



**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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Madam 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.

Since my last briefing on 5 October 2020, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has continued to maintain regular contact with counterparts at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to this matter. Yesterday, 4 November, the Office for Disarmament Affairs received information from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic concerning chemical issues for this period.

Madam 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. In this context, I would like to express my appreciation to the members of the DAT who deployed to Damascus from 22 September to 3 October 2020 to conduct the twenty-third round of consultations with the Syrian National Authority despite the COVID-19 pandemic and other logistical and security challenges. During this deployment, the DAT collected samples to replace those taken during its previous deployment and discussed the current status of all outstanding issues. The outcome of these activities will be reported to the OPCW Executive Council in due course.

At this stage, due to the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has assessed that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. I want to remind Council Members that efforts to resolve

these outstanding issues have been ongoing since 2014. As has been noted on many occasions, the confidence of the international community in the complete elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme depends upon these issues being finalized.

Madam 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 further inspections to these facilities will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With regard 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 understand 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 note that the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) is still 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. Further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As I have previously informed the Security Council, on 1 October 2020, the OPCW Technical Secretariat issued the "Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria Regarding the Incident of Alleged Use of Chemicals as a Weapon in Saraqib, Syrian Arab Republic, on 1 August 2016", which concluded that the analysis of all available data obtained up until the issuance of this report did not allow the FFM to establish whether or not chemicals were used as a weapon in this incident.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat has also issued the "Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria Regarding the Incident in Aleppo, Syrian Arab Republic, on 24 November 2018". According to the FFM report, all the information obtained and analysed, the composite summary of the interviews, and the results of the laboratory analyses did not allow it to establish whether or not chemicals were used as a weapon in this incident. A copy of both reports was shared with the members of the Security Council as document S/2020/1082.

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 underscore my full support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity, and independence of the work of the OPCW.

On 14 October 2020, the OPCW Director-General submitted to the OPCW Executive Council a report entitled “Implementation of EC-94/DEC.2 on Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic”. The report states that the Syrian Arab Republic did not complete the measures contained in paragraph 5 of the decision within the 90-day period specified therein. A copy of this report was shared with the Security Council and General Assembly members’ as document A/75/536–S/2020/1033, pursuant to paragraph 12 of the aforementioned decision of the OPCW Executive Council.

Madam President,

Distinguished Members of the Council,

It cannot be repeated often enough: there is no justification for the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances. There are no excuses for an inexcusable act. Those who have used chemical weapons must be identified and held to account. It is my sincere hope that members of this Council will unite on this issue.

I thank you very much for your attention.