



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

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Monday, 28 February 2022, 10.45 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Polyanskiy/Mr. Kirpichenko	(Russian Federation)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Xing Jisheng
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Gabon	Ms. Bongo
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mr. Mathur
	Ireland	Mr. Gallagher
	Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
	Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 31 January 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/76)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 31 January 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/76)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): 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/2022/76, which contains the text of a letter dated 31 January 2022 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.

Since my previous briefing, on 5 January (see S/PV.8943), the Office for Disarmament Affairs has continued to maintain regular contact with counterparts at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter. Per established practice, I held a monthly call with the OPCW Director-General on 24 February to receive an update on developments and ascertain in his views.

As I previously informed the Council, the OPCW Technical Secretariat's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic remains subject to the evolution of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Despite continued travel restrictions, the Technical Secretariat continues to undertake its mandated activities related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons

programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic to that end.

The OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) is continuing with its ongoing efforts to clarify all the outstanding issues related to the initial and subsequent declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not yet received the requested declaration from the Syrian Arab Republic on all undeclared types and quantities of nerve agents produced and/or weaponized at one former chemical weapons production facility that was declared by the Syrian Arab Republic as never having been used to produce and/or weaponize chemical warfare agents.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat also expects to receive further information and documentation from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the damage caused during an attack on 8 June 2021 to a military facility that housed a declared former chemical weapons production facility.

In that context, I have also been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not yet received information from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the unauthorized movement and remains of two destroyed cylinders related to the chemical weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018. I urge the Syrian Arab Republic to respond to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's requests as soon as possible.

It is my understanding that, for almost 10 months, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has attempted to schedule with the Syrian National Authority the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the DAT in Damascus. However, I regret to inform Council members that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not been in a position to conduct that deployment due to the continued refusal by the Syrian Arab Republic to issue an entry visa for one member of the DAT. I have been informed that the OPCW Technical Secretariat stands ready to deploy the DAT to the Syrian Arab Republic subject to the issuing of visas to all DAT members, as well as the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

I reiterate my call to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate arrangements for the deployment of the DAT as soon as possible. As has been stressed on numerous occasions, it is only through complete cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat that all outstanding issues related to the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration can be closed. The confidence of the international community in the complete elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme depends upon those issues being finalized.

I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is planning to conduct the next rounds of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in the course of 2022. Regarding the detection of a Schedule 2 chemical at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC in November 2018, I regret to inform the Council 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 note that preparations for the in-person meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic remain ongoing. The Technical Secretariat will keep the OPCW Executive Council informed of further developments on that matter.

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 analyse the information collected from recent activities. Furthermore, the FFM is preparing for upcoming deployments, which remain subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 24 January 2022, the OPCW Technical Secretariat issued the report of the FFM in Syria regarding the incidents of the alleged use of chemicals as a weapon in Marea on 1 and 3 September 2015 (S/2022/85, annex). The FFM report concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that, on 1 September 2015, in Marea, a vesicant chemical substance from Schedule 1.A.04 of the Chemical Weapons Convention was used as a weapon. With regard to the incident that took place in Marea on 3 September 2015, the FFM report states that the results of analysis of all available data obtained up until the issuance of the report did not

allow the FFM to establish whether or not chemicals were used as a weapon.

On 31 January 2022, the OPCW Technical Secretariat issued the report of the FFM regarding the incident of the alleged use of chemicals as a weapon in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016 (S/2022/116, annex). According to the report, the incident involved two barrels containing toxic gas near a field hospital. The FFM obtained one of the industrial chlorine cylinders retrieved from the incident location in Kafr Zeita. The FFM report concluded that there are

“reasonable grounds to believe that the chlorine cylinder was used as a weapon. The cylinder ruptured as a result of mechanical force and released a toxic irritant substance that affects the respiratory system and mucous membranes”.

A copy of both FFM reports was shared with the members of the Security Council on 1 and 15 February 2022.

I understand that the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues 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 my full support once again for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of the work of the OPCW.

On the decision entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic”, (C-25/DEC.9), adopted on 21 April 2021, I have been informed that, unfortunately, the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet completed any of the measures stipulated in paragraph 5 of decision EC94/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 unacceptable, and the absence of accountability for the past use of such weapons remains a blight on the conscience of the international community. Impunity for the use of those weapons is intolerable. As the body with the primary responsibility for international peace and security, unity in the Security Council continues to be necessary if those identified as responsible for the use of chemical weapons are to be held to account. Such profound

violations of international law cannot continue to go unaddressed and unresolved.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

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

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Yet again, through reports by experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), we are presented, with more incontrovertible evidence that chemical weapons were used in Syria. Those reports are of course alarming. They capture the true human tragedy underlying those horrific acts. Many witnesses interviewed by OPCW experts were poisoned by direct exposure to chemical weapons; others were exposed while caring for the injured. It is difficult to comprehend the terror that they must have experienced — terror that the Al-Assad regime and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) clearly intended to cause by deploying those illegal and immoral weapons throughout the conflict.

Per its mandate, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission did not, in those two reports, identify the perpetrators of those chemical weapons attacks. This is a task that falls within the purview of the OPCW attribution mechanism, the Investigation and Identification Team. We expect that the Investigation and Identification Team will seize itself of this matter and carry out the follow-up attribution work with the same independence and professionalism that it, as well as the Fact-Finding Mission, have demonstrated throughout their mandates.

