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**SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BASSAM SABBAGH  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC  
TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

At the outset, I should like to congratulate you on assuming the chairmanship of the Executive Council for the coming period, and wish you success in steering its deliberations. We stand ready to extend to you our full cooperation to achieve this objective.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E. Ambassador Haifa Aissami Madah, Permanent Representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on behalf of the Members of the Non-Aligned Movement that are Parties to the Convention, and China.

The Director-General has mentioned the meetings held by the Syrian representatives and the Technical Secretariat within the framework of their structured dialogue. Syria has welcomed such dialogue, through which it has extended its full cooperation. The Declaration Assessment Team has continued its discussions of the outstanding issues, and has been granted unfettered access to the requested sites where it has conducted field visits. Also, the Syrian side has provided scientific clarifications and convincing explanations with a view to closing all the outstanding issues. These meetings were scheduled to continue in Damascus, but the Technical Secretariat has postponed them until further notice, which raises questions about the reasons for such deferral, especially since the two parties were looking forward to continuing the tangible progress achieved in regard to the outstanding issues.

Now, with respect to what has been said about the non-granting of entry visas to the Coordinator for the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), my delegation wishes to clarify to Member States that, since its accession to the Convention, Syria has never failed to issue timely entry visas for any of the Technical Secretariat staff deployed to conduct their missions in Syria. However, with respect to the IIT, the matter relates to the clear and firm position of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the decision by the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties, adopted in June 2018, pursuant to which said IIT was established. We have expressed that position on multiple occasions, namely that the issue is not about a particular person or a meeting venue; it is rather related to the lack of international legitimacy of the said decision as it runs contrary to the provisions of the Convention, and was adopted in a manner widely departing from the OPCW tradition of consensus, which is the keystone for all its decisions. That decision caused a wide chasm and divide between the States Parties, due to some States persistently politicising the work of this



Organisation and using it as a stage to level accusations against a member State. We have already started to hear such accusations by some delegations, before the IIT has even begun its work and presented its findings. Therefore, I wish to underscore that the non-granting of an entry visa to the IIT Coordinator has nothing to do with Damascus as the meeting venue. So, whether the meeting is held in Beirut or even here in The Hague, Syria's position concerning the IIT remains consistent with its position regarding the decision.

Terrorist al-Qaeda groups, such as Daesh, Jabhat al-Nusra, the Turkestan Party, and others, are acquiring and transporting chemical weapons, aided by some States and their intelligence agencies, in order to perpetrate terrorist chemical attacks with the help of their direct accomplice, the "White Helmets", and then accuse the Syrian government of such attacks.

The Syrian Arab Republic has been regularly providing the Technical Secretariat with all information obtained in this regard, and has extended its full cooperation to the Fact-Finding mission (FFM) in order for it to conduct its work in a professional and independent manner and thus reach scientifically sound, logical and objective findings that would reflect the truth. Syria has expressed on multiple occasions its grave concern regarding the negative aspects and deficiencies in the working modalities and methodology of the FFM. Regrettably, there has been no change or improvement in these working methods, which had largely affected the findings of the FFM and the credibility of its reports. Its latest one, on the alleged Douma incident, is a case in point. Therefore, we did have solid grounds for requesting officially from the Technical Secretariat, through a letter addressed by the Deputy-Foreign Minister to the Director-General, on 1 May, to conduct with us in-depth and comprehensive discussions on the terms of reference of the FFM to fill the existing loopholes and make its working methods transparent and fully consistent with the standards and provisions stipulated in the Convention and its Verification Annex.

Also, we requested on 1 July that another technical briefing on the Douma incident report be held, in light of the new information that has surfaced recently, whether through the leaked engineering report by an investigator, namely Mr Henderson, or in the superficial and unconvincing answers contained in the FFM response to the written questions that the Syrian and Russian delegations have submitted to it, or also in the important analyses of the FFM report, made by the Working Group on Syria led by Professor Robinson, as well as the remarks and comments published by a number of international researchers and journalists. Regrettably, however, the Technical Secretariat did not respond positively to that request.

My delegation considers that disregarding the importance of the contents of inspector Henderson's leaked report, especially by certain delegations that have always expressed their confidence in all the staff of the Technical Secretariat and have rejected any doubts concerning their professionalism and the credibility of their work, is but clear proof that those same States are following a double-standard approach and that the only thing they care about is advancing their hostile policies against Syria.

My delegation has taken note of the Technical Secretariat reports on the third and fourth rounds of inspections by OPCW inspectors at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in 2018. We have also taken note of the summary of those reports, stating that "the inspection team did not observe any activities inconsistent with obligations under the Convention". The Syrian National Authority is currently conducting an in-depth review of the said reports and will submit the required explanations to the Technical Secretariat concerning some of their contents. In this regard, my delegation wishes to draw Council members' attention to the fact

that these reports have noted the cooperation extended by the Syrian Arab Republic to OPCW inspectors, allowing them unfettered access to all requested sites and locations, and providing them with the necessary escort for their protection.

I should like to conclude my statement by stressing that Syria is committed to implementing all its obligations under the Convention, in cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, and reaffirms its condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, anywhere, and under any circumstances, and its rejection of all the politicised accusations we heard in the statements by some delegations. I wish to stress that the support provided by certain States to terrorist groups, and their facilitating these groups' access to chemical weapons, have brought long suffering unto the Syrian people. The irony is that these are the same States that now accuse Syria. For example, the United States of America is accusing Syria while committing violations of international law, and having perpetrated twice a direct military aggression against sovereign Syrian territory. It accuses Syria while maintaining an illegal military presence on part of Syrian territory, and imposing coercive, unilateral, and illegitimate sanctions against the Syrian people. Hasn't the time come for these States to stop exploiting the suffering of the Syrian people, and put an end to their immoral politicisation of the work of this Organisation?

I wish to request that this statement be considered an official document of the Ninety-First Session of the Executive Council.

I thank you.

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