



OPCW

Executive Council

Thirty-Eighth Meeting
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ROBERT P. MIKULAK UNITED STATES
DELEGATION TO THE OPCW AT THE THIRTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

Since the last meeting of this Council on 8 January, the effort to remove chemical agent and key precursor chemicals from the Syrian Arab Republic has seriously languished and stalled. To date, only four percent of the Priority 1 chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic have been removed and roughly the same small percentage of the Priority 2 chemicals. Let us not forget that this Council on 15 November of last year adopted specific timelines for the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, which required that 100 percent of the Priority 1 chemicals be removed from the Syrian Arab Republic by 31 December. The United States recognises that 31 December was an ambitious goal for completing removal of the many tons of Priority 1 chemicals. However, the Syrian Arab Republic had not even begun the transport of Priority 1 chemicals to Latakia by 31 December, despite urgings from the OPCW-UN Joint Mission Special Coordinator to “intensify” its preparation efforts.

Today we are one month past the 31 December completion date set by the Council. Almost none of the Priority 1 chemicals have been removed, and the Syrian government will not commit to a specific schedule for removal. This situation will soon be compounded by the failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to meet the 5 February completion date set by this Council for the removal of all Priority 2 chemicals. The Syrian Arab Republic has said that its delay in transporting these chemicals has been caused by security concerns and insisted on additional equipment—armoured jackets for shipping containers, electronic countermeasures, and detectors for improvised explosive devices. These demands are without merit, and display a “bargaining mentality” rather than a security mentality.

The OPCW-UN Joint Mission and the Technical Secretariat have rightly concluded that the additional equipment demanded by the Syrian Arab Republic is not needed for the safe transport of the chemicals to Latakia. And let us not forget that that these chemicals have often been moved during the ongoing conflict without such equipment, demonstrating that the Syrian Arab Republic has been able to ensure sufficient protection to date with its current capabilities, and without this additional “wish list” of equipment. As Secretary General Ban said recently, “...the Syrian Arab Republic has sufficient material and equipment necessary to carry out multiple ground movements to ensure the expeditious removal of chemical weapons material.” Secretary General Ban added that “...it is imperative that the Syrian Arab Republic now examines the situation, intensifies its efforts to expedite in-country movements of



chemical weapons material, and continues to meet its obligations...” under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118 and the OPCW Executive Council decisions.

The requests by the Syrian Arab Republic for equipment and the open-ended delaying of the removal operation could ultimately jeopardise the carefully timed and coordinated multi-state removal and destruction effort. For our part, the international community is ready to go, and the international operation to remove the chemicals is fully in place and ready to proceed once Syria fulfils its obligation to transport the chemicals to Latakia. On Monday, the United States ship Cape Ray set sail from Norfolk, Virginia, and will be in the Mediterranean shortly. The delay by the Syrian Arab Republic is increasing the costs to nations that have made donations for shipping, escort, and other services related to the removal effort.

The United States is deeply concerned about the failure of the government of the Syrian Arab Republic to transport to Latakia all of the chemical agents and precursors as mandated by OPCW Executive Council decisions.

After missing the 31 December 2013 target date, the first movement of chemical agents took place on 7 January 2014. It took another three weeks, until 27 January 2014, for another shipment to take place. The Syrian Arab Republic must immediately take the necessary actions to comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Executive Council decisions, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118.

It is imperative that the removal effort be conducted with regularity, rather than after long intervals. In order for obligations to be kept, it is essential that the Syrian government establish a plan that will give the international community confidence that movements will be made regularly. There should be no doubt that responsibility for the lack of progress and increasing costs rests solely with the Syrian Arab Republic. In the report for this meeting, the Council should express “deep concern” over the Syrian Arab Republic’s delays in implementation of its chemical weapons elimination obligations and call for the transport of all chemicals to Latakia for removal without any further delay.

At this meeting, there is yet another serious issue involving the Syrian Arab Republic which must be addressed by this Council – the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs). The Syrian Arab Republic has proposed that seven hardened aircraft hangars and five underground structures previously used in connection with the production of its chemical weapons be “inactivated” and rendered inaccessible, for example, by welding doors shut and constructing interior obstacles. These proposed measures are readily reversible within days and clearly do not meet the requirement of “physically destroyed” as provided for by the Convention and the precedents for implementing that requirement.

With respect to the hangars, the United States is willing to explore an approach which would entail collapsing the roof, rendering them “physically destroyed” in line with the Convention.

The tunnels are a more challenging destruction problem that is complicated by the Syrian Arab Republic's revision of its initial declaration. In its conversion proposal, the Syrian Arab Republic declared the entire interior space of the tunnel as a CWPF. When its conversion proposal was rightfully rejected by this Council, the Syrian Arab Republic revised its declaration to encompass only a small fraction of the interior space of the tunnels. It is clear that the Syrian Arab Republic got it right the first time and its revised declaration lacks credibility. With respect to meeting the requirement for physical destruction, the United

States has concluded that the entire tunnel need not be collapsed or filled. Instead, we would propose that the tunnel portals be collapsed and the overall structural integrity of the tunnels be compromised at key junctures.

This Council must reject the Syrian Arab Republic's proposal to "inactivate" its hangar and tunnel CWPFS, rather than physically destroying them as the CWC requires. The United States invites Council members to review the analysis and proposals contained in our recently circulated national paper.

This Council has before it several important decisions that once again underline the commitment of the international community to make an extraordinary effort to destroy Syrian chemical weapons. One is to approve a Model Agreement produced by the Technical Secretariat related to contract arrangements with commercial companies selected for the destruction of Syrian chemicals outside the Syrian Arab Republic. My delegation supports the Decision.

The selection of the companies will be soon completed by the Technical Secretariat on the basis of a tender process conducted in accordance with international bidding standards. To further support the Technical Secretariat's efforts, the decision before us also gives formal and specific authority to the Director-General to conclude, in consultation with the relevant States Parties, commercial contracts for the destruction of the chemicals. This authorisation is fully consistent with the Council's wishes, previously recorded in EC-M-34/DEC.1 and EC-M-36/DEC.2.

The Council also has before it a request for the approval of the verification measures for the destruction of isopropanol in the Syrian Arab Republic, as called for in EC-M-34/DEC.1. My delegation supports the verification plan as submitted.

In closing, let me thank you and the Technical Secretariat, Special Coordinator Kaag and the OPCW-UN Joint Mission, and all of the States Parties that are participating directly in, or contributing to, the operation to remove and destroy Syrian chemical weapons agents and precursors. Thanks to these extraordinary efforts the international community is ready and poised to do its part in successfully implementing the decisions of this Council and the United Nations Security Council. The spotlight now is on the Syrian Arab Republic to proceed without further delay to comply with its obligations and make this effort a success.

The 27 September decision of this Council and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118 will be judged to be historic only if they succeed in eliminating the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The eyes of the world remain upon us to achieve the promise of this effort. Today let us make clear to the Syrian Arab Republic that the eyes of this Council remain upon them.

I request that this statement be made an official document of the meeting.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.