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NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

PROGRESS IN THE ELIMINATION OF THE SYRIAN CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMME

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.
2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities” (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation “in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, also adopted a decision entitled “Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria” (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015).
4. This, the twenty-sixth monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions, and includes information relevant to the period from 22 October to 23 November 2015.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

5. Progress within the reporting period by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:
 - (a) As previously reported, the Secretariat has verified the destruction of 11 of the 12 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) in the Syrian Arab Republic, namely five underground structures and seven aircraft hangars. The remaining hangar yet to be destroyed continued to be inaccessible during the reporting period due to the security situation.
 - (b) On 13 November 2015, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its twenty-fourth monthly report (EC-81/P/NAT.2, dated 12 November 2015) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.



- (c) The Syrian authorities have continued to extend the necessary cooperation in accordance with the implementation of subparagraph 1(e) of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and paragraph 7 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

6. Significant progress has been made in destroying all the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic, which were removed from its territory in 2014. A combined total of 99.2% of all declared chemical weapons has been verified as destroyed, which includes the isopropanol previously destroyed in the Syrian Arab Republic, 100% of the Category 1 chemicals, and 96.2% of the Category 2 chemicals. The effluent produced by the neutralisation process of sulfur mustard and DF has also been destroyed. As at the cut-off date of the report, a total of 68.6% of the remaining Category 2 chemical, hydrogen fluoride (HF) has now been destroyed, as Veolia ES Technical Solutions, LLC in the United States of America continued its destruction activities, as previously reported. Additional improvements to the process were made to ensure that the HF in the remaining corroded cylinders is safely destroyed. The Secretariat will continue to brief States Parties in The Hague on this activity, which is now expected to be completed in January 2016.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

7. The Secretariat and the United Nations Office for Project Services have made arrangements to extend their cooperation in the context of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic until May 2016. One OPCW staff member was deployed as part of that mission as at the cut-off date of this report.
8. The Director-General has continued to communicate with senior representatives of the States Parties hosting a destruction facility or providing assistance with the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, and with senior officials of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. As requested by the Council at its Seventy-Fifth Session (paragraph 7.12 of EC-75/2, dated 7 March 2014), the Secretariat, on behalf of the Director-General, has continued to brief States Parties in The Hague on its activities.
9. The Secretariat and the Syrian authorities have maintained their ongoing cooperation on outstanding issues regarding the Syrian initial declaration, as encouraged by the Council at its Seventy-Sixth Session (paragraph 6.17 of EC-76/6, dated 11 July 2014). The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), during its twelfth visit to the Syrian Arab Republic (from 2 to 12 November 2015), continued to pursue outstanding issues through site visits, discussions with Syrian authorities, and technical consultations with experts from the Syrian chemical weapons programme. A large number of samples, including those taken during the DAT's eleventh visit, were brought back to the OPCW for dispatch to designated laboratories for analysis. The DAT's next visit is currently scheduled to take place from 7 to 18 December 2015.

Supplementary resources

10. The total contributions of EUR 50.3 million in the Syria Trust Fund for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons and the contributors thereto remain unchanged from the previous report.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

11. On 23 November 2015, the Council, at its Fiftieth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Further Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria” (EC-M-50/DEC.1), in which it, inter alia, “expresses grave concern regarding the findings of the Fact-Finding Mission that chemical weapons have once again been used in the Syria Arab Republic”. In this regard, the Council underscored that two FFM reports issued on 29 October 2015 had concluded that, with respect to several incidents in the Idlib Governorate, they “likely involved the use of one or more toxic chemicals—probably containing the element chlorine—as a weapon” with an “outcome of exposure [that] was fatal in six cases in Sarmin” (S/1319/2015), including those of three children in the same family; and, with regard to the incident in the town of Marea, confirmed “with the utmost confidence that at least two people were exposed to sulfur mustard”, and that it is “very likely that the effects of sulfur mustard resulted in the death of a baby”(S/1320/2015).
12. Furthermore, in the aforementioned decision, the Council noted that with respect to the Syrian government’s allegations that its soldiers were attacked with chemical weapons in Jobber in 2014, the third FFM report issued by the Secretariat on 29 October 2015 (S/1318/2015) stated it “cannot confidently determine whether or not a chemical was used as a weapon”. The Council further noted that this is an interim report and that other incidents under investigation are pending final analysis and will be included in the final report.
13. Delegations at the Fiftieth Meeting expressed to the Council their positions on the FFM’s work and its three reports. The Council heard expressions of support for the work done thus far by the Mission. In the Council, diverse views were expressed with regard to the reports.
14. The OPCW, in a letter from the Head of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), was notified that the Secretary-General had informed the President of the United Nations Security Council that the JIM began its full operations on 13 November 2015. The JIM leadership panel has recruited qualified staff and set up offices in New York and The Hague, and plans to establish a presence in Damascus. In accordance with the timelines set by United Nations Security Council resolution 2235 (2015), the JIM is expected to present its first report to the Security Council in February 2016, and will inform the OPCW Executive Council at that time. As the JIM is an independent body, the Technical Secretariat will offer its assistance and support, including through the work of the OPCW FFM. The Director-General has provided the JIM with all FFM reports produced hitherto on 14 November 2015.

Conclusion

15. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the DAT and FFM activities, as well as the destruction and verification of the remaining aircraft hangar.