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**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
FOLLOWING DISCUSSIONS UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(C)
ON THE ELIMINATION OF THE SYRIAN CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMME**

Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

I would like to respond to comments raised by some delegations today with regard to the Syrian initial declaration and the supposedly differential treatment that Syria receives.

It has been suggested that no States Parties have ever been placed under such stringent verification measures as those imposed on the Syrian Arab Republic.

Let me tell you this: it is true that no other State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention has been placed under the same verification regime as the Syrian Arab Republic.

The reason for this is that paragraph 8 of Article IV of the Convention provides a specific framework for a possessor State joining the Convention more than 10 years after its entry into force, that is, after 29 April 2007, as was the case when Syria joined the Convention in 2013.

This Article provides that the order of destruction and procedures for stringent verification for such a possessor State shall be determined by the Executive Council.

In this context, the Executive Council decided, on 27 September 2013 (EC-33/DEC.1), on the nature of the stringent verification regime for the Syrian Arab Republic as a possessor State joining the Convention after the 10-year period.

After acceding to the Convention, Syria provided an initial declaration, as set forth by the Convention.

The verification of this declaration by the Secretariat resulted in the identification of numerous ambiguities and inconsistencies.

Since 2014, as allegations of use of chemical weapons have been reported in Syria after its accession, States Parties have expressed concerns about the accuracy and completeness of Syria's initial declaration.

In order to ensure an accurate and complete declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic, the Secretariat put in place, in April 2014, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT).



The DAT's mandate is based on both the Convention and on subsequent relevant Executive Council decisions.

This mandate is to verify Syria's initial declaration, through means of bilateral consultations with the Syrian National Authority.

These consultations include high-level exchanges, field visits to sites related to Syria's chemical programme, sample taking, and interviews with relevant staff connected to the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

In the course of the last seven years, the work of the DAT has brought the Syrian Arab Republic to declare elements of its chemical weapons programme that Syria had initially not declared, or stated it did not have, including:

- (a) one additional chemical weapons production facility;
- (b) four additional research and development facilities, including two sites at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (the SSRC);
- (c) five previously undeclared chemical warfare agents; and
- (d) several thousand large calibre chemical munitions, as well as other information on all the segments of Syria's chemical weapons programme.

All these elements were absent or incomplete in the Syrian initial declaration.

Through intense rounds of consultations, 24 to date, Syria has amended its initial declaration in 17 instances, always in line with the DAT's findings.

Today, 19 issues remain outstanding, and the Secretariat has continued to bilaterally engage with the Syrian Arab Republic in order to resolve them.

The number of issues is of concern.

But the nature of outstanding issues is just as concerning:

- (a) several hundred tonnes of chemical warfare agents and/or thousands of chemical munitions of which the reported destruction or consumption prior to Syria's accession to the Convention still cannot be verified by the Secretariat;
- (b) indicators of three undeclared chemical warfare agents found in the samples collected by the DAT;
- (c) inaccurate and incomplete scope of declarable activities conducted at the SSRC; and
- (d) unknown, potentially significant, quantities of chemical warfare agents of which the production and/or weaponisation in chemical weapons production facilities has not yet been declared to the Secretariat.

This morning, the Permanent Representation of the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW mentioned that a note verbale had just been sent to the Secretariat in relation to the Secretariat's request to declare the production and/or weaponisation of nerve agents at one chemical weapons production facility.

While I cannot share the content with States Parties in today's open sitting, as the note verbale has been classified by Syria as Protected, here is what I can share with you: in this note verbale, the Syrian Arab Republic considers that discussions are still ongoing with the Secretariat with regard to this matter.

You have all been informed through the Secretariat's last reports that this is no longer the case: the Secretariat has assessed all available information, including explanations provided by the Syrian Arab Republic, to justify the presence of chemical nerve agents at this site.

The elements provided by the Syrian experts cannot explain the consistent presence of indicators of nerve agents in the samples taken by the Secretariat at this site, in the presence of the Syrian authorities, over the last seven years.

In addition to collecting samples, the DAT also conducted 13 interviews with persons directly or indirectly involved in activities related to this site.

Through these interviews, the DAT received inconsistent and contradicting information in respect of that provided by the Syrian National Authority.

In line with its note verbale dated 21 October 2020, the Secretariat maintains that the Syrian Arab Republic needs to declare all chemical warfare agents produced and/or weaponised at this site.

For more information, I invite States Parties to consult the Director-General's Addendum to the Report on the Work of the DAT, (EC-95/HP/DG.2/Add.1, dated 18 November 2020) and the DAT's last report (EC-96/HP/DG.1, dated 5 March 2021).

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