



OPCW

Executive Council

Fortieth Meeting
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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

**STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO
THE OPCW AT THE FORTIETH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

The United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement given by the distinguished Ambassador of Greece on behalf of the European Union.

And like previous speakers we welcome the update today given by the Director-General.

Since we last met there has been very little ‘progress’. It remains the case that one site holds the remaining elements of Syria’s declared chemical weapon stockpile. And since we last discussed the issue we have received no information to suggest when we might expect this material to be moved nor any indication that preparations are being made to allow a movement to be made any time soon. Syria continues to possess approximately 100 metric tonnes of material. The materials at Site 2 are not trivial in quantity or quality – based on the Syrian declaration, the site contains all the precursors needed to produce nerve agent, and sufficient material to replicate, many times over, the incident in the suburbs of Damascus on 21 August last year. It goes almost without saying that this gives cause for a great deal of concern.

In the last days, and in the absence of any sign of action from inside Syria, we have heard voices suggesting that destruction should start before Syria gets the removal job done. But there are practical implications in this suggestion: the chemicals awaiting removal are both Priority 1 and Priority 2 material and their destruction will take place aboard the Cape Ray, and also in the United Kingdom, the United States and in Finland. So both the Danish and Norwegian ships sit in the Mediterranean with partial loads, waiting for their final shipments. Syria is holding up the next steps of transportation, transshipment, unloading and ultimately destruction. These delays and the resulting question marks over whether the final 30 June destruction deadline can be met, all fall at Syria’s door.

There are actions that Syria can and must take now. At the next meeting of this Council, I hope to hear that all declared material has been moved. If that has not been achieved then, at the very least, we hope to learn that the material is packed and ready for shipping and to be briefed on the options that have been considered to expedite this process. I would also expect to hear that the remaining stocks of isopropanol have been verified as destroyed as there seems only limited justification for continuing delay. I should also briefly recall that Syria has made no progress towards destruction of their former chemical weapon production



facilities: another deadline missed, or perhaps ignored. There appears no reason why the seven hangars at least cannot and should not be destroyed immediately. The lack of progress on all these issues is far from satisfactory.

We were of course pleased to hear that the Director-General has made progress and despatched an advance team into the field to prepare for the OPCW's mission to establish the facts about the recent renewed allegations of the use of chemicals in the Syrian conflict. An independent and thorough investigation is essential, and we remain ready to support the Director-General and his staff in this undertaking. We welcome the readiness of the United Nations Secretary-General to provide support to this mission and hope that both organisations will see the benefit of continued cooperation. Syria must provide the necessary support for the team. For our part we have urged the Syrian National Coalition to help provide the necessary access and support the mission in their effort to reach the affected areas. As they did last summer, we fully expect them to cooperate.

It is in the interests of all Syria's people that the Syrian chemical weapon programme is verifiably and completely destroyed and any concerns about discrepancies in Syria's declaration and allegations are investigated and resolved so that these weapons can be eliminated as a threat to them. So although the final deadline approaches, much remains to be done.

Finally Mr Chairman I would just like to express our gratitude for your role over the past year in steering this Council's work, especially given that the additional hours on the Syria file were so unexpected this time last year.

I ask that this Statement be circulated as an official document of this meeting.

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