



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

Provisional

8849

th meeting

Thursday, 2 September 2021, 3 p.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Byrne Nason	(Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Estonia	Mr. Lipand
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Niger	Mr. Aougi
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. Prince
	Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
	Viet Nam	Mr. Pham

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 August 2021 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2021/764)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Council, to pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. T. S. Tirumurti, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of August. I am sure I speak for all the members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Tirumurti and his team for the great diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 August 2021 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2021/764)

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

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

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2021/764, which contains the text of a letter dated 30 August 2021 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

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

Consistent with established practice, the Office of Disarmament Affairs has been in regular contact with its counterparts at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related

to this matter. Also per established practice, I held a monthly call with the OPCW Director-General on 31 August to receive an update and ascertain his views.

The OPCW's Technical Secretariat's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic remained subject to the evolution of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Nevertheless, the Technical Secretariat maintains its readiness for deployments. Despite continued travel restrictions, the OPCW's Technical Secretariat has been able to pursue 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 is pursuing its ongoing efforts to clarify all the outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW. In that context, the OPCW Technical Secretariat remains of the position that the Syrian Arab Republic must declare all chemical warfare agents produced and/or weaponized at the former chemical weapons production facility that was declared by the Syrian Arab Republic as never having been used to produce and/or weaponize chemical weapons.

I have been advised that, on 9 August, the Syrian National Authority was informed by the OPCW Director-General of his intention to deploy a Declaration Assessment Team to Damascus from 2 to 17 September to conduct the twenty-fifth round of consultations. However, on 16 August, the Syrian National Authority requested that the upcoming round of consultations be held in October 2021, after the high-level week of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

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

As previously reported, the OPCW Technical Secretariat still plans to conduct two rounds of inspections of the Barzah and Jamraya facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in 2021. The inspections of those facilities remain subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With regard to the Schedule 2 chemical detected at the Barzah facility of the SSRC in 2018, I have been advised that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the OPCW Technical Secretariat to close that issue.

I am informed that the OPCW Director-General has nominated a representative to initiate preparations for the proposed in-person meeting between the Director-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic. I have also been advised that the new Deputy Head of Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW has been appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs as the contact point for organizing the possible meeting. The objective of the meeting between the Director-General and the Minister is to hold a comprehensive and results-orientated substantive exchange on relevant developments and on the way forward regarding the OPCW Technical Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic. I hope that the meeting will be an opportunity to strengthen the dialogue and cooperation between the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

As reported during the Security Council meeting held on 4 August (see S/PV.8830), the Syrian National Authority informed the OPCW Technical Secretariat about an attack that took place on 8 June, targeting a military facility that housed a declared former chemical weapons production facility. The Syrian National Authority also reported the destruction of two chlorine cylinders that were related to the chemical weapons incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018.

In its reply to the Syrian National Authority, the OPCW Technical Secretariat requested further information regarding the damage caused to the declared site, as it was related to one outstanding issue, recently opened by the Declaration Assessment Team. The OPCW Technical Secretariat also recalled that, during its previous inspection of those cylinders, in November 2020, the cylinders were stored and inspected at another declared site, approximately 60 kilometres from the location at which they were reportedly destroyed on 8 June. The OPCW Technical Secretariat also recalled that it had previously advised the Syrian Arab Republic that it was not to open, move or alter the containers or their contents, in any way, without seeking the prior written consent of the Technical Secretariat.

I understand that the Syrian National Authority did not notify the OPCW Technical Secretariat that the cylinders had been moved to a new location until the report of their destruction. Accordingly, in a note verbale dated 15 July, the OPCW Technical Secretariat requested Syria to provide all relevant information regarding the movement of the two cylinders and any remains following their destruction.

I note that the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) remains in the process of studying all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and continues to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic and other States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with regard to "a variety of incidents". Further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the issuance of its second report, in April, I understand that the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues with its investigations into incidents in which the FFM has determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic. The IIT will issue further reports in due course, subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. I take this opportunity to reiterate once again my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of the work of the OPCW.

With regard to the decision entitled "Addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic", C-25/Dec. 9, adopted on 21 April, I have been advised that the Syrian Arab Republic has not completed any of the measures stipulated in paragraph 5 of decision EC-94/Dec. 2. I therefore reiterate my call on 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 the members of the Council will unite on the issue and reinforce the essential norm against the use of such horrific weapons. The vitality and credibility of a broader disarmament and non-proliferation architecture depends upon it. The

Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever support and assistance it can.

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

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

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Given that today's meeting of the Security Council is the first open-format meeting in September, I would like to start by thanking the delegation of India for presiding over the Security Council in August and by wishing Ireland every success as President of the Council this month.

September — this month — will mark a year since the Council started discussions on the issue of the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) in open format. Over that time, it has proved effective to discuss the Syrian chemical dossier in that format. Transparency is particularly important when discussing the Syrian chemical issue, in the light of the course of action taken by the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We would like to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing on the 95th monthly report of the Director-General of the OPCW on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) (S/2021/764, annex). Regrettably, that document is unbalanced, as was the case in the past.

We are particularly dismayed about the fact that, as was also the case in the past, the report intentionally shifts the emphasis as it describes the air strike that took place on 8 June on the declared chemical weapons facility in Syria. During that air strike, two cylinders were destroyed. Those cylinders are related to the incident that occurred in Douma in April 2018. Still no assessment of the egregious air strike itself — an air strike that was carried out on the territory of a sovereign State — can be found in the report, and neither is there any reaction to it by the Secretary-General or the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

As we saw at the previous meeting (see S/PV.8830), our Western colleagues are also very careful to sidestep the issue of the air strike itself, while highlighting the relocation of the cylinders by Syrians. Even if that were true — and the Syrian delegation provided exhaustive clarifications on the issue at that meeting — does it justify the use of armed force against a sovereign State? We would like to request that the Council reflect on who

stood to benefit from the air strike and from getting rid of important material evidence in the context of investigating the incident in Douma.

