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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**

**UNDER AGENDA SUBITEM 6(C):
ELIMINATION OF THE SYRIAN CHEMICAL PROGRAMME**

Mr Chairperson,

My delegation has taken note of the report by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and stresses that the Syrian Arab Republic continues to cooperate fully with the Technical Secretariat in line with the Director-General approach within the framework of the Structured Dialogue aimed at resolving all the outstanding issues in the Syrian declaration. This approach has led to tangible progress, which is reflected in the final closure of one outstanding issue and the agreement to address eight others aimed at closing them, following field visits, the collection of samples, and the subsequent assessment of information. This took place during the most recent visit by the DAT to Syria. The 11 remaining issues are also expected to be addressed in line with the same approach.

I wish to make four clarifying remarks in response to comments by certain delegations based on the contents of the report.

First remark, on the doubts cast on the Syrian declaration:

Certain States continue to cast doubts on the Syrian declaration. This is unacceptable and erroneous. Syria never failed to submit its declarations or implement its obligations pursuant to the Executive Council's decisions, stemming from its accession to the Convention, nor did it spare any effort to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat in a positive and constructive manner in order to complete its declaration.

Second remark, on cooperation with the Declaration Assessment Team:

The latest report by the Director-General clearly notes the cooperation of the Syrian National Authority's experts during the latest two rounds of consultations with the DAT, both in The Hague and Damascus. Cooperation was extended to the DAT during its visits and sampling activities. Also, the DAT was provided with information and clarifications on several issues, which should lead to significant progress and contribute to closing gaps in other issues.



Third remark, on the destruction of debris and equipment:

Following the completion of inspections, verification activities and the destruction of facilities and equipment for the production of chemical weapons precursors, Syria received from the Technical Secretariat, at the end of 2014, a document certifying the completion of said activities and stating that the destroyed equipment could be freely disposed of.

However, in the course of its operations in 2015, the DAT requested that the destroyed equipment and munitions be kept on-site for the purpose of conducting activities aimed at clarifying gaps in the Syrian declaration. The Syrian Arab Republic has complied with that request, and the DAT conducted subsequent visits to those sites and took samples from the destroyed equipment and munitions.

However, due to a year and half of inertia, during which the DAT did not conduct any other activities, the issue of disposal of said equipment and munitions was considered at several meetings with the Technical Secretariat. Recently, the officer in charge of the sites determined that the purpose of maintaining the remnants had been fulfilled and, considering their harmful impact on the surrounding environment and fearing they might be tampered with, he arranged in good faith for their transfer to and smelting at a smelting plant. This operation was documented by video.

Fourth remark, on the gas cylinders observed by the DAT during its latest visit:

The aforementioned empty cylinders were already verified during the Technical Secretariat's early missions in 2013 at the Al-Nasiriyah 1 and Al-Dhamir 3 sites. During these missions, the purpose of the existence of these cylinders was declared and the DAT was provided with detailed explanations of the chemical mechanism relating to their use. However, the cylinders were not destroyed as they were likely to contain traces of gas, and their destruction might cause widespread contamination with these pungent and harmful gases according to the opinion of the inspection team at the time.

Later, these cylinders were transferred to the Hafir 1 site and kept with the remaining equipment destroyed there. This is the site where the DAT saw the cylinders during its previous visits. But it deemed it appropriate to raise the issue of their presence only during its most recent visit.

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

I thank you.