In the meantime, however, based on the chemicals identified by the Fact-Finding Mission and previous incident reports from both the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Investigation and Identification Team, we can infer who is responsible.

In Marea, the Fact-Finding Mission concluded that sulfur mustard was used. This chemical was previously independently identified by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism as having been used by ISIS a couple weeks prior, also in Marea.

In Kafr Zeita, the Fact-Finding Mission concluded that a chlorine barrel bomb was used. Both the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the Investigation and Identification Team have attributed other aerial chlorine

barrel bomb attacks to the Al-Assad regime, the only party to the Syrian conflict known to have access to air assets.

These reports describe careful interviews with dozens of witnesses who provided detailed and consistent accounts of the incidents — accounts that were subsequently corroborated by physical evidence and scientific analysis, including X-rays, mechanical engineering analysis, ballistics, metallurgy tests and meteorological modelling.

The proficiency, impartiality, and thoroughness demonstrated in those reports dispels any misguided suggestions that the OPCW staff, be it the Fact-Finding Mission, the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team or the Investigation and Identification Team, somehow lack the professionalism, expertise or integrity to carry out credible work or are in any way biased towards a particular party to the conflict.

The United States sees attempts by the Al-Assad regime and its allies to impugn the integrity and capability of the OPCW and its staff as part of a deliberate — and, frankly, desperate — campaign to distract us from the human tragedy the Al-Assad regime has caused and from the fact that it has flouted its obligations under both the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). Indeed, the disinformation narratives issued by Russia are but a continuing disturbingly misguided effort to shield a regime that has used weapons of mass destruction against its people. But as we have said before, no amount of disinformation espoused by Syria or its Russian enablers can negate or diminish the credibility of the substantial body of evidence that has been presented to the Council by the OPCW.

Unfortunately, as the latest report of the OPCW Director-General (see S/2022/76) highlights, the strategy of systematic obstruction and obfuscation under the guise of cursory cooperation executed by the regime and its enablers continues to this day. In fact, it intensifies. The latest Director-General's report notes that the Syrian regime continues to fail to turn over evidence to corroborate its claim that two chlorine cylinders related to the April 2018 chemical weapons attack in Douma were destroyed in a June 2021 attack and air strike. Neither has the regime provided any explanation why those chlorine cylinders were moved from their previous location to the site of the air strike, despite explicit instructions from the OPCW Technical

Secretariat not to move or alter the containers without consent of the OPCW. The report also notes the regime has yet to issue visas to the entire Declaration Assessment Team, delaying the holding of the twenty-fifth meeting between the Declaration Assessment Team and the regime by nine months and counting.

In conclusion, we again call on Syria to comply with its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013), to cease obstructing the work of the OPCW and to end its continued assault on the Syrian people. And we call on our fellow Security Council members to stand united against Syria's chemical-weapons use.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu on her briefing on the recent progress in shedding light on the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical-weapons programme.

Brazil firmly supports the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to prevent the use of chemical weapons, which is unacceptable under any circumstances, from ever happening again. I take this opportunity to make three comments.

First, we appreciate the efforts of the Fact-Finding Mission in investigating incidents such as that at Kafr Zeita, which occurred in October 2016. While the use of chemical weapons in Syria has been proven beyond a doubt, the commitment to international humanitarian law and respect for the victims require impartial investigation and comprehensive documentation of similar episodes.

Secondly, Brazil encourages Syria to collaborate with the OPCW and facilitate access for technical teams to its territory. That includes responding promptly to requests for information and issuing visas to technical team members. We believe that ensuring free access of the OPCW is a condition for the speedy closure of this dossier.

Finally, Brazil attaches great importance to the confidence-building measures between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic. The proposed meeting between the Director-General of the OPCW and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria is a step in that direction, as is the extension of the tripartite agreement among the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services.

Brazil reiterates its support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. We reject

military solutions to the Syrian conflict and favour comprehensive political dialogue between all Syrian political forces. The success of the political process, however, depends on constructive engagement with the international community, which includes active collaboration with the OPCW.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament, for her briefing on the progress towards the full elimination of the Syrian chemical-weapons programme.

Let me first underline Norway's steadfast confidence in Director-General Arias and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We firmly reject any efforts to discredit their important work.

Since our most recent meeting on this issue (see S/PV.8943), the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) has published two reports on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The first report (S/2022/85, annex) investigates incidents in Marea in September 2015. The FFM concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that, on 1 September 2015 in Marea, a vesicant chemical substance was used as a weapon. The second report (S/2022/116, annex) investigates an incident in Kafr Zeita in October 2016, concluding that there are reasonable grounds to believe that an industrial chlorine cylinder was used as a weapon.

The report of the Fact-Finding Mission reflects a rigorous, evidence-based analysis. We applaud the FFM for the undertaking of collecting, comparing and scrutinizing evidence amid the challenges posed by the global pandemic. Norway strongly condemns the use of a chemical weapon in Marea and in Kafr Zeita, just as we condemn any use of chemical weapons under any circumstances by anyone. Accountability for those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be ensured.

Turning now to the monthly report, February marks one year since the last round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian authorities. That has been followed by months of persistent delays to the issuance of visas despite successful deployments by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission and Technical Secretariat to Syria in December last year. The situation is simply untenable. We would like to underline Syria's obligation to cooperate fully with the OPCW, including the DAT.