Logic dictates that it was certainly not the Syrians who stood to gain from it — because Syria, just like Russia, is calling upon the Technical Secretariat to conduct an objective investigation. However, those who are not interested in such an investigation and are inconvenienced by the proof of manipulation in preparing the infamous Fact-Finding Mission report certainly stood to benefit from destroying the cylinders.

What is striking is the overabundance of details in the report on purely technical issues, such as the visa issue. We are left with the impression that there is a lack of real evidence of any violation by Damascus of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Technical Secretariat is clinging to routine nuances of bilateral interactions and attempting to present Syrians as difficult negotiating partners. At the same time, there is a time lag with developing events, and steps taken by the Syrian side are overlooked. That gives the impression that delays are taking place because of the Syrians. For example, nothing is being said about the fact that it was the Director-General of the OPCW who suggested a later date for the next round of consultations with the initial Declaration Assessment Team, when he publicly stated that summer in Syria is uncomfortable for inspectors deployed in the field.

I would like to underscore that the Syrian side, despite the unprecedented pressure and the double standards employed by the Technical Secretariat, continues to scrupulously discharge its obligations under the Convention. The Syrian side does not refuse to cooperate and demonstrates the political will to continue dialogue with the leadership of the Technical Secretariat, and to do so at a high level. Even today, our Syrian colleagues stand ready to provide the Council with the most recent information on these issues.

Lastly, at the very least, we are surprised about the fact that, as a justification for a number of anti-Syria conclusions, the report again refers to remarks made by the Director-General of the OPCW, Mr. Fernando Arias, at the Security Council in June (see S/PV.8785). We have drawn the Council's attention several times to the many inconsistencies and direct distortions, including through the dissemination of documents S/2021/641 and S/2021/588 to the Council in that regard. We call upon the Council to study those documents carefully.

We also expect that the leadership of the OPCW will provide us with detailed explanations in the course of its next briefing to the Security Council, which we hope will take place soon.

We believe that the root of all of the current problems regarding the Syrian chemical dossier is that our Western colleagues have long turned into an instrument to punish the authorities in Damascus, which they find undesirable. It is therefore pointless to try to find in it anything connected to the use or non-use of chemical weapons in Syria, or to the issues of chemical weapons proliferation.

Unfortunately, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has become the conduit for that unscrupulous policy and has turned the organization from the independent and impartial guardian of the Convention into a tool to punish those who are not to the liking of individual States or who do not let them pursue their geopolitical goals. This is a dangerous trend towards politicizing the OPCW, and it is becoming increasingly obvious with each passing month.

There is more evidence of egregious and intentional violations of the Convention by the Technical Secretariat. The best example of that are the instances of manipulation during the preparation of the notorious 2018 Douma report. Despite the urging of Member States and the international community, correcting them is not something that the leadership of the Technical Secretariat is going to do, as far as we can see.

The activities of the illegitimate Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), whose creation was crudely pushed through the OPCW's Executive Council, in violation of the principle of consensus and article XV of the Convention, run in the same vein. Its outcomes cannot withstand scrutiny because they are politically biased, factually inaccurate and technically incomprehensible, and the methodology used there and by the Fact-Finding Mission is in violation of the Convention as it relates to the principles for conducting an investigation, particularly with regard to issues of collection of evidence and chain of custody. The goal of the IIT is not to recreate a real picture of events, but rather to fit their narrative to the conclusion that Damascus is at fault — in other words, to execute a political directive. We therefore reject the conclusions in the reports issued by the Team on Ltamenah and Saraqib, as well as its future reports. It is the biased conclusions by the IIT that were at the basis of the

punitive decision to incapacitate Syria — the first such step taken against a sovereign State that has scrupulously abided by the Convention.

I would like to underscore that the April decision reached by the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention is not an expression of the collective will of the States parties to the Convention, as our Western colleagues claim. It was crudely rammed through by Western delegations, in violation of the norms of the Convention, because it was introduced directly at the Conference without first being considered by the Executive Council and in violation of the principle of consensus.

In fact, fewer than half of the OPCW member States and only six Western States from the current membership of the Security Council supported it. The rest of the members were either against it or abstained. This was also the position taken by a number of former members of the Security Council. The policy of double standards by the Technical Secretariat is also evident in the outstanding issues on Syria's initial declaration. Damascus, which joined the Convention in very difficult and unusual circumstances, amid political and military instability and a terrorist threat fuelled from without — and in spite of that implemented all its commitments in good faith — is subjected to unreasonably strict requirements. And a great deal of commotion is being generated around this issue.

At the same time, the OPCW Technical Secretariat soft-pedalled the situation with Libya, where in 2012 about 500 undeclared munitions were found. The same is true with Iraq, whose initial declaration was not confirmed by any third party, but rather made solely on the basis of existing United Nations documents.

The stance of the current leadership of the Technical Secretariat is a serious threat to the authority of the OPCW, as it casts a shadow on its status as one of the pillars of the non-proliferation regime on weapons of mass destruction. It also calls into question the effectiveness of the organization's implementation of its mandate. As a responsible State present at the organization's inception, we are extremely worried about the situation. Unfortunately, we see no signs of it improving.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Let me start today by congratulating India on a successful presidency of the Security Council in August. I wish you, Madam President, and your team

all the best during Ireland's Council presidency in September. We look forward to working with you. I also wish to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her very thorough and factual briefing today, and I would like to acknowledge the presence of representatives from Turkey, Iran and Syria.

The United States condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances. There can be no impunity for those who use such weapons. The use of chemical weapons by any State constitutes an unacceptable threat to the peace and security of every State. The Al-Assad regime has repeatedly used chemical weapons and has tried to avoid accountability by obstructing independent investigations and failing to cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The Al-Assad regime's goal is clear — to undermine the organization's work as the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention. As we have noted on previous occasions, the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team has attributed four separate chemical-weapons attacks in Syria to the Al-Assad regime. Those incidents are in addition to the four chemical-weapons attacks attributed to the Al-Assad regime by the United Nations-OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism.

