



**Briefing to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council
resolution 2118 (2013) on the elimination of the chemical weapons
programme of the Syrian Arab Republic**

**Statement by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs**

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Virtual Briefing
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Madame President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

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

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

Madame President,

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

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the OPCW's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. However, the OPCW Technical Secretariat maintains constant readiness for deployments, which are being conducted subject to the evolution of the pandemic. Despite these conditions, the Technical Secretariat has continued with its mandated activities related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in this regard.

The OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic from 7 to 25 February 2021 for the twenty-fourth round of consultations. I have been advised that the results of this deployment will be reported by the OPCW Technical Secretariat to the Executive Council in due course.

I would like to reiterate my appreciation for the Declaration Assessment Team, which just returned to The Hague, continuing efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration to the OPCW, despite the COVID-19 pandemic related challenges.

Madame President,

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

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 would like to remind Council Members that efforts to resolve these outstanding issues have now been ongoing since 2014. As it has been noted on many occasions, the confidence of the international community in the complete elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme depends upon these issues being finalized. I therefore reiterate my call to the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in that regard.

Madame President,

The OPCW Technical Secretariat conducted the seventh round of inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) between 8 and 13 November 2020. I understand that the samples collected during these inspections

were split at the OPCW Laboratory in the presence of a representative of the Syrian Arab Republic and sent to designated laboratories for analysis. I look forward to the findings of this round of inspections that will be reported to the OPCW Executive Council in due course. I also understand that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the OPCW Technical Secretariat to close the issue related to the finding of a Schedule 2 chemical detected at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC during the third round of inspections in 2018.

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 its engagement with the Syrian Government and other States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with regard to a “variety of incidents”. As previously reported, further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I have also been advised 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 and will issue further reports in due course. I take this opportunity to once again underscore my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity, and independence of the work of the OPCW.

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

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

Madame President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

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

Before closing, I wish to echo the Secretary-General's remarks at the Munich Security Conference Segment on "Priorities for Global Action" delivered on 19 February 2021: "Now is the time for solidarity and international cooperation to tackle our even bigger and more complex challenges. I am convinced that if we are determined, we can achieve our shared goals".

I thank you very much for your attention.