Resolution 2118 (2013) explicitly mentions Syria's obligation to accept personnel designated by the OPCW and provide that personnel with immediate and unfettered access to, and the right to inspect, any and all sites.

Let me conclude by reiterating that 20 outstanding issues from Syria's initial declaration remain unresolved. We urge Syria to provide sufficient technical information and explanations to close those outstanding issues. Similarly, we urge Syria to complete the necessary measures to lift the suspension of its rights and privileges as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Gallagher (Ireland): Let me thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her informative briefing today.

I would like to begin by reiterating Ireland's condemnation of any use of chemical weapons in the strongest possible terms. Any use of chemical weapons is an affront to international law, on which we all depend for our security and well-being.

I wish to thank the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for its work in addressing chemical weapons in Syria. Since the beginning of the year, we have seen two further reports by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria into chemical weapons use in Marea in September 2015 and in Kafr Zeita in October 2016 S/2022/85, annex and S/2022/116, annex, respectively. We have also seen the 100th and 101st monthly reports of Director-General Arias to the Security Council. Those reports and the work behind them demonstrate the integrity, professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW in its work in Syria.

The OPCW's role remains essential. The Security Council should be clear in its full support for the OPCW in its ongoing work in Syria and in rejecting efforts to undermine the OPCW.

These Security Council meetings serve an important purpose: to hold Syria to its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and Council resolutions.

Let us recall that, in 2013, the Council adopted resolution 2118 (2013) in response to the deaths of hundreds of Syrians from chemical weapons in Ghouta. That resolution set out a very clear bottom line: no party, whether it be the Syrian authorities or non-State

actors, can be allowed to develop, produce, acquire, stockpile, retain, transfer or use chemical weapons; and Syria's chemical weapons programme must be verifiably destroyed, to be confirmed by the OPCW.

Since then, however, and despite Syria's accession to the CWC, the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian authorities has been clearly proved in numerous incidents by the United Nations and the OPCW.

Equally, it has not been possible for the OPCW to determine that Syria's initial declaration under the Chemical Weapons Convention is correct or complete. That is due to numerous ongoing and substantial gaps and inconsistencies relating to the entire production facilities, stockpiles of munitions and agents and research and development activities left undeclared. Based solely on the findings of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), Syria has amended its initial declaration 17 times since October 2013.

The Technical Secretariat has made clear the concrete actions necessary to resolve those outstanding issues. It is for Syria to implement such actions and provide the necessary clarity on all outstanding matters.

An important start would be for Syria to stop blocking the DAT's deployment to Syria for the twenty-fifth round of consultations, now outstanding since April of last year.

A resolution to this file is entirely in Syria's hands, should it engage in serious and meaningful cooperation with the OPCW. That can provide assurance for all of us that Syria's entire stocks of chemical weapons are declared and verifiably destroyed, in line with its obligations.

We remain hopeful that the proposed meeting between Director General Arias and Foreign Minister Mekdad can finally be arranged and that Syria will engage genuinely with the Technical Secretariat to agree the arrangements for the meeting soon. It is essential that the meeting focus on achieving concrete outcomes. It is important that Syria's engagement take the form of productive actions — not merely words and delays. Ireland will continue to support all efforts to resolve outstanding issues on this file.

Mr. Xing Jisheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing.

China has taken note of the monthly report on chemical weapons in Syria submitted by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2022/76), as well as the two recent reports submitted by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM).

The investigation and handling of the alleged use of chemical weapons must strictly follow the requirements of the Chemical Weapons Convention, respect science and facts and ensure compliance with procedures, reliable evidence and credible conclusions. There remain many doubts regarding the sources of information, the working methods and the completion of the chain of evidence of the FFM Douma report. So far, they are yet to be clarified. That will invariably affect the credibility of the work of the FFM.

China calls for upholding the technical attributes of the OPCW and avoiding the politicization of its work. In recent years, some countries have repeatedly pushed for a vote, which seriously undermined the authority and effectiveness of the OPCW. China calls on the Director-General to play an active role in promoting dialogue among States parties, in returning to the tradition of taking decisions by consensus and in avoiding going further down the road of disagreement. The OPCW should not be used as a tool for pursuing geopolitical goals.

Syria has repeatedly expressed its willingness to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat, and its constructive attitude deserves recognition. The Technical Secretariat should take an equally constructive approach and be flexible regarding some of the details. We hope that the two sides will hold the twenty-fifth round of technical consultations as soon as possible to promote the settlement of outstanding issues and maintain communication on issues such as the inspections of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre and the in-person meeting between the Director-General and the Syrian Foreign Minister. Since 2017, the Syrian Government has repeatedly provided the Technical Secretariat with information on the possession and use of chemical weapons by terrorist groups. That merits the attention of the Secretariat.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that, with the Council's limited resources and busy schedule, China strongly suggests reducing the frequency of the consideration of Syrian issues or considering combining them for joint consideration. That will not only help

deal with Syrian issues from a holistic perspective, but also improve the efficiency of the Council.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Kenya and my own country, Ghana (A3). Our decision to deliver a joint statement today flows from our shared commitment to upholding the well-established and internationally accepted norms against the use of chemical weapons and to supporting efforts geared towards their complete elimination.

