



**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 Mr. Thomas Markram, Deputy to the High Representative  
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Mr. President,  
Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

I thank Council members for the opportunity to brief you again on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. I am conducting this briefing on behalf of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, who is currently away from the office.

Since the last Security Council meeting on resolution 2118 held on 12 July 2021, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has maintained regular contact with its counterparts at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter.

As I have previously informed the Council, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected the OPCW Technical Secretariat's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. Nevertheless, 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 continues to undertake 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 by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) are still ongoing to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW. In this context, the OPCW Technical Secretariat remains of the position that the Syrian Arab Republic must declare all chemical warfare agents produced and/or weaponised at the former chemical weapons production facility (CWPF) that was declared by the Syrian Arab Republic as never having been used to produce and/or weaponize chemical weapons.

As previously reported, the OPCW Technical Secretariat intended to deploy the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to Damascus in May 2021 to conduct the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the Syrian National Authority. However, in the absence of a response from the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW Secretariat informed the Syrian Arab Republic that the deployment was postponed until further notice.

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 Syrian Arab Republic to extend its full cooperation to the OPCW Technical Secretariat to resolve all outstanding issues. As noted on many prior occasions, the confidence of the international community in the complete elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme depends upon these issues being finalized.

Mr. President,

I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat still plans to conduct two rounds of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in 2021. I am also advised 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 detection of a Schedule 2 chemical at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC in 2018.

I note that the OPCW Director-General sent a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Faisal Mekdad, proposing an in-person meeting to discuss relevant developments and the way forward regarding the OPCW Technical Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic. On 7 July 2021, Mr. Mekdad agreed to the OPCW Director-General's proposal. As noted in the monthly report, the OPCW Technical Secretariat stands ready to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic to initiate preparations for the meeting and will update the OPCW Executive Council in due course.

Mr President,

I have been advised that on 9 July 2021, the Syrian National Authority sent to the OPCW Technical Secretariat a note verbale reporting an attack that took place on 8 June 2021 targeting a military facility that housed a declared former chemical weapons production facility (CWPF). On 15 July 2021, the OPCW Secretariat requested further information

regarding the damage caused to the declared site, given that it was related to one outstanding issue recently opened by the DAT.

In its note verbale, the Syrian National Authority additionally reported the destruction of two chlorine cylinders related to the chemical weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018. In its reply, the OPCW Secretariat recalled the last inspection of these cylinders in November 2020, for which the inspection team was mandated to transport the cylinders to OPCW Headquarters. During this deployment, the Syrian Arab Republic notified the inspection team that the cylinders could not be shipped outside its territory. The OPCW Secretariat recalled that the cylinders were stored and inspected at another declared site approximately 60 kilometres from the location at which they were reportedly destroyed on 8 June 2021. The Secretariat additionally recalled that it had previously advised the Syrian Arab Republic that it was not to open, move, or alter the containers or their contents in any way without seeking the prior written consent of the Secretariat.

I understand that the Syrian National Authority did not notify the OPCW Secretariat that the cylinders had been moved to a new location until it reported their destruction. Accordingly, in its note verbale dated 15 July 2021, the OPCW Secretariat requested Syria to provide all relevant information regarding the movement of the two cylinders and any remains of their destruction.

Mr. President,

With regard to the work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), I note that the FFM remains in the process of studying all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. It also continues to engage with the Syrian Government and other States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with regard to, and I quote, “a variety of incidents”. As previously reported, further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I understand that following the issuance of its second report in April 2021, 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 the Secretary-General's full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity, and independence of the work of the OPCW.

Mr. President,

As I previously informed the Council, on 21 April 2021 the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention at its twenty-fifth session, adopted the decision C-25/DEC.9 entitled "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic", suspending the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention. According to paragraph 8 of this decision, the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic will be reinstated by the Conference of the States Parties once the OPCW Director-General has reported to the Executive Council that the Syrian Arab Republic has completed all of the measures contained in paragraph 5 of Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2. I have been advised that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to complete all these measures. I therefore reiterate my call to the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in this regard.

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 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 these threats. Unity in the Security Council is required to re-establish the norm against chemical weapons. 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.

I thank you very much for your attention.