The United States firmly supports the impartial and independent work of the OPCW and all of its investigative bodies. We welcome the intention of the OPCW's Director-General to deploy the Declaration Assessment Team to Syria to conduct the twenty-fifth round of consultations in Damascus later this fall. The Syrian Government has a clear obligation to cooperate with the OPCW. This month marks eight years since Syria acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention. I reiterate that, despite the OPCW's efforts to assist the Al-Assad regime with complying with its obligations under the Convention, the regime continues to ignore calls from the international community, including the Security Council, to fully disclose and verifiably eliminate its chemical-weapons programmes. The OPCW's assessment matches ours — that the declaration submitted by the Al-Assad regime still cannot be considered accurate and complete.

Sadly, the Al-Assad regime continues to deliberately delay and obstruct the work of the OPCW. Syria once again demonstrated its lack of candour with the OPCW when it recently reported the destruction of two containers that had previously been inspected

by the Declaration Assessment Team. Despite instructions to the regime to not open, move or alter the containers and their contents in any way, the Al-Assad regime — without seeking the prior written consent of the OPCW — reported that the cylinders were destroyed at a different location during the attack on 8 June 2021. The regime did not even notify the OPCW that the cylinders had been moved to a new location until it reported their destruction.

The Al-Assad regime's allies, including Russia, have also actively sought to block all efforts to promote accountability. Russia continues to defend the Al-Assad regime for its failures to adhere to its obligations, including by spreading disinformation, attacking the integrity and professional work of the OPCW and impeding ongoing efforts by responsible nations to hold the Al-Assad regime accountable. That pattern of enablement is dangerous. The Al-Assad regime's repeated and continued failures to comply with its obligations under international law must not be tolerated.

We therefore welcome the decision of the OPCW Conference of the States Parties to condemn Syria's use of chemical weapons and suspend its rights and privileges under the Chemical Weapons Convention. That decision sends a clear and unequivocal message that the use of chemical weapons has consequences. It is time for the Al-Assad regime to uphold its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013).

The Security Council decided, in the event of non-compliance with resolution 2118 (2013), to impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. We now have overwhelming evidence of numerous incidents of non-compliance by the Al-Assad regime. Now is the time to uphold and enforce the Council's decision. Without accountability for the atrocities committed against the Syrian people, lasting peace in Syria will remain out of reach.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate India on the positive outcome achieved under its presidency of the Security Council in August. I would also like to congratulate Ireland as it assumes the presidency for September. I believe that under your leadership, Madam President, the Council will achieve great success this month. The Chinese delegation assures you and your colleagues of its full cooperation. I also thank Mrs. Nakamitsu,

High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her briefing. I welcome the representatives of Syria, Turkey and Iran to today's meeting.

The Security Council considers the Syrian chemical weapons file monthly. China has comprehensively and clearly stated its position many times, stressing that the investigation of issues related to the Syrian chemical weapons should be based on facts and guided by science. It should be conducted objectively and fairly. Today I do not want to speak at length. I would like to highlight two points.

First, it is imperative to maintain dialogue and cooperation to resolve the Syrian chemical weapons issue. China has noted the most recent monthly report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (S/2021/764, annex). We encourage the Technical Secretariat to strengthen dialogue with Syria in order to jointly resolve outstanding issues, including those related to Syria's initial declaration. We hope that both sides can reach an early consensus on the schedule for the twenty-fifth round of technical consultations, steadily advance the preparations for the in-person meetings between the Syrian Foreign Minister and the OPCW Director-General, make proper arrangements for the Technical Secretariat's inspection of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre and start talks regarding the attack of a declared chemical-weapons production facility in Syria. The international community should create favourable conditions for dialogue and cooperation between the two sides, respect Syria's legitimate concerns and avoid exerting political pressure.

Secondly, we must return to the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention to resolve the issue of the Syrian chemical weapons. All States parties should safeguard the authority and integrity of the investigation. The handling of the incidents of the alleged use of chemical weapons must be in strict compliance with the provisions of the Convention and the verification annex and follow the principles of objectivity, impartiality and professionalism. Based on that position, China maintains that the establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team is beyond the authorization provided by the Convention. We have always had concerns about its working methods, procedures and staff composition. China urges all States parties to observe the principle of multilateralism, strengthen dialogue and consultation, reduce political confrontation and work together to create favourable

conditions and a good atmosphere for the OPCW to resume its normal functioning.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on the Republic of Ireland's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to wish you and your team every success. I also reiterate my thanks and appreciation to India for its successful and competent stewardship of the Security Council's work during the past month. I also thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing and welcome the participation of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey in this meeting.

Tunisia stresses its firm condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, regardless of the motives or justifications. The use of chemicals as weapons is a threat to international peace and security and a grave violation of international law. The perpetrators of such heinous crimes should be held accountable.

In that context, Tunisia supports the vital mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is responsible for the independent and impartial verification, including in the Syrian Arab Republic. The OPCW provides the platform for consultation and cooperation among States on relevant issues.

We value the initial agreement between the OPCW Director-General and the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates to hold an in-person meeting in the upcoming period. We hope that the meeting will be the start of restoring engagement, dialogue, confidence-building and mutual understanding, thereby contributing to advancing the Syrian chemical file. We look forward to the parties starting to make the necessary arrangements to hold that meeting as soon as possible.

We also urge that the Technical Secretariat teams resume their activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, in coordination with the Syrian Government, taking into account the restrictions still imposed due to the security and the pandemic situations in the country. We stress the importance of conducting comprehensive and transparent independent investigations into the allegations of the use of chemical weapons by any party, while striving to achieve rapid progress in resolving outstanding issues to ensure that Syria fully fulfils its commitments.

We reiterate that the efforts of the OPCW will be more effective if they are based on the collective and coordinated action and constructive cooperation of the Security Council and the international community at large in carrying out the mandate of monitoring the implementation of both resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We are convinced that finding collective and consensus-based solutions to close the Syrian chemical file is vital and feasible, similar to what was achieved upon the adoption of resolution 2585 (2021) to renew the cross-border mechanism for the delivery of aid to Syria this summer, thereby contributing to ensuring the rule of law, accountability and establishing trust in the effectiveness of the chemical weapons prohibition and non-proliferation regime for the sake of enhancing international peace and security.

