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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM
OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES
ON AGENDA ITEM 9(D)**

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was one of those that co-sponsored the joint statement just delivered by the Ambassador of Estonia on behalf of 56 States Parties. The last time States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention gathered, in April this year, we sent a very clear message to the Syrian Arab Republic. The Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties emphasised that Syria's repeated use of chemical weapons was unacceptable and a violation of its international obligations. The Syrian Arab Republic also heard that there was a way forward, a way to come into compliance with its treaty obligations, should its authorities choose to take that path.

Unfortunately, now more than six months on from that unprecedented Conference decision, it appears that the Syrian Arab Republic has no intention of coming into compliance. Rather we have seen an explicit repudiation of the Technical Secretariat's efforts to support the Syrian Arab Republic in declaring and destroying its retained chemical weapons capabilities. Failing to issue visas and ignoring correspondence from the Technical Secretariat exposes the Syrian Arab Republic's lack of cooperation for all to see. This is an affront to Syria's treaty obligations as well as resolution 2118 adopted by the United Nations Security Council.

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that little progress has been made in addressing outstanding concerns with the Syrian Arab Republic's initial declaration. What is more lamentable is that new problems have arisen. In September 2020 the Syrian Arab Republic was informed by the Secretariat that evidence had been found of nerve agent production at one of its inspected sites. The Syrian Arab Republic had never previously declared any nerve agent production at this site and, even more worryingly, the samples were collected from large-volume storage containers. The Syrian Arab Republic has yet to respond.

In July the Syrian Arab Republic asserted that two cylinders, relevant to the Douma chemical weapons attack on 7 April 2018, had been destroyed. No evidence has been produced to back up these claims. No explanation has been provided as to why the cylinders were over 60 km from where they were required to be securely stored. Any interference with evidence relevant to ongoing investigations of chemical weapons use is deeply concerning. The Secretariat has repeatedly sought an explanation from the Syrian authorities. The Syrian Arab Republic has yet to respond.



The Syrian regime has a choice to make. A pathway into compliance, with all rights and privileges restored is open to them, if they choose to take it. For now, it seems that is not their intention and perhaps it never was.

Mr Chairperson, on a more positive note the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland would like to pay tribute to the staff of the Technical Secretariat for their continued efforts on behalf of all States Parties to understand and resolve all issues related to Syria's chemical weapons programme.

Thank you.

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