate and the lack of professionalism and credibility in its reports led to the termination of its mandate. Consequently, some Western Governments have turned to the OPCW, manipulated the Convention's provisions and pressured and blackmailed States parties to adopt an illegitimate decision on establishing a mechanism of the so-called "Investigation and Identification Team" (IIT). This set a dangerous precedent of mandating a technical organization with the powers to conduct criminal and legal investigations to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, clearly overriding the Security Council's mandate.

The practices of the IIT were not that different from those of the Fact-Finding Mission, as it concluded an unprofessional report based on the principle of a balance of probabilities, which make these conclusions contested and untrustworthy. Yet these conclusions laid a basis for the United States and France to promote a draft decision submitted to the OPCW Conference of the States Parties, which aims at creating new pretexts for committing more acts of aggression against Syria and to encourage terrorist organizations to carry out more staged chemical incidents to serve the hostile American-Western policies.

The Syrian Arab Republic renews its call to all Member States not to be drawn into this endeavour and to confront it in order to spare the OPCW serious repercussions on the future of its work and its cooperation with the States parties.

In conclusion, the Syrian Arab Republic, at a time when it vehemently rejects this hostile and politicized approach against it and demands an end to it, calls on Member States to replace it with an objective approach and hold constructive discussions that allow the OPCW to work according to the technical character on which it was established and to enable it to restore its reputation, the professionalism of its inspectors and the impartiality and credibility of its reports.

Annex XVI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, Feridun Sinirlioğlu**

At the outset, Madam President, I would like to congratulate you on the assumption of your duties as the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations. I also express our congratulations for the United States presidency of the Security Council during this month.

I also thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

It is unacceptable that the Syrian regime has not yet made a complete and accurate declaration of its chemical weapons programme. This constitutes a serious violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The eighty-ninth monthly report (see S/2021/200) of the Director General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) provides yet another record of this alarming situation. There are still 19 outstanding issues regarding the Al-Assad regime's chemical weapons declaration. This declaration cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. Among those outstanding issues, one particularly deserves urgent attention by the Council.

Contrary to the regime's allegations, all the information and materials collected by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team since 2014 indicate that the production and/or weaponization of chemical warfare nerve agents took place at a facility in Syria. We deeply regret that the OPCW Technical Secretariat's request for information about this facility has been denied by the regime. The regime must be forced to declare the exact types and quantities of chemical agents produced and/or weaponized in that facility.

We expect concrete action from the Council to make the regime fully cooperate with the Declaration Assessment Team and immediately declare the full extent of its chemical weapons programme to the OPCW. The Security Council must act in unity and determination without delay.

In response to the Syrian regime's non-compliance with its obligations, the OPCW Executive Council adopted an important decision in July 2020. It set clear and verifiable parameters for action and required the Syrian regime to return to full compliance with the Convention within 90 days. Turkey co-sponsored this decision, together with 39 States parties. However, the Syrian regime has yet again failed to fulfil its obligations under this decision.

As a result, further effective measures became necessary. In this context, a draft decision has been submitted during the second part of the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of the States Parties. Turkey is one of the co-sponsors to that draft decision as well, together with 45 States Parties.

Establishing truth is fundamental for our joint efforts to achieve peace and justice in Syria. The current investigations by the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on the use of chemical weapons in Syria are crucial in this regard. The IIT has a unique role in identifying the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons. The Syrian regime's denial of visas to the IIT is another violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This is also a clear sign of an attempt to hide the truth.

Turkey reiterates its support for the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its investigative bodies. Their professionalism, impartiality and expertise are highly commendable. We would like to warn against efforts targeting the integrity and credibility of the OPCW.

The cooperation between the United Nations and the OPCW remains essential for a robust non-proliferation regime. We therefore welcome the adoption of the relevant resolution (resolution 75/265) at the General Assembly yesterday, which we gladly co-sponsored.

This month marks the tenth anniversary since the Syrian people took to the streets peacefully to express their legitimate aspirations for freedom, democracy and dignity. Their demand was met with oppression by the regime through the most brutal means, including the use of chemical weapons. We condemn in the strongest terms possible the repeated and well-documented chemical attacks by the Al-Assad regime against its own population.

The regime must be held accountable for its violation of international law and for crimes against humanity. The international community must stand firm to ensure accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Let us all work together to make this grim anniversary the beginning of a new era to end impunity.

The Council must be unified in urging the regime to swiftly and tangibly cooperate with the OPCW without further delay. This is also key to preventing the recurrence of the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

We would like to highlight once again the responsibility of those who have influence on the Syrian regime.
