



**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**

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Virtual Briefing
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Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

I thank you for the opportunity 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.

Since my last briefing on 4 March 2021, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has continued to maintain regular contact with counterparts at the OPCW on its activities related to this matter. As per established practice, I held a monthly call with the OPCW Director-General on Thursday, 1 April 2021, to receive an update and ascertain his views. I also met with the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic who reaffirmed the Syrian government's commitment to the Chemical Weapons Convention and cooperation with the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

Mr. President,

As I previously informed the Council, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the OPCW's Technical Secretariat's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. However, the Secretariat maintains its readiness for deployments, which are being conducted subject to the evolution of the pandemic. Despite the travel restrictions, 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.

Efforts to clarify the remaining outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW are ongoing. During the twenty-fourth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority held from 7 to 25 February 2021 in Damascus, the DAT conducted technical meetings with representatives of the Syrian National Authority, visited three declared sites, and conducted two interviews regarding an outstanding issue.

During this deployment, the Declaration Assessment Team also shared with the Syrian National Authority the results of the analysis of the samples collected in the Syrian Arab Republic during the twenty-third round of consultations in September 2020. The DAT

received preliminary comments from the Syrian technical experts regarding the presence of chemicals identified in these samples, some of which were unexpected. I have been advised that on 8 March 2021, the OPCW Technical Secretariat received a note verbale from the Syrian Arab Republic containing further explanations regarding the sample analysis results. The Technical Secretariat is analysing these explanations and will engage with the Syrian National Authority accordingly.

Mr. President,

I have also been advised that on 9 March 2021, the Syrian Arab Republic replied through a note verbale to the OPCW Technical Secretariat's assessment pertaining to a former chemical weapons production facility (CWPF) that was declared as never having been used to produce and/or weaponise chemical weapons. In this note verbale, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterated that this CWPF was never used for the production of chemical weapons.

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. As has been stressed on multiple occasions, engagement and dialogue by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat is critical to closing these outstanding issues.

Mr. President,

As I have previously informed the Security Council, the OPCW Technical Secretariat conducted the seventh round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in November 2020. The outcome of this round of inspections will be reported to the OPCW Executive Council in due course.

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

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, quote, “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 reiterate my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity, and independence of the work of the OPCW.

With regard to the inspections mandated by paragraph 8 of Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2 entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic”, I have been advised that 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. These inspections will also be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. President,
Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

Although almost eight years have now passed since the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), there is still much work to be done before this resolution can be considered fully implemented. Moreover, as long as the use of chemical weapons continues, or the threat of their use remains, we must retain our focus on preventing those threats and not allow ourselves to become inured to them. Unity in the Security Council is required to re-establish the norm against chemical weapons. The vitality and credibility of the broader disarmament and non-proliferation architecture depends upon it. The use of these weapons must always be seen as a clear violation of a deeply-held taboo. Accordingly, the identification and accountability of those responsible is imperative.

Before closing, I wish to echo the Secretary-General's remarks at the General Assembly on the situation in Syria, delivered on 30 March 2021: "After a decade of war, many Syrians have lost confidence that the international community can help them forge an agreed path out of the conflict. I am convinced that we still can. We will be relentless in our pursuit of a negotiated political settlement in line with Security Council resolution 2254...A solution that meets the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians. The war in Syria is not only Syria's war. Ending it, and the tremendous suffering it continues to cause, is a collective responsibility. Today, we must all commit fully to achieving that goal".

I thank you very much for your attention.