



**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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Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

1. Thank you for the opportunity to brief you on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. As always, I have remained in contact with the Director-General of the OPCW to discuss matters related to this file. In anticipation of this briefing, I spoke to him yesterday. I have also received a written update from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations.

Mr. President,

3. With regard to progress related to the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), there is one new development to report. As you know, two of the twenty-seven chemical weapons production facilities declared by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic remain to be destroyed. Following a long-standing delay, due to the security situation at the site, these two stationary above-ground facilities could now be accessed. The OPCW is currently conducting a visit to these two facilities, in order to confirm their condition. This is the first step in the process of OPCW verification of the destruction of these facilities.

4. I regret to note that the longstanding issues related to Syria's declaration and subsequent amendments remain, in spite of the fourth round of high-level consultations that took place in The Hague in September. As the Director-General stated, in his most recent Note to the OPCW Executive Council, "neither the information provided during the consultations nor the latest submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic...have enabled the resolution of all identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies" in Syria's declaration.

5. Efforts to resolve these issues have been hampered by a lack of original historical records, as well as what the Director-General has described as an "ongoing lack of access to and engagement with senior leaders and officials who have an overarching knowledge of the Syrian chemical weapons programme." While it is a positive step that the Government of Syria has chosen to declare additional laboratories and their rooms in the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC), the OPCW's assessment remains that the declaration of the SSRC is incomplete.

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5. On 2 November, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) submitted its report on the alleged incident of the use of chemical weapons at Ltamenah on 30 March 2017. Last month, the Director-General had informed that environmental samples provided to the FFM team, and reportedly connected to the 30 March incident at Ltamenah, showed the presence of sarin. The report of the FFM stated that given the limitations in some evidence, the FFM was not able to determine “with absolute certainty” the use of a chemical weapon.

6. However, the FFM was able to determine the presence of sarin on samples that came from the alleged site of the incident; that casualties from that site and time period displayed symptoms and received treatment consistent with exposure to sarin; and that munition parts from the alleged site of the incident were consistent with the application of a chemical weapon. As a result, the FFM was able to conclude that sarin “was more than likely used” at this incident. The FFM is continuing its work on looking into other allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

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7. These most recent findings of the FFM are deeply concerning – all the more so in view of the fact that the mandate of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism is set to end on 16 November. Allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria have not ceased and therefore nor has the need to identify and hold accountable those responsible for their use. The unity of the Security Council will be necessary in order to avoid impunity for the use of these abhorrent weapons. As always the Office for Disarmament Affairs remains ready to provide any support and assistance that it can, as we work together to restore the universal norm against chemical weapons and strengthen the broader non-proliferation regime.

8. Thank you very much for your attention.