



OPCW

Executive Council

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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 FORTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

At the outset, I want to welcome you as the new Chairperson of our Executive Council. The US Delegation looks forward to working with you during the coming twelve months and supporting you fully as you take over the leadership of the Council.

Mr Chairman, Mr Director-General, Distinguished delegates,

Here we are again, just two weeks after finishing the Council's fortieth meeting. I know that some might be wondering whether this meeting - and others like it between the regularly scheduled sessions is necessary. What is the point of the statements, when they are similar to what has been said before? What is the point of meetings if Syria ignores what is said by Council members and disregards its obligations to eliminate its chemical weapons programme?

Simply put, we are here because Syria is not behaving like a State Party that takes its obligations seriously. Syria is not just another State Party.

We are also here because of the Council's responsibility to ensure the complete elimination of the chemical weapons programme by a government that used chemical weapons against its own population less than a year ago, a government that is alleged to have continued to use chemical weapons as recently as this month, despite its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, United Nations Security Council resolutions, and the decisions of this Executive Council.

In recent months, Syria has been dragging its feet on the implementation of its own obligations to eliminate its chemical weapons programme. In fact, every target date set by the Council since January - and even dates set by Syria itself has been missed. As others have pointed out today, Syria appears to show progress only when this Council voices criticism and the international community focuses pressure on Syria to fulfill its obligations. The deadline established by this Council and the United Nations Security Council for the elimination of Syria's entire chemical weapons programme is a little more than a month away and much remains to be done. If this date is not met, the responsibility will lie entirely with Syria.



Since we met on 8 May, there have been some new developments. In particular, as the Director-General has reported, some packing materials have been transported by air to the site where the last declared chemical weapons remain, and the isopropyl alcohol there has been destroyed. Additional steps have been taken to prepare the chemicals to be loaded into shipping containers and moved to Latakia. Outside experts have briefed Syrian experts on the use of controlled explosive demolition for destroying the seven hardened aircraft shelters that are chemical weapons production facilities. These steps are necessary and constructive, but they are only preparatory in nature.

The troubling reality is that significant quantities of chemical weapons precursors remain in Syria well past the date for their removal. Ships from a half-dozen countries assisting with the removal process sit idle in the Mediterranean, with costs running far beyond what was envisioned. Twelve Syrian chemical weapons production facilities remain intact, well beyond the 15 March 2014 deadline for their destruction. The OPCW continues to have work to do to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the Syrian declaration and serious new concerns about Syria using chemical weapons again have arisen.

With respect to removal of chemicals, it is helpful that Syria implemented a suggestion made here in the Council a month ago - to take some steps to prepare the remaining one hundred tons of chemicals for shipment so that they can be removed without further delay. I must reiterate - it is Syria's responsibility to fulfill its obligations and remove the remaining chemicals from its territory, rather than complain about how difficult the task is to complete. In fact, inaction by the Syrian Government contributed mightily to this unsatisfactory situation.

Regarding the destruction of the remaining twelve declared production facilities, the recent briefing in Beirut is a positive step. The fact remains that actual destruction of the facilities has not started - and in any case won't be finished for months - even though it was supposed to be completed in March. Experts have technical questions and have identified problems with the destruction plans that, after many delays, Syria proposed to the Council at the end of March. However, Syria has refused to meet and discuss them and at the same time has been using the absence of a Council decision as an excuse for doing nothing. In fact, Syria has squandered two months that could have been used to fulfill its obligations. It has become all too clear that Syria is trying to use the Technical Secretariat as a shield, inaccurately claiming that the plan proposed is a joint plan, rather than Syria's plan. As the Director-General has explained to the Council, the Secretariat has provided advice and options to Syria, but the plan is Syria's alone. Syria has to prove to the Council that its plan meets the requirements of the Convention for full physical destruction. It has so far failed to do so.

The problems with Syria's destruction plan for the twelve facilities fall into two general categories: failure to specify a sound technical approach to destruction of the seven aircraft shelters, and failure to include in the plan areas of the underground structures that were directly related to chemical weapons production activities. My delegation has been and is still ready to discuss these issues at any time. We are not inflexible, but these matters are not just minor details that can be discounted. We have been waiting for two months to discuss them and Syria is once again deliberately dragging its feet in fulfilling its obligations.

Listening to the discussions today, I sense a great deal of frustration on the issue of the chemical weapons production facilities. My delegation is available to discuss the issue with

any other delegation at any time. We can proceed with the destruction of the seven hangars. We are available to work with delegations on this.

It is important that Syria respond substantially to questions about discrepancies in its declarations and that the responses be adequately documented. If its assertions are grounded in fact, Syria should have no problem producing corroborating documentation about its chemical weapons programme. Assertions alone will not build confidence in this Council, the United Nations Security Council or the international community that the Syrian chemical weapons programme has been completely eliminated. We look forward to information from the Director-General about the discussions underway with Syria about the accuracy and completeness of the declarations.

Finally, information continues to accumulate that toxic chemicals have been used as chemical weapons in the ongoing civil war. Determining the facts - and if use is substantiated, taking appropriate action - is critical to protecting the people of Syria and upholding the Convention. We hope that the OPCW team in Syria will be able to do its work and share its preliminary findings expeditiously.

I request that this statement be considered an official document of the Forty-First Meeting of the Executive Council and posted on the OPCW public website and external server without delay.

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