



OPCW

Executive Council

Eighty-Fourth Session
7 – 9 March 2017

EC-84/NAT.28
7 March 2017
ENGLISH and RUSSIAN only

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SHULGIN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,

The delegation of the Russian Federation is pleased to once again welcome you as the head of the Executive Council, and would like to assure you of its full support and preparedness for constructive cooperation to ensure that this session proceeds as successfully as possible.

The Russian Federation is fully dedicated to its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and consistently continues to destroy its remaining stockpiles of chemical weapons. As at 31 January 2017, over 38,500 tonnes of chemical weapons had been destroyed, or 96.6% of the initial stockpile total. The complete elimination of the remaining amount is under way and on schedule at the Kizner facility in the Udmurt Republic.

The Russian Federation has noted the regular reports of the Director-General, as well as the documents submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic on progress made in eliminating the Syrian military chemical capability over the reporting period.

Without a doubt, the Council's decision of 11 November 2016, which was adopted by vote, has substantially complicated work on the Syrian matter, as it has resulted in a schism within the Organisation. Moreover, a number of its provisions, regrettably, are not in compliance with the provisions of the Convention. Nevertheless, the Syrian Arab Republic continues to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat on the full spectrum of matters at hand, including the implementation of said decision. In spite of the challenging security situation, the Government of Syria was able to organise a visit by Secretariat experts to facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in Barzah and Jamraya. This inspection was conducted, and we await the results.

We are in favour of the continuation of a full-format, expert dialogue between the Secretariat and the Syrian Arab Republic in order to regulate all of the issues related to Syria's initial declaration under Article III of the Convention. The openness that Syria has demonstrated is the best evidence of the efforts made by Damascus to cooperate. It is worth recalling that Damascus is fulfilling its obligations under the Convention even as it continues to deal with a large-scale armed conflict within the country.

We welcome the preparedness of Director-General Üzümcü to continue consultations with the Syrian side, including at an expert level. We believe that the matrix developed by the



Secretariat, which brings together all of the questions remaining with regard to Syria's initial declaration and indicates the status of each, is a step in the right direction. Using this as a foundation, it will be possible to move forward by identifying and focusing on the specific issues from this list for which real progress can be achieved by experts. This approach will make it possible to gradually resolve problem areas in full compliance with the Organisation's work standards and practices.

We believe that the activities of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) investigating the use of chemical weapons in Syria will continue to be built on the principles of objectivity, impartiality, and professionalism. It is necessary that everything possible be done to collect convincing evidence related to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, based not on dubious or superficial witness accounts and indirect sources, but real facts, substantiated by material evidence. We consider it of equal importance to ensure increased transparency in the FFM's work. The presence of specific information about which events are being investigated by the FFM will make it possible to provide States Parties with additional information on these incidents, which would then facilitate the investigations. In this case, the reports of the FFM would in fact serve as significant sources of work for the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), which has been tasked with identifying the parties guilty of the use of chemical weapons.

Unfortunately, the problem of the possession and use of chemical weapons by non-State actors is becoming increasingly vital. Terrorist groups now have serious capabilities to produce these types of weapons. The fact that terrorists now have chemical weapons has been confirmed by the FFM and Russian experts who have visited the sites of chemical incidents in Syria. The Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Fact-Finding Mission a large volume of information on a number of such incidents, clearly bearing evidence of the use of toxic chemicals and military-grade chemical weapons by terrorists. We believe that this information should be duly considered when conducting investigations.

These developments confirm the relevance of the development of an international convention on counteracting chemical and biological terrorism; such a convention would be aimed at resolving this problem.

We have been surprised by the attempts of some delegations to raise a question here, the discussion of which took place in New York and was exclusively within the competencies of the United Nations Security Council. It is well known that the initiative of a number of countries with regard to imposing sanctions against Damascus in connection with the findings of the third and fourth reports of the JIM was not supported by the Security Council.

The Russian Federation has laid out its position on the matter during consultations on the draft resolution over the past several months. Nevertheless, the authors of the document deliberately—and with clearly provocative intent—have moved to polarise the Security Council and filled the draft with falsehoods, knowing in advance that this would be unacceptable to the Russian Federation (and not only), and that it would be vetoed. Meanwhile—and I would like to place emphasis on this point—the co-authors declined in every way possible to search for a compromise-based resolution.

There is no doubt that these types of initiatives at the United Nations Security Council and the OPCW could have an extremely negative impact on the prospects for a political solution

in Syria, the negotiations for which resumed on 23 February in Geneva. Damage has also been done to the work aimed at mending the dialogue between the parties within the Syrian Arab Republic, which got off to a productive start in Astana.

It is our opinion that raising this issue in The Hague is inappropriate, and only leads to the politicisation of our Organisation's activities.

We believe it is important to recall that our agenda still contains an item on the disappearance of over 220 tonnes of chemical weapons components at the Ruwagha storage facility in Libya. We expect that the Secretariat will seek out an opportunity to conduct an inspection of the facility as stated in the report of the Eighty-Third Session of the Executive Council.

We continue to carefully follow the status of the implementation of Article VII. Without any additional efforts, we cannot expect to achieve the full implementation of the requirements set out in the Convention at the national level in the near future—and this is a key element of the effectiveness of the Convention. In this regard, we welcome the continuation of informal consultations.

It is also clear that it is necessary to activate the implementation of the provisions of Article XI of the Convention, the effective and non-discriminatory implementation of which is an integral part of the Convention regime. In this regard, we note the work on preparing a summary document that takes into account the vision of all States Parties pertaining to future collaboration under Article XI.

We welcome the beginning of substantive discussions within the framework of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Future Priorities of the OPCW. We are confident that this work, taking into consideration the opinions of all interested States Parties, will help achieve significant, consensus-based results.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

We request that this statement be considered an official document of the Eighty-Fourth Session of the Executive Council.

--- 0 ---