
Thank you, Mr. President,

I would like to start by thanking USG Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

Mr. President,

Today, once again, the Council is discussing the subject of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Contrary to what some delegations may lead us to believe, this regular meeting is still very relevant and necessary. Resolution 2118 on the use of chemical weapons by Syria was adopted by this Council 7 years ago, in 2013. But still today, Syria failed to have taken the necessary steps to make progress in its implementation of the Chemical Weapons convention and of resolution 2118. That was also the conclusion of the OPCW Conference of States Parties in its July decision titled "*addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic*".

As an international community, we cannot accept this lack of progress.

Syria itself became a member of the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2013, after the regime used chemicals as weapons in several indiscriminate attacks, causing immense suffering and death to its own population.

Mr. President,

In order to secure a future without chemical weapons, we have the responsibility to protect and uphold the norms and rules we all agreed to, as enshrined in the chemical weapons convention. The CWC, the global norm against chemical weapons, is not only a legal agreement, but also a moral declaration about the dignity of humanity. If we do not react when our own rules and core values have been violated, we invite in a repetition of the use of chemical weapons.

Therefore, the OPCW undertook all possible efforts to engage with the Syrian authorities, in an independent, professional and factual way, to assist the authorities to take the necessary steps to implement the CWC, and resolution 2118.

A joint OPCW-UN Joint mission was established in October 2013. A Fact Finding mission was set up in 2014 to establish facts surrounding the alleged use of

toxic chemicals. Also in 2014, a Declaration Assessment Team was put in place, to engage the Syrian authorities to resolve the identified gaps and inconsistencies.

But, as said before and confirmed today in the briefing, far too little progress has been made, owing to the lack of cooperation by Syrian authorities.

1. Up to this day, Syria's declaration of chemical weapons remains incomplete. That leaves open the – unacceptable - possibility that Syria still maintains stockpiles of chemical agents, so these agents could be used again against the Syrian population. As the Director General Arias said before *"the full nature and extent of chemical weapons research and development activities are still unclear. Results of sample analysis taken by the DAT are indicative of undeclared activities, including undeclared chemical warfare agents and undeclared chemical weapons-related activities."*
2. The OPCW Fact Finding Mission concluded that chemical weapons have been used, or likely used, in at least 18 instances. The previous Investigation and Identification report did conclude that the Syrian Arab Air Force is to be held responsible for the use of chemical weapons in March 2017. This latest report confirms the wider pattern, and reminds us why it is absolutely essential that all outstanding issues are addressed conclusively, without any doubt.
3. Syria does not cooperate with the OPCW, not allowing the IIT to access its territory.

In view of the above, one can only conclude that this file remains of prime importance to the international peace and security, and thus to this Council. Furthermore, we look forward to the deliberations in the 25th Conference of States parties, beginning December, to take any further measures in the absence of compliance to the CWC and the CSPs decisions.

Beyond the measures taken by the OPCW, the perpetrators of these crimes should be held accountable. Only justice can prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. It is our common responsibility to support all procedures and bodies that contribute to this, including by the IIIM, or by the International Criminal Court.

Finally, we deplore the recent attempts to desinform and polarize the discussion in the Security Council. The Council should focus on the essence of the matter at hand, namely the unwillingness of Syria to comply with the obligations.