We extend our appreciation to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her comprehensive briefing. Let me also welcome the participation of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey.

The A3 acknowledges the role of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as the key implementing agency for the Chemical Weapons Convention and commends its efforts to complement and strengthen our work in the maintenance of international peace and security.

We welcome the centennial monthly report of the OPCW (S/2022/76, annex), which outlines the activities undertaken during the period of 24 December 2021 to 23 January 2022 to implement Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and the relevant decisions of the OPCW Executive Council relating to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

With nearly all of its members being State parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the African continent can be counted upon as a reliable partner in the global efforts against the use of chemical weapons in Africa or anywhere else in the world. Chemical weapons use constitutes a grave violation of international law and puts at risk the peace, security and stability that we work hard to obtain. The A3 therefore reiterates Africa's strongly held position against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances.

We further reiterate our firm condemnation of the use of chemical weapons in the name of counter-terrorism.

The A3 is concerned about the gaps and inconsistencies that remain in Syria's initial and subsequent submissions on its weapons stockpile and

urges the Syrian authorities and the OPCW to work together to resolve all outstanding issues and questions, especially those related to Syria's initial declaration, that remain unresolved eight years after the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme.

We take note of work of the Technical Secretariat in Syria and the difficult circumstances imposed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, and encourage the constructive cooperation of the Syrian Arab Republic and all other parties playing an important role in facilitating the effective discharge of the Secretariat's mandate.

We also take note of the activities of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and call upon the Syrian Arab Republic to grant unfettered access into Syria for all members of the team.

Regarding the issue of visas, we encourage the Technical Secretariat to explore alternative approaches to carrying out its verification and assessment mandate. This could include the replacement of the team member to whom access has been withheld or the remote participation of that member in the work of the team. This, we hope, would remove the obstacles to the holding of the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority and pave the way for verification and assessments in line with the Convention and relevant Executive Council decisions.

We would like to see progress on the subsequent rounds of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre and urge the Syrian authorities to be more cooperative on the conclusion of this issue.

The A3 looks forward to substantive progress being made towards the holding of the meeting between Foreign Minister Fayssal Mekdad and the Director General of the OPCW, as we believe that such engagement would be useful for building trust.

The A3 supports accountability mechanisms for chemical weapons use. To this end, the work of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team remain pivotal. We encourage the two bodies to carry out their mandate independently and with transparency.

We acknowledge the FFM report of 24 January regarding incidents of alleged use of chemical weapons in Marea on 1 and 3 September 2015, as well as the

report of 31 January, on incidents that allegedly occurred in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016 (S/2022/85, annex and S/2022/116, annex, respectively).

Finally, it is our belief that the expeditious closure of investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria will allow the Security Council to support the Syrian people more meaningfully in their quest for a comprehensive and lasting peace.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing.

We reaffirm the principled position of the United Arab Emirates rejecting and explicitly condemning the use of chemical weapons under any circumstances, by anyone and anywhere. Their use constitutes a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law and a grave threat to international peace and security.

Making tangible progress on the chemical weapons dossier requires, in principle, engagement in a constructive dialogue between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian Arab Republic. We believe that this dialogue should focus on discussing and identifying areas of cooperation for achieving that progress.

Within the framework of the current membership of the United Arab Emirates on the OPCW Executive Council and its support for the work and objectives of the Organization, we have taken note of the reports of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria on incidents related to the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. It is worth noting the efforts of the Fact-Finding Mission in collecting and analysing information to make progress on this dossier. We also note the importance of continuously ensuring that the Mission's reports are based primarily on information collected from scientific evidence and personal interviews.

Considering the horrific consequences of the use of chemical weapons, we reiterate the need to totally eliminate such weapons and prevent anyone from acquiring, using or developing them, in particular terrorist groups and armed militias, such as the terrorist Da'esh organization, which continues to launch terrorist attacks in Syria, as happened recently at Al-Sina'a prison in Al-Hasakah. We underscore that access by terrorists to these weapons constitutes a grave threat to international peace and security.

In conclusion, we emphasize the importance of eliminating chemical weapons from Syria's territories in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013).

Mr. Hoxha (Albania) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

We have just heard once again, unfortunately and not surprisingly, the overwhelming evidence of a deliberate lack of cooperation on the part of Syria to respond to the clear requests in resolution 2118 (2013).

We commend the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its Technical Secretariat to shed light on the irrefutable use of chemical and biological weapons in Syria. Paragraph 7 of the resolution requires Syria to accept personnel designated by the OPCW by providing immediate and unfettered access necessary for carrying out their duties. That is not the case and we regret that.

To date and following the numerous reports — the current one is the hundredth — there is no reason to believe that Syria's chemical weapons programme has been destroyed. The briefing that we have just heard this morning reinforces the certainty that the chemical weapons and their components in Syria have not been placed under international control.

The most recent OPCW report (S/2022/76, annex) continues to assess that, at this stage, owing to identified gaps, inconsistencies and unresolved discrepancies — precisely the same ones that were clearly indicated before, which I will not quote, as the report is clear on that — the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic on 17 January cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We are waiting for the planned meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates to take place as soon as possible. If we must wait months for such a meeting take place, what does that say about everything else? We demand the full and unconditional cooperation of the Syrian authorities with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and reject any effort to discredit or politicize its work. Syria does not have the right to decide on the rules of procedure and is not entitled to decide on the selection of inspectors.

