



**High Representative's 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
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Madame 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.

Consistent with established practice, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been in regular contact with its counterparts at the Organisation 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 31 August 2021, to receive an update and ascertain his views.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic remained subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the Secretariat maintains its readiness for deployments. Despite continued travel restrictions, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has been able to pursue 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) is persisting with its ongoing efforts to clarify all the outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration by 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.

I have been advised that on 9 August 2021, the Syrian National Authority was informed by the OPCW Director-General of his intention to deploy the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to Damascus from 2 to 17 September 2021 to conduct the twenty-fifth round of consultations. However, on 16 August 2021, the Syrian National Authority requested that the upcoming round of consultations be held in October 2021, after the high-level week of the seventy-sixth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Madame President,

Full cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat is essential to closing these outstanding issues. As has been stressed on numerous occasions, due to 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 previously reported, 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. The inspections to these facilities remain subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With regard to the Schedule 2 chemical detected at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC in 2018, I have been advised 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 am informed that the OPCW Director-General has nominated a representative to initiate preparations for the proposed in-person meeting between the Director-General and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic. I have also been advised that the new Deputy Head of Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW has been appointed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs as the contact point for organizing the possible meeting. The objective of the meeting between the Director-General and the Minister is to have a comprehensive and result-orientated substantive exchange on relevant developments and on the way forward regarding the OPCW Technical Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic.

I hope that this meeting will be an opportunity to strengthen the dialogue and cooperation between the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

Madame President,

As reported during the Security Council meeting held on 4 August 2021, the Syrian National Authority informed the OPCW Technical Secretariat about an attack that took place on 8 June 2021, targeting a military facility that housed a declared former chemical weapons production facility (CWPF). The Syrian National Authority also reported the destruction of two chlorine cylinders that were related to the chemical weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018.

In its reply to the Syrian National Authority, the OPCW Technical Secretariat requested further information regarding the damage caused to the declared site as it was related to one outstanding issue recently opened by the DAT. The OPCW Secretariat also recalled that during its previous inspection of these cylinders, in November 2020, 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 OPCW Technical 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 the report of their destruction. Accordingly, in a 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 following their destruction.

Madame President,

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 to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic and other States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with regard to, and I quote, “a variety of incidents”. Further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following the issuance of its second report in April 2021, I understand that the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues with 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 once again reiterate my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity, and independence of the work of the OPCW.

Madame President,

With regard to 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 advised that the Syrian Arab Republic has not completed any of the measures stipulated in paragraph 5 of decision EC-94/DEC.2. I therefore reiterate my call to the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in this regard.

Madame President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

Any use of chemical weapons is totally unacceptable and a serious violation of international law. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be held accountable, no matter who they are. If we cannot do so, we allow the use of chemical weapons to take place with impunity, something that must not be tolerated. It is my sincere hope that members of this Council will unite on this issue and reinforce the essential norm against the use of these horrific weapons. The vitality and credibility of the broader disarmament and non-proliferation architecture depends upon it. The Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever support and assistance it can.

I thank you very much for your attention.