

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



**STATEMENT BY**

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United States Delegation to the Eighty-Second Session  
Of the Executive Council  
Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**

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## CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam Chairperson, Mr. Director-General, distinguished ambassadors and delegates,

Allow me to begin by welcoming you to your first meeting as Chairperson and assure you the full cooperation of my delegation in the conduct of our proceedings.

This Organization, its Executive Council (EC), and States Parties continue to face very difficult circumstances and challenges as we work together to address the threat of chemical weapons. Let me assure you that the United States is fully committed to surmounting these challenges by eliminating all chemical weapons, preventing their reemergence, and holding accountable State and non-State actors who use these heinous weapons to the detriment of mankind.

Madam Chairperson,

The greatest challenge this Council has ever faced is the continuing Syrian chemical weapons crisis. In September, it will be three years since the adoption of our historic decision on the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons. Years ago -- and certainly by now -- the entire Syrian chemical weapons stockpile, and the threat it constitutes to the people of Syria and the region at-large, should have been completely eliminated. Instead, the years since the Council's decision have been marked by stymied efforts of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), tragic findings of CW use by the Fact-Finding Missions, and the necessary establishment of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism. Today, the Council has before it a truly alarming report from the Director-General on his recent consultations with Syria regarding its declaration. This Council must now confront and address the compelling body of evidence indicating that, regrettably, Syria has never truly accepted the obligations or the ideals of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Madam Chairperson,

In his report, the Director-General underscores that, despite the best efforts of the Secretariat, none of the numerous outstanding issues have been resolved. As a result, the Director-General has informed this Council, as he did prior to the March EC session, that the Secretariat is not able to resolve all identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies in Syria's declaration, and therefore cannot verify that Syria has submitted a declaration that can be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the CWC or the Council's September 2013 decision.

The Director-General's report also contains some specific findings that directly challenge the veracity of Syria's declaration and raise serious doubts about Syrian intentions.

Since the beginning of the DAT process in April 2014, Syria has failed to disclose the prominent role its Scientific Studies and Research Center (SSRC) has played in Syria's chemical weapons program; moreover, Syria has deliberately misrepresented the activities of the SSRC. Syria continued its misrepresentation of the SSRC even as



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sampling and other evidence mounted demonstrating the true role of this center. The Secretariat has now formally concluded that there is a sufficient scientific and technical basis to declare all relevant parts of the SSRC as part of Syria's CW program in accordance with Articles III and VI of the Convention.

Perhaps even more troubling are the results from a large number of samples taken by the Secretariat at Syrian facilities. The Director-General reports that those results indicate potentially undeclared chemical weapons-related activities at multiple locations. Further, sampling and analyses indicate potentially declarable activities involving five chemical warfare agents -- four of which have not been identified or declared by Syria to the OPCW.

The United States has carefully reviewed the reports of the Secretariat and the DAT. We believe the sampling results obtained by the Secretariat are indicative of production, weaponization, and storage of CW agent by the Syrian military that has never been acknowledged by the Syrian government. We, therefore, remain very concerned that CW agent and associated munitions, subject to declaration and destruction, have been illicitly retained by Syria.

Madam Chairperson,

The Technical Secretariat has engaged in an intensive effort of more than two years to verify the declaration and related disclosures of the Syrian Arab Republic. Over the course of this effort, the number and seriousness of outstanding issues have steadily grown, as has the level of concern among many Council members and States Parties. The only constant in this process has been Syria's refusal to be open and transparent about the full extent of its chemical weapons program. Syria has engaged in a calculated campaign of intransigence and obfuscation, of deception, and of defiance: Syria alleges that all of its records have been destroyed; Syrian narratives constantly change and blatantly contradict earlier cover stories; and Syria makes promises of full access to all Syrian officials only to later deny such access.

What should this Council conclude from Syria's refusal to declare the true role of the SSRC, the sampling evidence of undeclared CW activities and agents, the host of other unresolved declaration issues, and the pattern of bad faith by Syrian authorities? What should this Council conclude? For our part, the United States unequivocally concurs in the sober assessment of the Secretariat that 'a continuation of this effort without a change in the approach by the Syrian Arab Republic to resolve all outstanding issues related to its declaration is unlikely to yield concrete results.' For more than two years, the Secretariat and the Council provided Syria with an opportunity to instill international confidence that it had renounced chemical weapons and become a CWC State Party in good standing. Syria has not only squandered that opportunity, it has cynically exploited it.

Madam Chairperson,



At this session, the Council has a responsibility to address firmly the alarming content and implications of the Director-General's report. The United States has submitted for the consideration of the Council a draft decision that expresses deep concern with the report of the Director-General on consultations with Syrian officials and on the many unresolved issues with the Syrian declaration of its CW program. We urge all members of the Council to support this draft decision, and we will make every effort to achieve its adoption by consensus during this session.