Albania reiterates its strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor under any circumstances and believes that the Security Council

must maintain its strong and clear message on upholding the international ban on chemical weapons. We remain convinced that the early conclusion of the investigations into the use of chemical weapons in Syria will enable the Council to more effectively support the Syrian people in their quest for a peaceful and better future.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me thank Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu for her briefing, and Director-General Arias for his continued thorough reporting.

Within the past month, the Fact-Finding Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has issued two reports finding that there are reasonable grounds to believe that chemical weapons were used in Marea in September 2015 and Kafr Zeita in October 2016 (S/2022/85, annex, and S/2022/116, annex, respectively). Both incidents are cause for concern, indicating further use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict. We welcome the OPCW Technical Secretariat's professionalism and impartiality in compiling the reports, in which we have full confidence.

The United Kingdom opposes the use of chemical weapons in all circumstances by all actors. There can be no impunity for those who use chemical weapons. We will continue to work with the international community to hold perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks to account. Syria continues to fail to engage with efforts to resolve the many serious gaps and omissions in its chemical weapons declaration. Its defiant attitude shows its contempt for its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013).

Disinformation about chemical weapons is worryingly familiar, coming not only from the Al-Assad regime but from its backers on the Security Council. We have recently seen fake claims by the Russian Federation about impending chemical weapons attacks in Ukraine. Claims of imminent attacks by groups labelled as terrorists or saboteurs are put forward without any credible evidence, undoubtedly as part of the pretext for an invasion that the Russian Federation told us in the Council would never happen.

Russia has repeatedly alleged that the West supports false-flag attacks to frame Syria — charges that are never backed by evidence. Russia also claims that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is biased, once again presenting no plausible evidence. Russia's tactic is designed to deflect attention from those who

actually use chemical weapons. So far, eight separate attacks in Syria have been attributed to the Al-Assad regime by independent expert investigations run by the OPCW and the United Nations. Further attacks remain under investigation.

Let me conclude by reminding you, Mr. President, and the Council that any use of chemical weapons by anyone is abhorrent and cannot be tolerated

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Nakamitsu, for her briefing. I also welcome the delegations of Turkey, Syria and Iran.

Once again, we are faced with a lack of tangible progress on the Syrian chemical weapons dossier, including various obstacles such as the denial of visas to experts of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). The reasons for the unauthorized movement of the two chlorine cylinders related to the April 2018 Douma incident have also not been clarified. We stress the call on the Syrian authorities to cooperate constructively with the Declaration Assessment Team.

In that regard, the meeting between Director-General Arias and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria, which we hope will take place soon, will be a positive step towards strengthening collaboration between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian authorities. We reiterate our confidence in the professionalism of the OPCW investigation teams. Accordingly, we take note of the reports that have already been published by the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) — previously mentioned here in the Chamber — in relation to the incidents in Marea, in September 2015 and Kafr Zeita in October 2016 (S/2022/85, annex and S/2022/116, annex, respectively).

Concerning the attacks in Marea, the FFM determined that there are reasonable grounds to believe that sulfur mustard was used as a weapon. As in the previous incident, the Mission's investigation determined that there are reasonable grounds to believe that chlorine was used as a weapon in Kafr Zeita.

Both incidents constitute a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international humanitarian law. Those responsible for such crimes must be brought to justice. In the light of the failure of the Security Council to refer the Syrian dossier to the International Criminal Court, cooperation with the International,

Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 is more imperative than ever. Mexico once again urges Member States to cooperate with the work of the OPCW and promote the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions to end the conflict.

I conclude by noting that, in view of the resurgence of terrorist cells in Syria, the possibility that those organizations may be able to procure chemical materials and weapons is of great concern. We underline the importance of fully implementing resolution 1540 (2004) and other mechanisms to that end.

Mr. Mathur (India): We would like to thank 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 two reports by Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2021/1103 and S/2022/76) submitted to the Security Council pursuant to resolution 2118 (2013), as well as the reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission on the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria in 2015 and 2016 (S/2022/85, annex and S/2022/116, annex, respectively). We have also noted the two latest submissions made by Syrian Arab Republic detailing measures undertaken to implement its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Furthermore, we note the Technical Secretariat's proposal for holding the next round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre and urge that they be held at an early date. We encourage continued engagement between Syria and the OPCW Technical Secretariat to resolve their differences as soon as possible.

India's position on issues related to Syria acceding to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is well known. It is our principled stand that the CWC is a unique, non-discriminatory disarmament instrument for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. India attaches high importance to the CWC and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. We support the collective efforts made by all the parties to ensure that the credibility and integrity of the Convention is maintained to the fullest.

India is against the use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. India has consistently maintained that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, credible and objective. Such an investigation should follow scrupulously the provisions and procedures embedded in the Convention and be in conformity with the delicate balance of power and responsibility enshrined under it to establish facts and reach evidence-based conclusions.

India has also repeatedly cautioned against the possibility of terrorist entities and individuals gaining access to chemical weapons, including in the region. The reports of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have also referred to the repeated deployment of chemical weapons by United Nations-proscribed terrorist groups and those affiliated with ISIL against civilian populations between 2014 and 2016. ISIL and Da'esh should remain active in Syria and Iraq, where the group is seeking to rebuild its capabilities. Therefore, allegations of the use of chemical weapons need to be addressed with the utmost attention.

