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SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MILAD ATIEH
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC TO THE
OPCW AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate His Excellency Ambassador Ziad Al Atiyah, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the OPCW, on his election as Chairperson of the 100th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW. I wish him success in chairing this session. I also take this opportunity to extend sincere thanks to Her Excellency Dr Eniola Olaitan Ajayi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the OPCW, for her successful steering of the Ninety-Ninth Session of the Council in February 2022.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan in this session on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

Syria welcomed this year the twenty-fifth anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is the first multilateral agreement to eliminate a category of weapons of mass destruction. Syria believes strongly that the Convention is the first multilateral disarmament mechanism in the world to provide for the elimination of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction under the leadership of the OPCW which has the mission of implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is regrettable that the OPCW, which is the body mandated to implement the provisions of the Convention of Chemical Weapons, is being used since 2018 as a tool to serve the political agendas of some Western States against States Parties to the Convention. Those known States have used the Organisation to level false accusations and take unjust decisions in clear contradiction with the provisions of the Convention, using methods of hegemony, extortion, and pressure, and passing decisions through voting. There is now a serious concern for the future of this Organisation and its noble technical goals if such approach continues and because of the schism within the Organisation.

My country's delegation regrets that, once again, this technical Organisation has been dragged into regional and international geo-political and security issues, driving it away from its objectives. The United States of America and some Western States are repeating with the Russian Federation the same scenarios that they used against Syria over the past ten years. They encourage the fabrication of scenarios of use or preparation for the use of chemical weapons in order to accuse Russian forces of such use, just as they used to do with the Syrian Government. They then moved to levelling false, baseless accusations against Russian forces during Russia's current special military operation in Ukraine to defend its security and citizens.



Those States ignored all the documented information and evidence that Russia provided on what Ukrainian forces are doing with support from Western States and other parties to fabricate scenarios of chemical weapons use in Ukraine in order to accuse Russian forces of such use.

In this context, the Syrian Arab Republic affirms that the Russian Federation has the legitimate right to defend its national security, independence, stability, and territorial integrity and to eliminate strategic threats to its people and citizens. Syria's position in support of the Russian special military operation in Ukraine has been and will remain based on firm political, moral, and legal considerations and principles. Today, the United States of America and its allies are required to end their hostile and hard-line attitude towards Russia and their push for the reckless strategy of confrontation, and to take the strategic interests of the Russian Federation into consideration. Syria is of the view that Western States are the ones responsible for the chaos and bloodshed because of their policies aimed at taking control of other peoples in Ukraine and different parts of the world, destabilising the world, and because of their continued imposition of immoral, unilateral, and coercive economic measures and sending to Ukraine all sorts of weapons and mercenaries, including Syria's terrorists, without any accountability. The United States of America and its Western allies should be the last to speak about interference in internal affairs of States. Modern and contemporary history is rife with their acts of aggression, invasion, and interference, leading to the displacement and killing of millions of innocent people in many countries. We do not forget what they have been doing in Syria where thousands of innocent people have fallen victims, infrastructure has been destroyed, terrorism is being supported, and economic terrorism is being imposed since 2011.

In 2013, Syria acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention voluntarily and in good faith, as it believes in the rejection of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances. Syria has faithfully and credibly implemented its sovereign decision to end the Syrian chemical dossier, which was achieved in record time. Despite the very difficult and complicated circumstances it has been going through, Syria has accomplished what some other States which had acceded to the Convention many years before it did not accomplish. Unfortunately, what Syria has been subjected to within the OPCW over the past years has made us raise a serious question about the Organisation's ability to carry out its mandate under the Convention and to withstand the pressure it is facing from the United States of America and its Western allies. This is because the OPCW has turned into an instrument of political manipulation, which has alienated it from its professionalism and thus its credibility, particularly as a result of the Western States' approach of passing decisions of the OPCW decision-making organs through voting, with no consensus and no respect for the views of other States. Therefore, we are extremely concerned about the current state of affairs. It has become necessary to put an end to this continuous deterioration in the Organisation's course of action and to begin seriously and urgently correcting this course to take the Organisation back to implementing its mandate. Despite the difficult circumstances that the Syrian Arab Republic is going through, as a result of the economic war waged on it by the United States of America and some Western States, namely the illegitimate "unilateral, coercive measures" imposed on it, which have had a tremendous toll on the socio-economic conditions of Syrian citizens, in addition to the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, Syria has never ceased to cooperate fully with the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat and teams in implementation of its obligations.