Madam Chairperson,

The United States fully appreciates the challenges that Libya faces in destroying its remaining Category 2 chemical weapon materials. Given the dangerous and volatile security situation, we understand Libya's concerns and its proposal to move the chemicals to a port for removal and destruction outside of Libya.

To prepare for this contingency, the United States has been working with the Government of National Accord (GNA), other interested States Parties, the Libyan National Authority, and the Technical Secretariat to develop fully-funded donor architecture and a detailed operational plan. The Executive Council would have an essential role in reviewing and overseeing such an operation and the United States stands ready to work closely with Council members to facilitate any Council action.

Madam Chairperson,

All of us should be concerned by the threat of the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors. In March, Iraq informed this Council that its national investigation had concluded that a terrorist group, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), had used chemical weapons against Peshmerga forces in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Let us never forget that chemical weapons use against anyone, anywhere, is a threat to all of us. This Organization has an important, indeed, an essential role to play in preventing and responding to the threat posed by the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors. The United States is of the firm belief that the OPCW needs to take concrete steps to strengthen the implementation of relevant provisions of the Convention and to enhance the capabilities of the Technical Secretariat. We strongly favor timely action by this Council through a decision.

To that end, in the lead-up to this Council session, the United States has taken part in a broad effort by Member States to develop a comprehensive draft decision that would garner strong consensus support. Such a decision should support full and effective national implementation of the obligations under the Convention and enhance the safety and security of facilities that produce, process, or store toxic chemicals. Furthermore, it is important also to provide enhanced opportunities for assistance, recognizing the implementation challenges that some States Parties face. The Council, in this decision, also welcomes the Secretariat's efforts to enhance its response capacity and readiness to respond to the alleged use of chemical weapons. Further, recognizing the important contribution of OPCW assistance to Iraq's national



investigation, the Council should request the Director-General to establish a permanent capability within the Secretariat to offer such technical assistance to national investigations of CW use.

I urge all members of the Council to support the draft decision regarding the non-State actor threat and, if at all possible, to adopt this decision during this session.

Madam Chairperson,

The United States of America continues to be on track to meet its planned completion date, notwithstanding adjustments to our internal timelines at one of our destruction facilities to ensure all conditions are met for a safe commencement of operations. For the sake of transparency, the United States has shared such information with all Member States of the OPCW, and we will once again have a presentation on progress to date under the appropriate agenda item during this Council session. We welcome the progress of the Russian Federation with respect to the destruction of its remaining chemical weapons arsenals, and extend our appreciation to the Russian Federation for hosting in April 2016 a visit by the Executive Council to the Kizner chemical weapons destruction facility.

Madam Chairperson,

At the Council's last session in March 2016, the United States underscored the deteriorating financial condition of the OPCW and the need for all Member States and the Technical Secretariat to address this looming crisis collectively. In the report of its Eighty-First Session, the Council expressed concern over the overall difficult financial situation of the OPCW. Since then, two financial watchdogs for the OPCW have flagged the cash-flow situation. In its May 2016 report, the External Auditor noted the 'financial pressures' confronting the Organization. In June 2016, the OPCW's Advisory Body on Administrative and Financial Matters -- the ABAF -- 'expressed concern regarding the OPCW cash situation' in its report.

Before considering how to address the financial difficulties facing the OPCW, let us all be clear about the root cause. This troubling situation was not the result of any financial mismanagement on the part of the Secretariat; rather, the OPCW's deteriorating finances are the direct consequence of non-payment by a number of Member States of their financial obligations. Currently, more than 60 Member States are in arrears for their pre-2016 assessments. Of particular concern, we understand the government of Brazil, due to fiscal constraints, is considering which international organizations it will continue supporting and to which ones it will cease paying assessments. The United States urges Brazil to continue its support and participation in the OPCW -- the work of this Organization is undoubtedly essential to the cause of international peace and security.

Non-payment of Article IV and V inspection costs has also directly contributed to the troubling financial situation. More than 85 percent of the outstanding inspection costs

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-- nearly 4 million euros -- are owed by Syria, which has defiantly refused to pay its inspection arrears, even rejecting offers by the European Union to unfreeze Syrian assets for this purpose.

Although it is clear that the Technical Secretariat was not the cause of the looming financial crisis, the Director-General and the Secretariat's financial staff, as stewards of the Organization, must take a leading role in addressing the financial situation. Indeed, in the EC-81 report, the Council 'requested the Director-General to manage the cash flow and financial situation of the Organization and to keep the Council informed about the measures it has taken, or is considering, to mitigate as much as possible the situation.'

Under the agenda item on administrative and financial matters, I intend to address the steps we believe need to be taken to manage the near-term cash flow challenges and, over the longer term, to restore the OPCW to a sound financial footing. The United States is fully committed to working constructively with the Director-General and Member States to navigate this situation prudently and ensure that the OPCW can effectively continue its vital mission.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I request that this statement be posted to both the OPCW external server as well as the public website.