Mr. Lipand (Estonia): I join other speakers in thanking India for its successful presidency of the Security Council during the month of August. I wish Ireland all the best for its presidency for the month ahead. I also thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Last month, on 21 August, we marked the eighth anniversary of the chemical-weapons attack that took place in the Damascus suburb of Ghouta. The attack remains one of the most horrendous, large-scale atrocities conducted during the Syrian conflict by the Al-Assad regime against its own people. Thousands of individuals were killed or injured. The vast majority of them were civilians, including hundreds of women and children. It was an act in clear violation of international law.

Estonia strongly condemns the attacks in Ghouta, but also those in Khan Shaykhun, Douma, Ltamenah and Saraqib, as well as the numerous other instances that have taken place in Syria since the start of the conflict. Impunity for these atrocity crimes cannot be tolerated. Estonia continues to support accountability mechanisms that have been put in place by a wide United Nations membership to combat impunity, such as the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism and the Commission of Inquiry. The opening of criminal inquiries by judicial authorities in France, Germany and Sweden are encouraging steps towards ensuring justice for the victims of the Ghouta sarin attacks.

Turning to the monthly report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (S/2021/764, annex), the outstanding issues with the initial declaration unfortunately persist, and Syrian cooperation with the OPCW is deteriorating. We note with concern that despite the OPCW Technical Secretariat's efforts, the next round of consultations has still not taken place. The tripartite agreement that facilitates the Technical Secretariat's mandated activities in Syria was, at the request of Syria, extended for only three months, hampering the OPCW's ability to plan and conduct its activities in the country. Failure to grant a visa in a timely manner for an OPCW staff member to be deployed in Damascus is not acceptable, nor is the unauthorized movement of the two chlorine cylinders that were part of the evidentiary material of the Douma incident.

In resolution 2118 (2013), the Security Council decided that Syria shall cooperate fully with the OPCW, including by complying with their relevant recommendations and providing the respective personnel access to — and the right to inspect — sites in order to fulfil their mandate. The implementation of this provision — paragraph 7 of the resolution — is clearly inadequate.

We positively note the prospect of a meeting between Director-General Arias and Mr. Mekdad and hope this meeting can take place soon to instigate much needed progress in this file.

In conclusion, we commend the dedication and integrity of the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat in fulfilling their task of upholding the norm against the use of chemical weapons. We call on the Syrian regime to cooperate fully with the OPCW and comply with the Security Council resolutions and with international law.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): Like others, let me begin by thanking the delegation of India for its very able and successful presidency in August, and we wish Team Ireland all the best for this coming month. I also thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing on the progress towards full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

Two weeks ago, we marked the eighth anniversary of the incident that took place in Ghouta in 2013. This grim reminder of the heinous impact of chemical weapons causes us to redouble our commitment to not allowing the global norm against the use of chemical weapons to erode.

There have unfortunately been few positive developments in the Syrian dossier since we met last month (see S/PV.8830). We regret that the Declaration Assessment Team has yet to deploy to Syria and could potentially be delayed further to October. Every month that these consultations are postponed undermines the priority of ensuring consistent cooperation, exchanges of information and technical assistance to Syria. It is urgent that this issue be resolved. Regular inspections, including of the Barzah and Jamraya facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre, must remain a priority and should not be further delayed.

In addition, Norway will continue to urge Syria to fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and provide sufficient technical information or explanations to bring closure to the 20 outstanding issues. It is essential that identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies be resolved. The Syrian Arab Republic must fulfil its obligations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). It is also critical that Syria complete the necessary measures to lift the suspension of its rights and privileges as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We are pleased to see that the issue of the OPCW staff member's visa has been resolved. Continuing situations with no team leader deployed to the OPCW mission in Syria are not sustainable. We strongly urge the Syrian authorities to return to the previous practice of issuing visas to OPCW team members in a timely and efficient manner.

The tripartite agreement among the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and Syria is another vital component of the Secretariat's activities. While we are pleased that the tripartite agreement was extended, we are concerned that an extension for only three months, instead of the nine months proposed, could have an adverse impact on the Secretariat's ability to plan and conduct its mandated activities.

Let me conclude by reiterating that Norway remains steadfast in its confidence in the work of Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, and in their commitment to ensuring that the international prohibition against the use of chemical weapons is upheld.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I would like to join others in appreciating India's presidency of the Security Council, and wishing you,

Madam President, and your team, the very best for your presidency.

I would like to start by thanking High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing, but I have little to add to what I said one month ago (see S/PV.8830). Syria has an obligation under the Charter of the United Nations to abide by the decisions of the Security Council in resolution 2118 (2013), and, as a member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), it has an obligation to meet its commitments under the Chemical Weapons Convention. It has breached these obligations by using chemical weapons throughout the conflict in Syria.

In this month's report of the Director-General of the OPCW (S/2021/764, annex) there are further signs of Syria's failure to cooperate fully with the OPCW and its personnel. We note with concern, for instance, that Syria has agreed to only a three-month extension of the tripartite agreement with the United Nations Office for Project Services and the OPCW, rather than the nine months requested, which will significantly affect its ability to conduct its mandated activity. The tripartite agreement is often held up by Council members as evidence of Syria's alleged cooperation. This is actually evidence of Syria's failure to cooperate fully.

Furthermore, there continue to be unjustified delays in agreeing on the next round of consultations with the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team and in granting visas to Technical Secretariat staff, which has led to a period, for the second time this year, where there is no Technical Secretariat presence at the command post.

As we said last month, we hope the proposed meeting between the Director-General and Mr. Fayssal Mekdad will open the door to resolving these compliance issues. We also hope that it will contribute to progress on the increasing list of declaration issues and that it will provide clarity on other open questions for the Syrian regime, such as on the unauthorized movement of cylinders relating to the high-profile Douma chlorine attack and those cylinders' subsequent alleged destruction.

I would like to conclude by expressing my regret at the ongoing use of these meetings to call into question the OPCW's scientific, technical and independent findings. Those who do so claim to be protecting the OPCW and the Chemical Weapons Convention. The reality is that they are seeking to divert attention from the Al-Assad regime's well-evidenced use of chemical weapons, and

in doing so they themselves continue to undermine the Chemical Weapons Convention, the long-held norms against chemical-weapons use and the role and unity of the Council on such an important issue. There are questions to answer, but those questions are for the Syrian regime, not the OPCW. The Council should leave Syria in no doubt that we expect it to take expeditious action to resolve those questions and comply fully with its obligations.

