



OPCW

Executive Council

Fortieth Meeting
28 March and 11 April 2014

EC-M-40/NAT.4
11 April 2014
ENGLISH only

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ROBERT P. MIKULAK
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
TO THE OPCW AT THE FORTIETH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

The Council resumes today to closely monitor the implementation of the decisions aimed at elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The good news is that another shipment was carried out yesterday. The bad news is that only a relatively small shipment was made and, unfortunately, almost a week has elapsed since the previous shipment, which was also small. Syria is ignoring the Council's call for accelerated, predictable, and systematic shipments. The only element of predictability is that shipments tend to take place around the time of Council sessions. We continue to observe that the unprecedented levels of international cooperation provided to assist Syria in meeting its obligations are being abused by the Syrian regime. The removal operation is falling even further behind schedule because of Syria's failure to provide the resources needed for its implementation. Let there be no mistake about this. The slow pace is a result of political decisions by Syrian authorities.

Over the past three months Syria has missed removal and destruction milestones established by this body and in two days Syria will again miss a milestone, this time one that it proposed itself. After yesterday's movement, removal of Priority 1 chemicals is still below fifty percent. The destruction of the remaining declared chemical weapons production facilities is also well behind schedule, as a result of Syria insufficiently declaring the full extent of the facilities and proposing destruction methods with outcomes that fall short of the Convention standards, and established precedent. Let me be clear: My delegation cannot accept lowering the Convention's standards or allowing Syria to do less than all other States Parties.

The United States believes that reaching an agreement today on how to proceed with the destruction of the seven hangars would have been a step in the right direction, and we stand ready to work on how to do so and to continue to address the complexities of destroying the underground structures as well. My delegation is deeply disappointed that Syria has not agreed to separate consideration of its destruction plans between hangars and underground structures, making it impossible for my delegation and many others to support the adoption of the combined verification and destruction plans as they currently stand.

Resolution of our concerns with the pace of removal and the destruction of the remaining declared chemical weapons production facilities, crucial as they are, are necessary but not sufficient to achieve the ultimate goal of the historic decisions that this Council and the United Nations Security Council took on 27 September 2013. Many questions remain



unanswered about the information provided in the Syrian disclosures and declarations. These concerns must be resolved before the international community can be confident that the Assad regime will not be in a position to produce or use chemical weapons again, or maintain a covert chemical weapons programme. By gassing its own civilians, Syria proved that its disclosures and declarations cannot be treated just like those of any other State Party.

We share the concern about a number of recent reports that allege that chemical weapons have again been used in the Syrian conflict. While we are not in a position to confirm or corroborate these reports, we take them seriously and are very carefully looking into them. They cannot be ignored or brushed off.

Syria's actions were a violation of long-standing international norms. The international community came together to create the Geneva Framework and adopt United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118 (2013) and the decisions of this Council to address these horrific acts in a resolute and unified way. For precisely this reason, Syria is subject to the decisions made by this body and the United Nations Security Council, in addition to its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The goal of all of this work has been, continues to be, and must be the complete elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. As the removal operation of the remaining chemicals continues, the Executive Council will need to maintain its oversight of the elimination of all aspects of the Syrian chemical weapons program.

As I emphasised on 28 March, this Council, States Parties, and the Technical Secretariat need to review and further assess the declaration, amendments, and disclosures of the Syrian Arab Republic to verify that these submissions are fully accurate and complete. Appropriate steps must be taken to resolve those ambiguities and concerns, if we are to achieve international confidence that Syria has met its obligations and the Syrian chemical weapons programme has been fully 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.

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