India continues to believe that progress on other tracks — the political track and the humanitarian track — would help with potential forward movement in respect of the political process in Syria, as advocated by resolution 2254 (2015).

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to begin by thanking Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing and by commending the vital work of the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

The publication of a report of the Fact-Finding Mission, led by the OPCW in Syria, again contains information on an incident that took place in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016 (S/2022/116, annex). Despite the challenges faced, it is a comprehensive and high-quality report. It concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that a chlorine cylinder was used as a weapon on Syrian territory. Those findings are extremely disturbing.

The Syrian regime must cooperate with OPCW teams and shed full light on its chemical arsenal. Instead, it hinders the full implementation of OPCW team mandates. We are still awaiting the initial deployment

of the Declaration Assessment Team. To that end, cooperation at the most basic level is needed to issue the necessary visas. However, such cooperation does not exist. It is very clear that efforts are intentionally being thwarted. The Council must not remain silent on the issue.

The position of the Syrian regime is at complete variance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution of 2118 (2013). The regime must fulfil those obligations and cooperate. Failing that, its rights and privileges at the OPCW will not be restored. We are waiting on the regime to demonstrate goodwill. It must be held accountable for its behaviour, including before courts.

I would like to recall that combating impunity and ensuring a total ban on the use of chemical weapons remain our priorities. That is the foundation for an effective and credible prohibition regime. It is also one of necessary pillars for lasting peace in Syria.

France remains fully mobilized with its partners to address the threat posed by chemical weapons to our collective security. That is the reason we continue to support the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which we launched with our partners in 2018.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We would like to thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. We were eager to see the report from the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Mr. Fernando Arias, during today's meeting.

Since his previous briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.8785), approximately eight months ago, Mr. Arias was re-elected for a second term. We expected to hear his plans to address the dire situation at the OPCW caused by the politicization of its work. We extended an invitation to him, but Mr. Arias declined to participate in today's meeting as he was too busy. We very much regret the fact that the OPCW Director-General was unable to find time in his schedule for a briefing to the Council. This is the second time that that has happened. The same occurred in May last year.

At the same time, what is most surprising is that, when it pertains to statements on other platforms and various forums, Mr. Arias can find the time to attend.

For example, on 22 February, he participated in a seminar organized by the Arms Control Association in Washington, D.C., during which he saw fit to deliver an openly politicized assessment. However, he preferred not to answer our comprehensive questions.

Mr. Arias also opened a meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism on 22 February, as part of the ninety-ninth session of the Executive Council of the OPCW. We also realized that the note distributed on the day before the event on the contribution of the OPCW to the global counter-terrorism efforts, under his authorship, once again, for some reason, made no mention of the fact that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) has a full-fledged chemical weapons programme, according to the conclusions of the seventh report of the Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (see S/2021/974).

It is quite difficult for us to understand why, time and again, such an important aspect is not the focus of the OPCW's attention. The Technical Secretariat has been in possession of that information since September 2021, but no mention of it was made in the note I mentioned or during the meeting of the governing body of the organization. That information was not provided to Member States. Yet the threat of the use of chemical weapons by terrorists continues. As recently as 26 February, the Russian Ministry of Defence announced that fighters from Jabhat Al-Nusra in Idlib were to receive containers containing toxins, in all likelihood chlorine. Due to careless handling during their transport, one of the cylinders was badly damaged. As a result, approximately 10 terrorists received chemical burns on their skin and respiratory tracts.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat has little hope. We need only to think of the infamous report of the Fact-Finding Mission on alleged chemical weapons' use in Syria, which recounts the incident that took place in Douma in 2018. Its conclusions were edited with an anti-Syrian bias, as compared with the initial version, following pressure from some. That was confirmed by various sources, including former OPCW inspectors who were part of the investigation team. It was quite simply a sham. However, despite calls from States Members of the United Nations and the broader international community, addressing those issues is not on the agenda of the Technical Secretariat.

In the same vein, we highlight the work of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), whose establishment was railroaded through the OPCW Executive Council, in violation of the principle of consensus and article XV of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Its products and outcomes are baseless. It is technically illiterate, not to mention factually unverified and politically biased. IIT methodology, as with that of the Fact-Finding Mission, violates the Convention and the principles for conducting investigations, primarily with regard to ensuring the chain of custody.

Investigations conducted much later, by definition, cannot be accurate. It is very difficult to establish a chain of events several years later. Furthermore, it is practically impossible to conduct investigations remotely based on testimonies from vague sources. We also believe that the goal of the IIT's work is not to establish a true picture of events but to bend its content to fit the conclusion that Damascus is guilty — that is, to fulfil a political agenda. Therefore, we dismiss its findings — those in existing IIT reports and in its future products.

The biased findings of the IIT were the basis for the punitive decision to strip Syria of its rights on fictitious grounds. That is the first time that such a step was taken concerning a sovereign State that believed it was in compliance with the Convention. The decision, made by the Conference of the States Parties, was forced through by Western delegations, in violation of CWC standards and the principle of consensus. Nevertheless, the Syrian Government has not refused to engage in dialogue with the OPCW. However, the policy of double standards at the Technical Secretariat is also manifest in the closure of the remaining issues related to Syria's initial declaration. Damascus has fulfilled, in good faith, all of its obligations by acceding to the CWC in extremely difficult circumstances due to military and political instability and an externally-fuelled terrorist threat.