Mr. Ragutthalli (India): Let me begin by congratulating the delegation of Ireland on its assumption of the presidency for September and extend to it our best wishes. I also thank you, Madam President, and others for the kind words towards my delegation for our August presidency.

I join others in thanking the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her update. We have taken note of the contents of the latest, ninety-fifth monthly report by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We note the recent announcement by the Director-General to deploy the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to resolve the outstanding issues regarding Syria's initial declaration and subsequent submissions, and the response from the Syrian National Authority proposing to receive the DAT team in October. We encourage the two sides to work out mutually acceptable dates at the earliest.

Our views on the Chemical Weapons Convention have been consistent. The Convention is a unique, non-discriminatory disarmament instrument. It is a model for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. We attach high importance to the Convention and stand for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. We support the collective efforts by all to ensure that the credibility and integrity of the Convention are maintained to the fullest.

India is against the use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere, at any time, under any circumstances. India has consistently maintained that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, credible and objective, following scrupulously the provisions and procedures embedded in the Convention and in conformity with the delicate balance of power and responsibility

enshrined in the Convention to establish facts and reach evidence-based conclusions.

Since we joined the Council in January, India has been repeatedly cautioning against the possibility of terrorist entities and individuals gaining access to chemical weapons. We are concerned at the frequent reports of the resurgence of terrorist groups in Syria and in the region. As we have learned from the consequences of complacency against terrorism in the past, the international community cannot afford to ignore terrorist activities in Syria and beyond.

The Council came together in July this year by unanimously adopting resolution 2585 (2021). We showed the world that progress on the Syria file, after a decade of conflict and impasse, is possible provided we are willing to take that extra step and work in tandem while taking cognizance of one another's concerns. Let us continue to advance the same constructive spirit with regard to the chemical-weapons discussions.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, Madam President, to add my congratulations to those of my colleagues upon your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. You have the support of the delegation of Mexico. I wish also to acknowledge the good work done by India last month. I also thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing, and I welcome the presence of the representatives of Syria, Iran and Turkey.

We took note with interest of the fact that the twenty-fifth round of inspections of the Declaration Assessment Team, which had been repeatedly postponed, is planned for October. We hope that light can be shed on the pending issues concerning Syria's initial declaration and that the discrepancies that have been repeatedly pointed out can be resolved.

We note with concern that for the second time this year, the post of the head of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Declaration Assessment Team is vacant, which is not an encouraging sign. We also note that the tripartite agreement between the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and Syria, which is to expire on 30 September of this year, was extended only until 31 December 2021, at Syria's suggestion, which contrasts with the OPCW's proposal to extend that agreement for a further nine months. What is the purpose of this? We think that this will hardly contribute to better cooperation between

Syria and the OPCW, even though such cooperation would be highly desirable.

I would like to ask the High Representative about the impact of the foregoing on the planned activities or investigations in the field. Cooperation with the OPCW and with the various mechanisms established to shed light on the use of chemical weapons means complying with the obligations that the States parties to the Convention have undertaken.

We also reiterate our proposal that the OPCW investigation teams working on this issue be able to provide periodic reports to the Security Council, which would make it possible for us to have first-hand information on their investigations and break the cycle of inertia that has taken over the monthly review of the chemical issue in Syria. It is a question of making progress on ongoing issues and not of just engaging in a circular and repetitive dialogue.

In that light, the upcoming meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Syria, Fayssal Mekdad, and the Director-General of the OPCW is a positive sign. We hope that that dialogue will build trust between the parties and make it possible to dispel doubts such as those concerning the presence of the chemicals detected during the third round of inspections in Barzah, in 2018, and the recent destruction of the cylinders related to the Douma incident, among others.

Finally, Mexico reiterates its firm rejection of the use of chemical weapons by any actor and under any circumstances, as well as its support for the professional work of the OPCW and its international verification standards.

Mr. De Rivi re (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, I to congratulate the Permanent Representative of India and his team for a very successful presidency in August and to wish you, Madam President, good luck and every success during your presidency in September. I would also like to thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Once again, it is clear that the Syrian regime continues to evade its international obligations. The list of blocked issues is long. No responses have been provided to the 20 outstanding questions related to Syria's initial declaration. We hope that the meeting between the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the

Syrian Arab Republic will make it possible to address them head on.

We further reiterate our concern about the unauthorized movement and destruction of two cylinders related to the Douma attacks. The Syrian regime must provide all the information requested by the OPCW Technical Secretariat to shed light on that matter. The OPCW, for its part, stands ready, but is awaiting an operational response.

The postponement of the deployment of the initial Declaration Assessment Team is also worrisome. The OPCW liaison officer was unable to obtain a visa to replace his predecessor, who left Damascus in August, which means that the position is vacant for the second time this year. We call on the Syrian regime to quickly resolve that situation.

The regime's non-cooperation with the OPCW is blatant and leading it to an impasse. However, we recall once again that the decision taken in April by the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention is not irreversible. The rights and privileges that were suspended in April can be restored. For that to happen, the regime must cooperate decisively and in good faith with the OPCW, which continues its work in full transparency and with a great deal of professionalism.

It is of course up to the Security Council to ensure that. The Syrian chemical issue is far from being resolved. Those who try to make us believe that that is not the case are fooling no one.

I encourage the members of the Security Council to return to the full and comprehensive implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). The security of all of us depends on it.

France will continue to work with its partners, including in the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, to bring the perpetrators of chemical attacks to justice.

Ms. Prince (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): We join others in congratulating Ireland on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. We wish you, Madam President, the very best. You can count on our support. We also commend India for a very well-organized and successful presidency last month.

I begin by restating Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' well-established position that the use of

chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances constitutes a reprehensible violation of international law. Perpetrators of chemical weapons atrocities should not be allowed to operate with impunity and must be held accountable. For this reason, we continue to support the mandate of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Furthermore, we support all efforts to strengthen the organization's capacity to ensure that the quality of its work remains of the highest standard.

