



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

Seventy-Fifth Session  
4 – 7 March 2014

EC-75/NAT.6  
4 March 2014  
ENGLISH only

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR ROBERT P. MIKULAK  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
TO THE OPCW  
AT THE SEVENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

At the opening of this Seventy-Fifth Session of the Executive Council, Mr Chairman, I would like to assure you of the continued support of my delegation to the OPCW. We look forward to your leadership of the Council as we maneuver through these challenging times.

Mr Chairman, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

Over the last few weeks we all have witnessed two extraordinary meetings of the Council. On 30 January, delegation after delegation after delegation, expressed concern about the slow pace of removal of chemicals from Syria and called for acceleration of the chemical weapons removal process. Again, on 21 February, delegation after delegation after delegation—nearly the entire Council, in fact—repeated and strengthened their expressions of concern. Now, due to the insistence of members of the Council that Syria meet its commitments, there is the possibility that Syria may at last be starting to take its removal obligations seriously. Syria has now withdrawn its 100-day removal plan, which was indefensible, and presented a 65-day removal plan. Although, this is useful, the Operational Planning Group had earlier recommended steps that would allow all the chemicals to be removed in just 37 days. Moreover, the revised Syrian plan appears vulnerable to quickly expanding back to its original length since the gains were made by simply shrinking the original time devoted to packaging the chemicals at each site. There are few or no gains made by other means, for example consolidating movements into fewer than 24 missions. The Director-General made it clear that the Operational Planning Group plan offered a faster timeline while also addressing Syrian concerns regarding security and the availability of equipment and personnel.

The United States of America believes that Syria should implement and, with the assistance of the Operational Planning Group, accelerate the new Syrian plan immediately to ensure that these deadly chemicals are out of Syria as soon as possible. We look forward to learning the Director-General's detailed assessment, and the further recommendations of the OPCW.

To any members of this Council who might be flush with optimism over the new Syrian plan, a word of caution is appropriate and necessary. What counts is not a plan on paper, but actual performance on the ground. This Council should resist any temptation to simply assume that the Government of Syria will follow through on its new plan to remove chemicals from its territory. Syria's dismal record of compliance to date with the Council's removal decisions



should belie any such assumption. Now is not the time for complacency, but rather for circumspection and diligent exercise of the oversight responsibilities of this Council.

As it has repeatedly done, after weeks of inaction, Syria has moved chemicals just before an Executive Council session. Perhaps more will be moved while the Council is in session this week. What counts is what happens on a consistent and regular basis going forward. The Council needs to see a systematic, sustained, and accelerated series of movements of chemicals to Latakia for removal.

This Council should consider the acceleration of the new plan to be a test of Syria's commitment to finally comply with its elimination obligations under Executive Council decisions and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118. Syria should be held to account for the plan it has put forward and directed to work with the OPCW-UN Joint Mission to substantially accelerate the timeline for completing removal. It should immediately begin to make substantial and regular deliveries of chemicals, particularly Priority 1 chemicals, to Latakia. We request that the Director-General provide the Council with a chart showing the aggregate amount of chemicals to be moved each week under the plan so that the Council can monitor Syria's efforts. Weekly reports on removal actions should be provided to the Council by the Technical Secretariat. This Council should not tolerate any slippage on removal actions or political backsliding by the Syrian Government.

As you are well aware, this Council has held two successive meetings to discuss the Syrian chemical weapons situation—on 30 January and 21 February—without issuing a report, unfortunately, because consensus could not be achieved. On 27 September, this Council put politics aside and let itself be guided by the moral compass of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Every State Party on this Council has pledged through the Convention's preamble "for the sake of all mankind to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons ...". So long as those chemicals remain in Syria, the possibility of use remains. For the sake of the Syrian people, let us once again put politics aside and ensure through the actions of this Council that the Syrian Government completes, with urgency and dispatch, the removal effort it has begun. To that honourable end, the report of this session should unequivocally reflect the Council's determination and commitment to closely monitor the Government of Syria's efforts to implement and accelerate its new removal plan.

Let us also not forget that Syria is about to disregard yet another deadline set by this Council. The date set by this Council for completing destruction of Syria's twelve chemical weapons production facilities is 15 March—two weeks from today. The United States of America has made every effort to work with Syria to reach an understanding on a destruction plan. Syria has refused to negotiate, and has adamantly clung to its proposal to inactivate, rather than destroy, these chemical weapons production facilities.

The Convention is clear with respect to the physical destruction requirement and this Council should also be clear. Since Syria has failed to propose destruction methods that meet the Convention's requirements, the United States of America has tabled a draft decision for this Council's consideration for addressing Syria's inertia and calculated misreading of the Convention. In our view, a Council decision should have two principal components:

1. First, with respect to the seven hardened aircraft shelters, this Council should require that Syria by March 15 collapse the roofs using precision explosives. The United States of America and a number of Council members have carefully analysed this approach, and concluded that it would meet the Convention standard for physical

destruction in an expedited and cost-effective manner that ensures the safety of the population and the protection of the environment.

2. Second, with respect to the five underground structures, this Council, noting the additional technical challenges they entail, should extend the deadline for destruction but only on the condition that specified measures be undertaken by Syria first to inactivate them and then to physically destroy the entire underground structure.

The physical destruction of chemical weapons production facilities is a fundamental requirement of the Convention, and a prudent protection against the retainment or restart of a chemical weapons programme. The seriousness attached to this requirement by the Council is attested to by the past practice of completely leveling all such facilities to the ground. Given the extraordinary circumstances associated with Syria's accession to the Convention, it would be irresponsible for this Council to exhibit the same inertia and disregard for the Convention as the Syrian Government has on this issue. This Council needs to summon the same resolve it evinced in December when it categorically rejected Syria's request to convert these chemical weapons production facilities to allegedly peaceful uses.

In closing, let me emphasise that March will be a critical test for the international effort to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons programme. Syrian action—or inaction—will tell the international community whether Syria is truly committed to giving up its chemical weapons arsenal or choosing instead to play political games. As the world waits to see what path Syria takes, this Council, along with its members, should work to ensure that Syria remains committed to giving up its chemical weapons. Every step that Syria has taken has been the result of international monitoring and prodding, not because of Syria's moral abhorrence of chemical weapons. Indeed, less than a month before it announced its intent to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Syria on 21 August launched a brutal chemical attack in the suburbs of Damascus. Let us not be swayed by any illusions about the nature or good faith of the Assad regime. Four-and-a-half months after Syria's accession, we are here in this Council talking about Syria's failure to meet two deadlines on the path that was set before it by this Council to eliminate the Syrian chemical weapons programme. This Council has an essential role to play in keeping the pressure on the Syrian Government to ensure that Syria is completely disarmed of its chemical arsenal. Syria is testing the resolve of this Council to defend its own decisions—we as a Council should not fail this test.

As all of us walked into this room today, we passed the Nobel Prize for Peace awarded to the OPCW. That prize honours what this Organisation has accomplished and also challenges us to remain a force for peace in the future. The historic effort in which this Organisation embarked on 27 September 2013, to eliminate the Syrian chemical weapons programme, is not finished; in fact, the end is regrettably not yet in sight. Let us continue to remain a force for peace and finish what we have started. Let us end the silence of this Council and speak loudly and clearly so that the Assad regime knows that we will not relent until Syria's chemical weapons programme—and the threat it poses to peace and security—has been completely eliminated.

I ask that this statement be considered an official document of this Executive Council session and placed on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.