



**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 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.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the new non-permanent members of this Council: India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico and Norway. I look forward to working closely with all of you on this important issue.

Since my last briefing on 11 December 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has continued to maintain regular contact with counterparts at the OPCW on its activities related to this matter. In addition, on 14, 18 and 28 December 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs 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.

Mr. President,

As I have previously informed the Security Council, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the OPCW's ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. Nonetheless, 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) is persevering in its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration to the OPCW. As reported by the OPCW Director-General during his briefing to the Security Council on 11 December 2020, while some progress was made during the last round of consultations with the Syrian National Authority with three outstanding issues related to the Syrian initial declaration being closed, 19 issues remain outstanding. One of the remaining outstanding issues pertains to a chemical weapons production facility (CWPF) declared by the Syrian National Authority as never having been used for the production of chemical weapons. However, the review of all the information and other materials gathered by the DAT since 2014, indicates that production and/or weaponisation of chemical warfare nerve agents took

place at this facility. Therefore, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has requested the Syrian Arab Republic to declare the exact types and quantities of chemical agents produced and/or weaponised at this site. I understand from the OPCW Technical Secretariat that the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to respond to this request.

Consequently, the OPCW Technical Secretariat continues to assess that, at this stage, due to the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. I take this opportunity to reiterate that until these outstanding issues are closed, the international community cannot have full confidence that the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme has been eliminated.

Mr. President,

I have been advised that the outcome of the seventh round of inspections conducted last November by the OPCW Technical Secretariat at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) 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 held 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.

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 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 OPCW 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 is monitoring the current situation and will inform the Syrian Arab Republic when it is prepared to deploy for this purpose.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

It cannot be repeated often enough: there is no justification for the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. The use of such weapons with impunity and without accountability is a threat to international peace and security and a danger to us all. It is, therefore, imperative to hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons. As we start the new year, I state my sincere hope once again that members of this Council will unite on this issue. The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever support and assistance it can.

Before closing, I wish to echo the Secretary-General’s end of the year message: “Together, let’s make peace among ourselves and with nature, tackle the climate crisis, stop the spread of COVID-19, and make 2021 a year of healing”.

I thank you very much for your attention.