We are cognizant that the coronavirus disease pandemic has created various impediments to the work. However, we remain concerned by the overall lack of progress on this file. The issue of the unresolved gaps, discrepancies and inconsistencies in the original declaration remains, and we are hopeful that continued dialogue between the parties will assist in making meaningful progress. In that regard, we take note of the forthcoming round of consultations. It is our hope that those consultations will yield tangible results. We also look forward to the convening of the in-person meeting between the OPCW and Syria to discuss relevant developments and the way forward.

We welcome the agreement on a three-month extension of the tripartite agreement among the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and Syria. The agreement remains relevant and, although short, the extension still demonstrates the spirit of cooperation, which is very much needed in every aspect of this file.

As the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW plays a critical role in safeguarding international peace and security. The importance of the organization's efforts aimed at eliminating and preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons, as well as the promotion of the peaceful uses of chemistry, can never be overstated.

The successful implementation of both the Convention and resolution 2118 (2013) requires sustained international cooperation. However, that becomes severely strained where trust deficits exist. As such, the OPCW must continuously strive to ensure that its internal structure and all activities are characterized by integrity, transparency and non-politicization. Furthermore, States parties to the Convention should engage constructively and pursue consensus-based decisions to thwart polarization and divisiveness. In all discussions political quarrels ought to be set aside

and the collective vision of achieving a world free of chemical weapons must remain at the forefront.

Mr. Pham (Viet Nam): Like others before me, I would like to warmly congratulate India for its successful presidency in August and wish Ireland a fruitful month ahead. I assure you, Madam President, of our delegation's full cooperation.

I thank 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.

Let me reiterate Viet Nam's consistent policy of strongly supporting non-proliferation and the disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons.

The use of chemical weapons is inhumane and clearly prohibited under international law, especially under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). The obligations under CWC therefore must be fully respected. The full implementation of the Convention helps prevent immediate and long-term effects of those weapons on human life and the environment.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the role of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) — a multilateral body in charge of coordinating international efforts towards ridding the world of chemical weapons. At the same time, it is our belief that the organization's work, including investigations of alleged uses of chemical weapons, must be carried out in a most comprehensive, objective and impartial manner. It should strictly abide by the Convention in order to ensure intended outcomes.

My delegation shares the concerns over the alleged uses of chemical weapons in Syria, as well as the current impasse in finding a lasting solution to this issue. We take note of the ninety-fifth monthly report of the OPCW Director-General (S/2021/764, annex), in which we note that the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian National Authority will soon conduct the twenty-fifth round of consultations in Damascus. In that regard, we call on the two sides to deepen their technical cooperation in a most constructive and non-politicized manner to finally settle the remaining outstanding issues relating to the initial declaration — the first obligation for the national implementation of the CWC.

My delegation also looks forward to the holding of the meeting between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW Director-General. That should serve as a confidence-building measure aimed at reviewing the current state of affairs and discussing the enhancement of future cooperation between the two sides. We look forward to a positive outcome to the meeting.

At the same time, given the protracted length of time in finding a solution to the issue, it is imperative that the engagement between the OPCW and Syria be supported by effective international cooperation. Good-faith and non-politicized cooperation need to be promoted in the international community. It is undeniable that the unity of the Security Council as well as that of all CWC State parties is the key to the full implementation of the CWC and resolution 2118 (2013).

Mr. Aougi (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to congratulate India on its presidency last month and to wish Ireland every success in its presidency this month. I also thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

The Niger takes note of the report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (S/2021/764, annex) and reaffirms its support for efforts to eliminate the threat of the use of chemical weapons. We hope to see a full resumption of the deployment of the OPCW mission in Syria once coronavirus disease-related restrictions are lifted.

Resolving the Syrian chemical weapons issue calls for the Security Council to demonstrate unity on the way forward and on the objectives of the work of the OPCW in Syria. Only open ongoing dialogue between the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and the Syrian Government will help resolve the issue regarding Syria's initial declaration and allow for progress in the work of the Declaration Assessment Team, in line with resolution 2118 (2013). My delegation notes the ongoing efforts of the Syrian Government to shed light on the use of those weapons on its territory, through its communications via the OPCW and the Security Council, and its readiness to continue cooperating with the Technical Secretariat by guaranteeing better access to reported sites throughout Syria to facilitate investigations. We welcome the fact that Syria and the OPCW have agreed to hold rounds of consultations in October. We hope that those consultations will be productive.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates that all incidents of the use of chemical weapons in Syria should be accorded the same attention and be addressed with the same rigour to allow for general findings and to determine who is responsible. The diverging views of the members of the Council should give way to a thorough and technical analysis of the findings of the investigations conducted to ensure the integrity of the OPCW.

Mrs. Toroitich (Kenya): We join others in congratulating you, Madam President, and your team on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We assure you of our cooperation and support. We also wish to commend India for its successful presidency. I also thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Kenya takes note of the monthly report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (S/2021/764, annex) as well as the submission of the report by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The purpose of our monthly meetings is to review the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) and the OPCW Executive Council decision of 27 September 2013. It is unfortunate that, eight years on and despite the monthly meetings taking place on the matter, there is hardly any significant progress to speak of. Nonetheless, resolution 2118 (2013) remains clear. The use of chemical weapons anywhere constitutes a threat to international peace and security. Kenya reaffirms its firm conviction and belief that the use of such weapons anywhere and by anyone constitutes an unacceptable violation of international law.

Kenya supports the mandate of the OPCW as the technical body overseeing the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. However, if it is to make good progress, its mandated activities pertaining to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme should be supported by all and must be depoliticized.

As we have said before, an expeditious closure of investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria will allow the Council to support the Syrian people more meaningfully in their quest for lasting peace. Consequently, we encourage enhanced cooperation and engagement between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Technical Secretariat, particularly regarding the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies

that remain unresolved. In that regard, we note the expressed intention of the Director-General to deploy the Declaration Assessment Team to conduct the twenty-fifth round of consultations in Damascus, as well as the fact that the Syrian Arab Republic has indicated that the consultations can take place in October.

