



**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**

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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 hope that today's format will allow for a substantive debate on this very important international security issue.

As is established practice, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has maintained regular contact over the last month with counterparts at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter.

Mr. President,

As I have previously informed the Security Council, all scheduled deployments and missions of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, including missions to take place in the Syrian Arab Republic have been postponed until further notice due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 Technical Secretariat will continue to closely monitor the situation and will keep States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) duly informed of any developments.

The OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) is continuing its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration to the OPCW. I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat received a response from the Syrian Arab Republic to the letter sent by the OPCW Director-General to the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic dated 21 April 2020. This response submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic is being translated and will be reviewed and analysed by the OPCW Technical Secretariat experts. The Technical Secretariat will inform the Executive Council of any developments in due course.

At the technical level, the engagement between the OPCW Secretariat and the Syrian National Authority continued, including through a videoconference held on 20 July 2020 followed by a note verbal from the Syrian Government dated 27 July 2020. I take this opportunity to once again stress 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 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 2020. However, the undertaking of these inspections will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on OPCW activities.

I understand that the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet provided 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. The OPCW Technical Secretariat will continue to engage with the Syrian authorities and will inform the OPCW Executive Council of any progress in due course.

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 CWC with regard to a variety of incidents. As I have previously informed Council members, further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on OPCW activities.

Following its first report issued on 8 April 2020, the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues its investigations into incidents in which the FFM have determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic and will issue further reports in due course.

Mr. President,

I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has yet to receive a response from the Syrian Arab Republic to the letter sent to the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic by the OPCW Director-General on 20 July 2020, outlining the obligations of the Syrian Arab Republic under OPCW Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2 entitled "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic". As conveyed by the Director-General in the aforementioned

letter, the OPCW Technical Secretariat is ready to assist the Syrian Government in the fulfilment of these obligations within the required period of 90 days.

Mr. President,

Distinguished Members of the Council,

I take this opportunity to reiterate that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable. The requirement for those responsible to be identified and held accountable is paramount. Ensuring accountability for chemical weapons use is our responsibility, not least to the victims of such attacks. It is my sincere hope 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.

I thank you very much for your attention.