



## Security Council

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### Letter dated 27 March 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the seventy-eighth monthly report of the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) (see annex). The report covers the period from 24 February to 23 March 2020.

I note that, on 4 March, the OPCW Technical Secretariat held a briefing for the States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction on the status of its mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, which include the work of the Declaration Assessment Team, the fact-finding mission and the Investigation and Identification Team and the conduct of inspections, in accordance with OPCW Executive Council decision EC-83/DEC.5.

In the light of the recent events related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak, the OPCW Technical Secretariat informed the Syrian Arab Republic on 13 March that the OPCW Director General had decided to postpone all scheduled deployments and missions of the Technical Secretariat, including missions to take place in the Syrian Arab Republic, until further notice. The Technical Secretariat will keep the Syrian Arab Republic and States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention duly informed of the next developments related to this situation and intends to resume its activities in the country in the near future.

The Declaration Assessment Team continues its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues related to the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic to OPCW. A report on the work of the Team was submitted to the OPCW Executive Council at its ninety-third session, held from 10 to 13 March. I note that the twenty-third round of consultations between the Team and the Syrian Arab Republic, initially planned to begin on 15 March, will be postponed until further notice in view of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Pursuant to decision EC-M-43/DEC.1 on the destruction and verification of 12 declared chemical weapons production facilities, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has been monitoring and maintaining the remote monitoring systems installed at four sealed underground structures in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. The activities related to that mandate will be rescheduled in accordance with the decision of the OPCW Director General to postpone all deployments and missions until further notice in view of the COVID-19 outbreak.



The OPCW fact-finding mission continues to study all available information related to allegations of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic and is currently analysing the information collected from recent deployments. The mission is planning further deployments and will report to the OPCW Executive Council on the results of its work in due course.

I note that a progress report on the implementation of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 was submitted to the OPCW Executive Council at its ninety-third session. The Investigation and Identification Team is conducting its investigations, has contacted States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention requesting their cooperation and is in the process of concluding its work on the first incidents under investigation.

As I have stated previously, the use of chemical weapons by anyone and anywhere is intolerable, and impunity for their use is equally unacceptable. It is imperative to identify and hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons. Unity in the Security Council is essential to achieve this urgent obligation.

*(Signed)* António **Guterres**

**Annex**

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled “Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme”, prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 and Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 24 February 2020 to 23 March 2020 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

*(Signed)* Fernando **Arias**

**Enclosure**

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

**Report by the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons****Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme****Background**

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.
2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities” (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation “in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria” (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015) noting the Director-General’s intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact Finding Mission in Syria (FFM), along with information on the Council’s discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled “Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director General’s intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.
4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled “OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall “regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
5. This, the seventy-eighth monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 24 February to 23 March 2020.

**Impact of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19)**

6. On 13 March 2020, the Secretariat informed the Syrian Arab Republic through a note verbale that, in view of the recent events related to the COVID-19 outbreak,

and in line with measures announced by the Dutch authorities, inter alia, the Director General had taken the decision to postpone all scheduled deployments and missions of the Secretariat until further notice. This includes missions to take place in the Syrian Arab Republic.

7. The Secretariat will monitor the situation closely and will keep the Syrian Arab Republic and States Parties duly informed of the next developments related to this unprecedented situation, and intends to resume its activities in the Syrian Arab Republic in the near future.

### **Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1**

8. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

As stated in previous reports, the Secretariat has verified the destruction of all 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic.

On 18 March 2020, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its seventy-sixth monthly report (EC-94/P/NAT.1, dated 18 March 2020) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC M 34/DEC.1.

### **Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities**

9. As stated in previous reports, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have been destroyed.

### **Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5**

10. The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continues its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with paragraph 3 of Council decision EC-81/DEC.4 and paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5.

11. The twenty-second round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian Arab Republic took place from 14 to 23 October 2019. These consultations built upon the work carried out during the previous two rounds that had taken place, respectively, in March and in April 2019. The outcomes of this deployment, together with further information provided by the Syrian Arab Republic and/or collected by the DAT, as well as the results of the analysis of information and samples obtained by the DAT during the previous rounds of consultations, were reported to the Council at its Ninety-Third Session in a document entitled "Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team" (EC-93/HP/DG.1, dated 6 March 2020).

12. The twenty-third round of consultations, initially planned to begin on 15 March 2020 in Damascus, will be rescheduled in accordance with the decision of the Director General to postpone all planned deployments and missions until further notice in view of the COVID-19 outbreak.

13. In accordance with paragraph 10 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat continues to assess conditions for the conduct of inspections at the sites identified by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in its third and fourth reports. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat conducted the sixth round of inspections from 6 to 11 November 2019. The outcome of these inspections will be reported to the Council in due course.

14. With regard to the explanation provided in a note verbale by the Syrian Arab Republic for the finding of a Schedule 2.B.04 chemical that was detected during the third round of inspections at the Barzah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC), the Secretariat sent the Syrian authorities a note verbale on 20 February 2020 requesting additional information and proposing further activities to clarify the explanation. The Syrian Arab Republic responded in a note verbale on 12 March 2020. The Secretariat will engage with the Syrian authorities in due course, and the Council will be informed accordingly.

### **Other activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic**

15. On 4 March 2020, the Secretariat provided States Parties with a comprehensive briefing on the status of its mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, which are comprised of the work of the DAT, the FFM, and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), and the conduct of inspections pursuant to Council decision EC-83/DEC.5.

16. As at the cut-off date of this report, one OPCW staff member was deployed as part of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic.

17. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) continues to provide support to the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement concluded between the OPCW, UNOPS, and the Syrian Arab Republic. This agreement facilitates the Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and to any subsequent decision or resolution of the relevant organs of the OPCW or the United Nations, as well as any bilateral agreements concluded between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic.

18. Pursuant to EC-M-43/DEC.1 (dated 24 July 2014) regarding the destruction and verification of 12 declared CWPFs, the Secretariat has been monitoring and maintaining the remote monitoring systems installed at four sealed underground structures on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. The activities related to this mandate will be rescheduled in accordance with the decision of the Director-General to postpone all planned deployments and missions until further notice in view of the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria**

19. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 4 February 2015 and 23 November 2015, respectively), as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution [2209 \(2015\)](#), the FFM continues to study all available information relating to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The FFM is currently analysing information collected from recent

deployments, is planning further deployments, and will report to the Council on the results of its work in due course.

### **Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 of the Conference of the States Parties at its Fourth Special Session related to the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic**

20. Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018), adopted by the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) at its Fourth Special Session, addresses, inter alia, the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

21. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat established the IIT to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic by identifying and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those chemical weapons in those instances in which the FFM determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, and cases for which the OPCW United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism did not issue a report. The IIT is conducting its investigations, has reached out to States Parties requesting their cooperation, and is in the process of concluding its work on the first incidents under investigation.

22. Pursuant to paragraph 24 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Director-General submitted to the Council at its Ninety-Third Session a report entitled “Progress in the Implementation of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 on Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” (EC-93/DG.11, dated 24 February 2020).

### **Supplementary resources**

23. The Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the FFM and other remaining activities, which presently include the work of the DAT and IIT, and the biannual inspections of the SSRC. As at the cut-off date of this report, total contributions to this fund stood at EUR 31.2 million. Contribution agreements had been concluded with Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

### **Conclusion**

24. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the activities of the FFM; the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration-related issues; inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah sites of the SSRC; and the implementation of Conference decision C-SS-4/DEC.3.