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

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

I would like to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her briefing today and for her important work on this file. I would like to make three points.

First and foremost, I would like to reiterate that the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time is abhorrent and unacceptable. The Security Council should be united and firm in upholding the international prohibition against such terrible weapons.

The role of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as the impartial and technical body mandated by the international community to address these weapons remains essential. The OPCW's strong professionalism, impartiality and integrity in handling the Syrian file has been clear throughout. In turn, the Council should be clear in its strong support of the OPCW and in rejecting efforts to undermine it.

Secondly, the lack of progress by Syria in addressing the serious and growing list of issues under its initial declaration remains a matter of serious concern. We welcome the ongoing efforts by the OPCW to work with Syria to address those issues. We note that Minister Mekdad has accepted the proposal by Director-General Arias to meet to look at ways to break the impasse. We note that Syria has now appointed a representative to engage on the details of the meeting. We encourage early engagement and hope that such a meeting can contribute to much-needed progress.

Unfortunately, the most recent OPCW report (S/2021/764, annex) points to a growing number of areas where Syrian actions threaten to affect the OPCW's work on the ground. They include the ongoing

substantial delays in issuing visas to OPCW staff; the further delay, until October, in the deployment of the Declaration Assessment Team to Syria, originally planned for May; and limiting the extension of the tripartite agreement to just three months.

The reported destruction of chlorine cylinders from the incident at Douma raises serious questions. Their removal to a new location, without informing the OPCW, is disturbing and symptomatic of the difficulties the OPCW faces. We strongly encourage Syria to provide the OPCW with the requested information and materials, including any remains of the cylinders.

Finally, it is only through Syria's real and meaningful cooperation with the OPCW that we can resolve these outstanding issues and be assured that its entire stocks of chemical weapons are declared and verifiably destroyed, in line with its commitments under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). That is in all of our interests, including Syria's.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mrs. Nakamitsu: I believe the representative of Mexico posed a question regarding the extension of the current tripartite agreement. I will gladly address that issue. As the Security Council knows, the current tripartite agreement is valid through the end of this month, until 30 September 2021. Towards the end of July, the three parties — the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Technical Secretariat, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Syrian Government — held a video-teleconference to discuss the further extension of the agreement.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat proposed a nine-month extension, whereas the Syrian Arab Republic proposed a three-month extension. In the end, the OPCW Technical Secretariat agreed to the three-month extension, which means that the agreement will be valid through 31 December 2021. The Technical Secretariat also conveyed to the Syrian Arab Republic that an extension of such a limited duration will have an impact on the OPCW's ability to plan and conduct the activities mandated by the OPCW's policymaking organs, especially those that have to be conducted on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The President: I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for the clarifications she has provided.

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

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate India on presiding over the Security Council last month and to express to you, Madam President, our wishes for every success in conducting the business of the Council this month.

The purpose of holding this monthly meeting is to brief the Council on the developments pertaining to the current work between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Technical Secretariat. Unfortunately, some Western States have derailed these monthly meetings and twisted them into a means of defamation against Syria through the politicization of technical issues. They have turned the meetings into a platform for questioning and misrepresenting our cooperation, as well as levelling false accusations and promoting lies against my country. The irony is that one of the States spearheading this approach — the United States of America — is the only State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention that has not met yet its Convention obligations on the destruction of its chemical-weapons arsenal.

The Syrian Arab Republic has repeatedly expressed its strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by whomever, wherever and under any circumstances. We once again reiterate that we no longer have any chemical weapons, yet we face baseless accusations of the alleged use of chemical weapons. Those accusations are, without a shred of doubt, a means of distracting the attention of the international community away from the use of such weapons by terrorist organizations that continue to be protected and sponsored.

The misleading United States statements against my country in that regard are clear evidence that the United States Administration continues the aggressive approach it took more than 10 years ago by using its various agents to wage a fierce war against the Syrian people at all levels. The use by the United States representative of the words “Syrian regime” instead of “Syrian Government” more than 10 times in a single statement today is another affirmation that the United States Administration insists on maintaining that aggressive approach.

I would like to remind the members of the Security Council that the Syrian Arab Republic voluntarily joined the Chemical Weapons Convention and destroyed, in record time, its entire chemical-weapons programme. In addition, we are keen to continue our cooperation with the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

Some exaggerate certain routine technical and procedural matters and exploit them to create false impressions. I would therefore like to highlight recent developments that Mrs. Nakamitsu did not report — developments that confirm that my country is engaged with the OPCW and is keen to cooperate with it in order to achieve the final closing of this dossier as soon as possible.

First, on 15 August, Syria submitted its ninety-third report on its activities with regard to the destruction of chemical weapons and the facilities for their production.

Secondly, the Syrian National Authority welcomes the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team, to be held in October in accordance with the commitments of both parties. In that regard, I would like to remind the Security Council that the OPCW Director-General is the one who did not wish to dispatch the Team in the summer, an issue he mentioned before the Council in his June briefing (see S/PV.8785).

Thirdly, the tripartite agreement among the Syrian National Authority, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the OPCW has been extended. Syria has emphasized working expeditiously on such activities in order to ensure that the mission can be completed as soon as possible.

Fourthly, an entry visa was granted to the chief of the OPCW office in Damascus through an accelerated procedure — the standard procedure to grant a foreign national entry to Syria for the first time usually takes longer. We would like to note that, throughout its years of working with the OPCW, Syria has not denied a single entry visa to the organization’s staff.

Fifthly, in line with Syria’s welcoming of a meeting between the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates and the OPCW Director-General in Damascus on a date convenient for the Director-General, we have notified the Technical Secretariat of the focal point who would be in charge of preparing for such a meeting.

After all those actions undertaken by the Syrian Government to cooperate with the OPCW, it is unfortunate that some question in the Council our cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, or misrepresent that cooperation through a politicized exploitation of technical and procedural matters that are not out of the ordinary.

