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**THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BASSAM SABBAGH  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC TO THE  
OPCW ON THE FIRST REPORT OF THE OPCW INVESTIGATION AND  
IDENTIFICATION TEAM ISSUED ON 8 APRIL 2020**

Ladies and gentlemen, representatives of the States Parties to the Convention,

On 8 April, the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) of the Organisation issued a report of the so-called “Investigation and Identification Team” which included wrong conclusions based on false and fabricated information, with the aim of falsifying facts and accusing the Syrian government of using toxic chemicals in the alleged incidents that occurred on 24, 25, and 30 March of 2017 in the town of Al Latamna – Hama Governorate.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns in the strongest terms the conclusions contained in the report of the so-called "Investigation and Identification Team" which lacks legitimacy, rejects it in form and in substance, and considers it a translation of the desires of the United States of America and its Western allies to target Syria. At the same time, Syria categorically denies that it has used toxic chemicals in the town of Al Latamna or in any other Syrian city or village, and affirms that the Syrian Arab Army, with its high virtue, never used these weapons and did not possess them.

It is important to recall here that the establishment of the "Investigation and Identification Team" was a result of the failure of several attempts by the United States of America and its Western allies to exploit the reports of the Joint Investigation Mechanism, which prompted those irresponsible countries to push for tampering with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”), and then push to vote on a decision during a Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties in June 2018 to establish this team, which was supported by less than half of the whole membership of the Organisation, rendering it an illegitimate team.

The Syrian Arab Republic regrets the Secretariat’s insistence to continue to work with the same approach that lacks professionalism, transparency, and credibility, and violates the most basic rules of investigation and principles of integrity, which it had previously followed in the reports of the Fact-Finding Mission, and currently follows in this report for the Investigation and Identification Team. This approach has always led to false and unconventional conclusions. Syria is also very surprised that the Secretariat did not bother to take into account the legitimate concerns expressed by a number of Member States of the Organisation and their dissatisfaction with the fraud and manipulation of events regarding an alleged incident in Douma in April 2018.



Syria and a number of States Parties to the Convention have repeatedly expressed substantive and serious legal concerns as a result of the Secretariat's failure to comply with the requirements contained in the Verification Annex of the Convention, especially with the remote investigations conducted – from Turkish territory – and the absence of logical sequence in the collection and preservation of material evidence. Syria is also concerned about the Secretariat's absence of a legal chain of custody of samples, along with reliance on videos and fabricated images published on the internet, or witness statements provided by armed terrorist groups and its arm, the White Helmets, or what the United States of America and some Western countries have provided, who are already involved in supporting terrorist groups on Syrian soil to serve their hostile political agendas.

The Syrian Arab Republic reminds those in charge of this Organisation that Syria with a number of other countries exposed during the work of the Ninety-Third Session of the Executive Council last March the pressures and suspicious contacts that the United States of America had made with Member States of the Organisation prior to the issuance of this report, and they also exposed what the American diplomats have done - provocatively - in a number of capitals to promote this report, in a blatant hijacking of the powers of the Secretariat of the Organisation. The practice of the United States which is based on all kind of blackmailing on Member States in support of the conclusions of this report, clearly indicates that the preparation and writing of this report was carried out in advance in the American and Western intelligence services, or upon their instructions, with the aim of covering aggression crimes committed by each of the United States of America and its French and British allies in Syria. What confirms the doubts of the Syrian Arab Republic is the fact that these Western countries launched expressions of support for the report only minutes after it was issued and without taking the time to study it.

It was clear that the success achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in the elimination of its chemical weapons did not please the United States and its Western allies, who wanted to invest in this file to destabilise security and stability in Syria, weaken its government, and undermine its capabilities. Thus, they pushed their agents and their mercenaries towards using chemical weapons and toxic chemicals against civilians and against the Syrian army, to fabricate scenarios and provide false witnesses in order to build void accusations against Syria, and endeavoured with all its powers to ignore the information repeatedly provided by Syria to the Secretariat about the possession of toxic chemicals by terrorist groups, transporting them from the Turkish territories towards Syria, and training the terrorist groups to use them.

The United States of America in committing atrocities amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity in Iraq and Afghanistan, and before that in Vietnam and Japan, and its occupation of Syrian lands in the northeast of the country, is not eligible to talk about accountability. Moreover, its failure to end the destruction of its chemical weapons arsenal to this date, and to continue the postponement under flimsy pretexts, is not qualified to talk about cases of non-compliance or the fulfilment of the States Parties' obligations under the Convention.

The Syrian Arab Republic denounces the representative of the United States of America and the representatives of some other States Parties for using inappropriate language in their statements in describing the government of the Syrian Arab Republic, in which they violate the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of international law and diplomatic speech. Syria affirms that it can respond in the same way to those representatives, but it distances itself from slipping to this inappropriate level.

Finally, and based on the above, the Syrian Arab Republic affirms that the conclusions reached by the so-called "Investigation and Identification Team" in its report are not worthy of any trust, and it proves categorically the reasons for the refusal of this team by Syria alongside with a number of other States Parties, as they realise in advance that this team is a tool to politicise the work of this Organisation and to turn it into a platform that serves the goals of well-known countries. The Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the States Parties to reject these false and fabricated new allegations, as it warns of the dangers arising from the transformation of this Organisation into a tool for the implementation of the hostile plans of the United States of America and its allies, and into an arena for settling political accounts with Syria, who is fighting terrorism on behalf of the whole world.

The Syrian Arab Republic requests that this statement be considered as an official document submitted in response to the report of the Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and to place it immediately on the external server and the public website of the Organisation.

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