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FRANCE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LUIS VASSY PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC TO THE OPCW
AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(C)**

Mr Chairperson,

Allow me to begin by congratulating you on your new role and on how well you are leading our discussions.

For three years now I have represented France before the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and sat on the Executive Council (“the Council”). Regrettably, I find myself in the unpleasant situation of having to recall certain facts and certain requirements, which we should collectively bring to bear on Syria within the framework of the OPCW.

It has been nearly nine years since Syria joined the OPCW, and despite nearly nine years of consultations, field visits, and document exchanges, its initial declaration remains incomplete and non-exhaustive.

Twenty issues remain outstanding. This is all the more disturbing since Syria has been unwilling to cooperate with the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) since spring 2021, by refusing to issue a visa for one of its experts, by refusing to answer the questions of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”), and by refusing to update its declaration. Furthermore, and just as disturbing, it sends us notes verbales in which we learn that cylinders containing toxic chemicals were destroyed at a location where they in fact should not have been.

If I am speaking today it is also in reaction to a number of things said this morning by the Syrian delegate and by others, things that are intended not so much to convince us that what is false is true, but rather to sow doubt and indecision within this forum in an attempt to obscure certain facts. Let me remind you that the plain fact regarding the Syrian chemical dossier is indeed Syria’s failure to cooperate with the Secretariat, as well as the incompleteness of its initial declaration.

More broadly, what we are dealing with today are statements telling us that white is black. Obviously, I do not think that any of the delegates who engage in such acrobatics actually think that we will end up believing that white is black, but maybe they hope that we will think that white is grey. And there they will have already achieved something.



I cannot but join our Ukrainian colleague in his shock at hearing the Syrian delegate argue for Russia's right to preserve its territorial integrity, in the war that Russia itself is waging on the territory of its neighbouring country. That was stunning. I was also surprised at receiving a lecture on press freedom from the Russian delegate. More subtly, I heard our Iranian colleague try to explain to us that all of this was very complicated and that, perhaps, between white and black there can be grey.

No. There is no grey area when it comes to the DAT. Our responsibility as members of the Council is to remind Syria of its obligations, which today I must unfortunately do once again. Information must be shared with the Secretariat. This is necessary if Syria wishes to recover the rights and privileges that were suspended in the decision taken by the Conference of the States Parties in April 2021.

I should once again like to commend the tenacity, professionalism, and independence with which the DAT carries out its mission.

I would ask that this statement be considered as an official document of this session of the Council and that it be posted on the OPCW internal and external servers.

Thank you.

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