The Syrian Arab Republic has faced an unprecedented campaign of scepticism and false accusations of failing to cooperate with the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat. The behaviour of those States is in blatant contradiction with the provisions of the Convention, the principles

of international law, and the Charter of the United Nations, and is nothing more than an attempt to use the OPCW and the remaining technical aspects of the Syrian chemical weapons dossier to serve their political purposes, namely exerting pressure on Syria. Yet, Syria continued its full and positive cooperation with the OPCW and committed itself to a structured dialogue with the Declaration Assessment Team through rounds of consultations, of which twenty-four have been held so far, with the aim of closing the remaining outstanding technical issues.

It was striking to find in the recent reports of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW false, baseless accusations that Syria is obstructing the work of the Technical Secretariat and that the Syrian Arab Republic does not want to hold the twenty-fifth round of consultations between experts of the National Authority and the Declaration Assessment Team. The truth, however, is that Syria welcomed all proposals made by the Technical Secretariat. As it is fully committed to ending the dossier of outstanding issues, Syria expressed its willingness and serious desire to close this dossier once and for all. Syria now has the right to declare that the party obstructing the holding of the twenty-fifth round of consultations and the settlement of the outstanding issues is the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and the States that are known for being hostile to Syria and that are dictating their policies. There is no better proof than the fact that Syria has agreed to all proposals made by the Technical Secretariat to hold this round of consultations in Damascus, The Hague, and Beirut, while affirming its sovereign right to its legitimate request that one expert in the DAT be replaced with any other expert whom the Secretariat deems suitable.

On more than one occasion, the Syrian Arab Republic, along with many States, has made objective observations regarding the work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM). Yet, Syria cooperated with FFM teams, providing them with all the facilitations required for the success of their missions. The Mission has failed more than one test, and the evidence is clear to all States Parties. The FFM has proved to be biased and unprofessional, falsifying the facts in more than one of the reports that it has issued. Examples include the reports on the incidents of Khan Shaykhun (2017), Aleppo (2018), Saraqib (2018), Douma (2018) and lately on the Kafr Zita incident (2016). Such an approach will not lead to fair and objective conclusions and findings. In this context, we stress the need for the FFM to correct the flaws marring its approach and working methods, comply with the provisions of the Convention, and abide by its professional standards and Terms of Reference agreed upon with Syria. My country's Government is of the view that, after all these professional scandals, it has become unacceptable to remain silent on the fact that the FFM continues to operate according to those wrong methods. The praise given by some known States to the FFM's reports and their professionalism and integrity is part of the attempt to use the Mission's reports to exert more pressure on Syria and cover up the crimes of terrorists and their arm, "the White Helmets" group.

The Syrian Arab Republic maintains its firm position regarding the Investigation and Identification Team, which is lacking legitimacy. Syria, along with other States, does not recognise the legitimacy of this Team and rejects any and all of its past and future outcomes, proceeding from its respect for and adherence and commitment to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The widening scope of the threats from chemical terrorism poses a serious threat to international peace and security. No State is safe from this grave threat. In this context, the Syrian Arab Republic affirms that the conduct of certain States Parties covering up the crimes and practices of terrorist groups in Syria has encouraged those terrorists to commit more atrocious crimes against Syrian citizens, including the use of toxic substances over the past

nine years. Syria has consistently informed you that terrorist groups and the “White Helmets” terrorist group continued to prepare false-flag chemical attacks, particularly in the countryside of the Governorates of Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia, in order to accuse the Syrian Government of those attacks.

In this context, Syria stresses that achieving the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention is a very important step towards ensuring an effective global regime against chemical weapons. However, this will not be achieved without compelling Israel to join the Convention and place its nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons under international control. It is regrettable that, in order to protect Israel and keep it beyond the reach of any international control over its nuclear, chemical, and biological facilities, the States that claim to be committed to nuclear non-proliferation are obstructing any attempt to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Syria calls for international cooperation to confront the illegitimate restrictions imposed by some known States on the transfer to developing States of scientific technology for peaceful purposes, and the imposition of illegitimate, unilateral, and coercive measures on some other States, in order to prevent them from achieving economic and scientific development for their peoples and from using chemistry for peaceful purposes, in clear violation of the provisions of the Convention and international law.

My delegation wishes to affirm the determination of the Syrian Arab Republic to continue to implement its obligations emanating from its accession to the Convention and to continue to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat and its Director-General in an atmosphere of mutual trust and commitment to the standards of integrity and neutrality, without giving in to pressure and politicisation used by States that have become known to all, in order to influence the work of the Organisation and serve their political interests.

I thank you and I request that this statement be considered an official document of the 100th Session of the Executive Council and posted on the OPCW’s public website and on Catalyst.

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