It is evident that the Fact-Finding Mission's investigations into the alleged Douma incident have used erroneous methods of work, as the Mission has not adhered to the standard procedures pursuant to the Convention. That includes, for example, overlooking the methodology provided for in the verification annex, as well as the means for collecting evidence and samples and the rules for ensuring the chain of custody, as the Mission relies on open sources and information provided by terrorist organizations and their affiliates, such as the White Helmets.

How can we be asked to believe that there is credibility and professionalism by the Fact-Finding Mission team while, to date, it has not issued reports on five investigations into incidents reported by the Syrian Arab Republic five years ago? For five years, the Fact-Finding Mission has not issued reports on those incidents, whereas it issued reports on alleged incidents by the armed terrorist group that took place years after the incidents to which I just referred.

The destruction of the two cylinders related to that alleged incident as a result of a brutal Israeli attack on the site where they were stored on 8 June, which should clearly be condemned by the Security Council, has been used by some countries as a means to focus on only procedural matters, in complete disregard for the condemnation of that perfidious aggression. That is a continuation of the approach by those countries to turn a blind eye to the State terrorism practised by the Israeli occupation authorities, which, as Council members all know, still refuse to join the Chemical Weapons Convention and still possess a huge arsenal of other weapons of mass destruction that threatens peace and security in the Middle East. We hoped that Mrs. Nakamitsu would have been honest in her briefing and speak in full about what Syria reported, namely, the aggression by Israel. She should not have been selective and said that Syria had reported an attack only.

My delegation previously made clear that the Syrian National Authority is fully committed to implementing the Technical Secretariat's request regarding those two

cylinders and that it would not transfer them outside the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, as they are material and legal evidence, while taking into account the fact that the organization had previously caused damage to a number of samples that served as physical evidence because they were not handled with the required professionalism.

In conclusion, all the unprecedented measures in addressing the Syrian chemical file, resorting to manipulating the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and establishing illegal mechanisms that go beyond the obligations of the States parties to the Convention and imposing their funding from the regular budget, in addition to ignoring all the cooperation of Syria and progress made to date, as well as setting unworkable conditions to achieve the suspension of Syria's rights and privileges in the organization, clearly prove the flagrant politicization of this file. This also proves the lack of credibility of the organization's reports and the lack of objectivity and professionalism of its work.

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

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Madam President, on presiding over the Security Council this month.

We reiterate our full support for the Chemical Weapons Convention and the promotion of its authority. As an advocate party to the Convention, Iran will spare no efforts for the realization of the objectives of that vital instrument. To that end, we also attach great importance to, and call for, the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of, the Convention.

We also strongly call for the Convention's universality. To achieve that noble objective, the Israeli regime must be compelled to join the Convention without any precondition or further delay.

As a major victim in contemporary history of the most systematic use of chemical weapons, Iran strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances.

As an active member of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Islamic Republic of Iran also underlines the fundamental importance of ensuring independent, impartial and professional work by the OPCW. That is of the outmost importance, especially with respect to the issues related

to the implementation of the obligations by States parties, including the Syrian Arab Republic.

Once again, we acknowledge the vital importance of the efforts of the Syrian Government in implementing its obligations under the Convention. The complete destruction of its chemical weapons programme in the least possible time and under severe conditions proves the importance of such efforts by the Syrian Government. We welcome the recent submission by Syria of its ninety-third monthly report on its activities related to the destruction of chemical weapons and their production facilities. We also positively note the ongoing preparations for the meeting of the OPCW Director-General and the Syrian Foreign Minister, as well as for the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team.

It is extremely disappointing that the Syrian chemical file has been politicized by a certain group of countries. That trend, which has undermined the Convention's authority and the OPCW's credibility, must stop. That is in the interests of the Convention, the OPCW, the rule of law and the maintenance of international peace and security.

Supporting the new approach of the OPCW and Syria to conducting high-level dialogue, we encourage both sides to engage constructively in that process, and we hope that such an initiative will yield positive results.

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

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Madam President, on Ireland's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for September, and I wish you every success. I also commend India for a successful presidency last month, and I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

As expected, the most recent monthly report (S/2021/764, annex) 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 OPCW therefore cannot confirm whether that declaration is accurate and complete.

The increasing number of outstanding issues is a matter of great concern to us. The presence of an undeclared chemical weapons production facility is

a case in point. The regime still fails to declare the chemical warfare agents produced and/or weaponized at that site, in violation of its obligations.

Equally worrisome is the revelation that the Al-Assad regime had moved two chlorine cylinders related to the Douma chemical attack. This happened despite the warnings from the OPCW Technical Secretariat and without its consent, let alone prior knowledge.

That is another stark example of the Al-Assad regime's non-compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The regime must be urged to provide all relevant information with regard to the movement of the two cylinders and any remains that exist following their destruction. For that to happen, the unity of the Security Council is indispensable.

Turkey has supported the efforts within the OPCW aimed at bringing the regime to compliance by co-sponsoring the OPCW Executive Council decision of July 2020 and the decision adopted during the second part of the twenty-fifth session of Conference of State Parties in April. Such measures, supported by the overwhelming majority of States parties, are vitally important to ensuring 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, with the two reports of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), it has now been proven that the regime is responsible for at least eight chemical-weapons attacks. We strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons by the regime.

The IIT plays a critical role in identifying the perpetrators of chemical-weapons use. The regime must be compelled to cooperate with the IIT for its operations in Syria, including by issuing visas and granting access to confidential information relating to its military chemical programme. The regime must also fulfil its obligations to issue a visa for the new OPCW team leader to be deployed in Damascus.

Turkey regrets attempts that question the objectivity of the work carried out by the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its investigative bodies. We reiterate our support for the independence, professionalism and impartiality of the Technical Secretariat.

The appropriate response to the regime's brazen violations of international law cannot and should not

be the ongoing inaction at the Security Council. The regime's war crimes and crimes against humanity require immediate steps towards full accountability. We owe this to the victims of the Ghouta attack, whose eighth anniversary we marked last month. We have to take action to honour the innocent victims of all chemical attacks.

We strongly condemn the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime in Ghouta and elsewhere. Ending impunity is a pressing task for the international community, especially for the Security Council, in order to achieve peace in Syria.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.