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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A.V. SHULGIN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO
THE OPCW AT THE 101ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(C)**

Mr Chairperson,

From the moment the Director-General established the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) in 2014, the DAT has been actively carrying out its work in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic (paragraph 11 of EC-101/HP.DG.2, dated 28 September 2022). This has included numerous meetings with representatives of Syrian authorities and technical experts, visits to chemical weapons facilities, the collection of samples, holding interviews, and examining requested documents.

It is clear that this was all made possible thanks only to the unprecedented transparency of Damascus, and its willingness to respond positively each time to the requests made by the DAT. We note the efforts of the Syrian authorities to remove as soon as possible the outstanding issues from the agenda, as well as those for which Damascus has already provided all possible responses and explanations. It has been possible to close four problematic issues, and several more are under way. Thus, Syria is fully cooperating with the OPCW Technical Secretariat not in word, but in deed. Furthermore, it is doing so in conditions of persistent attacks against Syrian citizens, civil and military facilities, and the continued unlawful occupation by the United States and their allies of a part of Syrian territory.

However, since spring 2021, progress has stagnated. In particular, agreements have stalled on holding the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the DAT. The refusal of Damascus to issue a visa to one of the members of this Team has become a bone of contention. Syria, as a State Party, has taken this step as part of the rights granted it under the Convention. And, of course, there is no way that this can be characterised as a refusal to cooperate with the Team. The Syrian Arab Republic regularly confirms its readiness to meet with the DAT, both on its territory, as well as in Beirut or in The Hague. The Secretariat is the one insisting that Damascus lay aside its issues with the DAT expert, which basically means coercing Syria to give up its legitimate rights under the Convention. Somehow this isn't exactly reminiscent of a search for compromise.

We call upon the sides to find a mutually acceptable solution, in line with the provisions of the Convention, to this artificially created problem, and to not put it into any political context. We have full respect for the Secretariat's experts, their unique experience, and their technical knowledge. They carry out an honourable and complex mission. However, we do believe that



the circumstances have been contrived, when all work is being held hostage by one specific individual's ability to travel to Syria.

In general, this situation is a good reason to think about activating work in the field of knowledge sharing in order to expand the circle of specialists capable of tackling these types of tasks, thus ensuring smooth handovers among Secretariat personnel.

We are pleased to note the continued cooperation between Syria and the Secretariat. The parties have agreed to cooperate via the exchange of documentation, in the absence of in-person meetings. We also welcome the contact between Syria and the Secretariat that took place in September this year, specifically the proposal by Damascus to organise limited working consultations.

We express hope for the soonest possible agreement on holding a meeting between the Director-General of the Secretariat, Mr Arias, and the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Mekdad.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the 101st Session of the Council and published on the Catalyst platform and the OPCW website.

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