Nevertheless, it is subject to unjustifiably harsh requirements and there has been an artificial frenzy stoked around that subject. We have no other explanation for the repetition in the latest report of the Director General of the OPCW (S/2022/76, annex) on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) of the same elements that we have seen before and that still do not hold water. Perhaps Mr. Arias could provide some clarification, but it seems he prefers

not to come to the Security Council, thereby running the risk of undermining not only his own reputation but the authority of the OPCW itself, one of the most important pillars of the weapons of mass destruction non-proliferation regime.

In conclusion, I would also like to note the need to reduce the number of meetings that the Security Council holds on Syria. We hope that we will soon be able to return to that issue.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Two days ago, the Security Council reaffirmed its commitment to resolution 1540 (2004), which seeks to prevent non-State groups from possessing weapons of mass destruction and their means of production and delivery, including chemical weapons (see S/PV.8977). My country fully supports that commitment to putting an end to the possession and use of chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction by terrorist organizations, and hopes that the resolution will be implemented more effectively.

In that connection, I note that my delegation has always provided information to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and to the Secretariat on the possession and use of chemical material by terrorist organizations, as well as on fabricated chemical incidents in Syria, including information on the terrorist Al-Nusra Front, which possesses toxic chemical material and rockets that have been modified with these toxic chemical agents in Idlib governorate. The aim is to fabricate a chemical incident while accusing the Syrian Arab Army and its allies of perpetrating it. That is based on directives from foreign intelligence agencies. Numerous terrorists from the Al-Nusra Front have been burned and suffocated recently when they had to carry containers which include toxic chemical agents in Idlib governorate.

My delegation listened carefully to the briefing by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. Regrettably, she continues to make incomplete presentations that provide a one-sided version of recent developments, including the fact that she ignored the cooperation of Syrian authorities with the technical teams of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the facilities granted to

them. She also failed to mention important information provided by us.

Syria has maintained its cooperation with the OPCW. We have presented our ninety-eighth report on activities regarding the destruction of chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities on Syrian territories. We also continue to prepare for the holding of a high-level meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates and the Director General of the OPCW, including an agenda for that meeting, in order to make tangible progress on a number of issues related to wrong practices undertaken by the technical teams of the OPCW.

In this regard, I would also like to note the letters from the Chair of the Syrian National Committee to the Director General of the OPCW. In those letters, he reiterated that the Technical Secretariat should work professionally and avoid using incomplete or imprecise information in the OPCW reports and briefings. That information is being twisted by some adversary States to make false accusations against Syria.

Regarding the allegations that have been repeated by certain States on Syria's initial declaration, I would like to reiterate my country's position. We reject any attempt to call that declaration into question. We reaffirm the fact that the work of the Declaration Assessment Team should help Syria and that it is not an investigative team.

I also note in this regard the facilities provided by the Syrian National Committee during the twenty-fourth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian Committee, which resulted in resolving a number of pertinent pending issues.

In terms of holding the twenty-fifth round of consultations, the Syrian National Committee welcomed a visit from the Declaration Assessment Team to Syria 10 months ago. The Director General did not announce that last summer. Syria stresses its reservations regarding the exercise of its sovereign right to refuse access to a member of the team, which should not be used as a pretext to undermine the Declaration Assessment Team's work or to tarnish Syria's cooperation with the Team in recent years. It is not acceptable and logical for the work of the Team to be disrupted due to a single member.

The reports of the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria, including the two most recent ones on the two alleged incidents in Marea and Kafr Zeita (S/2022/85, annex and S/2022/116, annex, respectively), do not change our firm position about the gross defects and serious irregularities that overwhelm the working methods of the Fact-Finding Mission, especially their inconsistency with the rules contained in the Convention and their lack of commitment to the reference criteria. That includes methods for gathering and preserving evidence and samples, while depending on open sources and information provided by terrorist organizations, such as the White Helmets terrorist organization.

Moreover, during its inquiries, the Mission applies double standards and neglects to notify the Syrian Government. The Fact-Finding Mission insists on pursuing that erroneous approach. That is why its reports are false and significantly tarnish the professionalism and credibility of the OPCW. The report on the alleged incident in Douma is a clear example of that.

We are rightly concerned by the manipulation in the Fact-Finding Mission's reports. Certain Western States interfere in its work and exert political pressure on it. The United States knows the conclusions of the Mission's reports in advance, before the reports are published. We all clearly heard evidence of that in the statement made by the United States delegation during the previous meeting of the Security Council on the matter (see S/PV.8977). There are many examples of United States interference in the work of the Fact-Finding Mission. Washington has already sent a team of its experts to The Hague to meet with the Fact-Finding Mission and pressure it to remove some sections of its reports and highlight others.

I would also like to recall that the Fact-Finding Mission received guidance from senior OPCW officials to delete the reports of two inspectors on the alleged incident in Douma. The reports acknowledged that the attack in that incident was a staged spectacle. They were to be replaced by non-scientific and illogical reports. That was not only the case. The Fact-Finding Mission until now postpones publishing its reports on the five incidents, on which the Syrian Government had requested an inquiry in 2017. That is despite our repeated requests, while the Mission hastily investigated and issued misleading reports on alleged incidents promoted by terrorist organizations to tarnish the image of the Syrian Government. What neutrality,

independence and professionalism are they therefore talking about?

The Syrian Arab Republic once again expresses its total condemnation and rejection of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, anytime and under any circumstances. Syria would like to recall that we voluntarily acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention and destroyed our chemical stockpiles in record time. By doing so, Syria fulfilled all its obligations under the Convention. Syria reaffirms that it is cooperating with the OPCW, despite its suspicion due to the erroneous methodology and imbalanced approach of the OPCW Technical Secretariat. We hope that the OPCW will be able to rectify its working approach and focus on the technical nature of its work, because it is one of the pillars of the non-proliferation regime and an important framework for multilateralism.

The role of the OPCW should not be to illegally deny Member States of their rights. Rather, it should focus on the destruction of the chemical arsenals of Member States. The United States remains the only State that has not destroyed its chemical weapons to date.

Moreover, the OPCW should not call into question the commitments of its States parties. It should undertake efforts so that States that have not yet acceded to the Convention will do so, at the forefront of which is Israel, which possesses a significant arsenal of chemical weapons.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ms. Ershadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): As a major victim of the most systematic use of chemical weapons, Iran once again expresses its strong opposition to the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances.

We reiterate our call for the full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the upholding of the authority of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and we stand ready to actively and constructively contribute to that end. We repeat, however, our concern about the serious effects of politicizing the Convention's implementation on its authority and credibility.

The OPCW must not be used to advance politically motivated national objectives. In the past couple of

years, Syria has been experiencing such attempts by some State parties.

We welcome Syria's ongoing cooperation with the OPCW, including the filing of its 98th report on 17 January 2022, relating to the destruction of chemical weapons and associated production facilities on its territory.

Furthermore, during the past year, letters were exchanged between Syria's Foreign Minister and the OPCW's Director-General in the context of the issues developed through years of collaborative work.

The information provided by Syria to both the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Secretariat of the United Nations about the possession and use of chemical materials by terrorist organizations, as well as about the fabrication of chemical incidents to accuse the Syrian army, need to be taken up by the Council.

It is equally important to note that the meetings of the Security Council on the chemical file should not be dedicated to the repetition of positions of Member States and discussions of unfounded allegations, given that the Syrian Government has made substantial progress in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention. It would therefore be wise for the Council to revisit the decision to continue to hold monthly meetings to discuss the Syrian chemical file. Such meetings undermine the Convention's authority and the OPCW's reputation, rather than achieving the Convention's purposes.

Only the thorough the destruction and elimination of all chemical weapons globally and the implementation of all essential measures to ensure that such weapons are not created in the first place can we be certain that chemical weapons will not be used again. That objective has yet to be realized because the United States, as the only remaining possessor State party, is not complying with its obligations regarding the final extended deadline for the destruction of chemical weapons.

Another stumbling block is the Convention's lack of universality. If we are to achieve that great goal, the Israeli regime must be compelled to join the Convention immediately and without conditions.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Sinirlioğlu (Turkey): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Today's meeting is one that none of us could have imagined 11 years ago. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Director-General has submitted his 100th report (see S/2022/76) on the Syrian chemical file. Moreover, it has been 100 months since the OPCW confirmed that the Al-Assad regime failed to provide information regarding the true scope of its chemical weapons programme.

The outstanding issues in relation to the Syrian regime's initial declaration persists. How long will it take the Security Council to unify and respond to that brazen violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention? How many more milestones should pass before the Council members urge the regime to comply with its obligations? The Council's inertia is of the utmost concern. This unacceptable passivity only emboldens the violators of international law. While the world waits for the Council to act, the scientific evidence keeps piling up. We have taken note of the two latest reports of the Fact-Finding Mission, which confirmed the use of chemicals as weapons in Marea on 1 September 2015 and in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016 (S/2022/85, annex and S/2022/116, annex, respectively).

We also look forward to the conclusion of two ongoing investigations by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which is mandate to establish responsibility in the chemical weapons attacks in Syria. However, we are most concerned that the regime continues to refuse visas to the IIT experts, thus deliberately hindering their ability to discharge their mandated duties. Pursuant to resolution 2118 (2013), the Syrian regime has the obligation to provide immediate and unfettered access to personnel designated by the OPCW. The Security Council must be united in enforcing it.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances is prohibited by international law and constitutes a violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the Chemical Weapons Convention and Security Council resolutions. Turkey strongly condemns the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Al-Assad regime against its own people, which amounts to crimes against humanity. As of now, the regime has been found responsible for using chemical weapons on at least eight occasions.

The OPCW and its investigative bodies play a crucial role in unearthing the truth about those gruesome attacks. We commend the independence,

professionalism and impartiality of the OPCW Technical Secretariat and caution against futile attempts to discredit it.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the OPCW serves as a sobering reminder of the need to protect the universal norm prohibiting the use of chemical weapons and to protect innocent civilians. Turkey is proud to be one of the States members to have joined the OPCW in 1997. We will continue to actively participate in efforts to uphold the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is critical that we take urgent action towards accountability in the face of the regime's present violations of that fundamental legal document. We once again highlight

the special responsibility of the Security Council in that regard.

It is imperative that we take steps to end impunity in order to achieve lasting peace in Syria. The people of Syria deserve much more, but we should be able to uphold accountability at the very least.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.