



Ninety-Seventh Session

6 – 9 July 2021

EC-97/DG.3

23 April 2021

Original: ENGLISH

### REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

#### PROGRESS IN THE ELIMINATION OF THE SYRIAN CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMME

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.
2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities” (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation “in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria” (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015), noting the Director-General’s intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM), along with information on the Council’s discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled “Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director-General’s intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.
4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled “OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall “regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1”.



5. The Council, at its Ninety-Fourth Session, adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-94/DEC.2, dated 9 July 2020). In paragraph 12 of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall “regularly report to the Council on the implementation of this decision and decide[d] also that the Director-General shall provide a copy of this decision and its associated reports by the Secretariat to all States Parties and to the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly through the United Nations Secretary-General”.
6. This, the ninety-first monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 24 March to 23 April 2021.

#### **Impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)**

7. As previously reported, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the Secretariat’s ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretariat is maintaining its readiness for deployments, which are being conducted subject to the evolution of the pandemic. The travel restrictions notwithstanding, the Secretariat is continuing its mandated activities related to the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in this regard.

#### **Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1**

8. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:
  - (a) As stated in previous reports, the Secretariat has verified the destruction of all 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic.
  - (b) On 15 April 2021, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its eighty-ninth monthly report (EC-97/P/NAT.2, dated 15 April 2021) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

#### **Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities**

9. As stated in previous reports, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have been destroyed.

#### **Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5**

10. The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continues its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with paragraph 3 of Council decision EC-81/DEC.4, paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, and paragraph 5 of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2.

11. As reported previously, regarding the issue of a former CWPF that was declared as never having been used to produce and/or weaponise chemical weapons, the Syrian Arab Republic has reiterated that this CWPF was never used for the production of chemical weapons. In keeping with the remarks made by the Director-General to the Council at its Ninety-Sixth Session, the Secretariat continues to maintain that the Syrian Arab Republic must declare all chemical warfare agents produced and/or weaponised at this site.
12. As also previously reported, on 8 March 2021 the Secretariat received a note verbale from the Syrian Arab Republic containing explanations regarding the results of the analysis of samples collected by the DAT from several large volume storage containers in the Syrian Arab Republic during the twenty-third round of consultations, in September 2020. The DAT conducted a detailed analysis of all information provided by the Syrian National Authority and assessed that the aforementioned explanations are not sufficient to explain the sample analysis results. One of the chemicals detected in these samples is a neat chemical warfare agent, the production of which has not been declared by the Syrian Arab Republic. Its presence inside storage containers of large volume at a previously declared chemical weapons facility may imply undeclared production activities. Through a note verbale dated 16 April 2021, and in line with the established practice, the Secretariat informed the Syrian Arab Republic that a new outstanding issue would be opened and discussed at the next round of consultations with the DAT, which are currently planned to take place in mid-May 2021.
13. At this stage, considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”), Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). The Secretariat will continue to engage with the Syrian National Authority regarding the remaining outstanding issues in its initial declaration and subsequent submissions, and will continue to keep the Council updated regarding progress made in these activities.
14. In accordance with paragraph 10 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat is continuing to assess conditions for the conduct of inspections at the sites identified by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in its third and fourth reports. In doing so, the Secretariat is taking into account the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.
15. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat conducted the seventh round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) between 8 and 13 November 2020. The outcome of these inspections will be reported to the Council in due course. The conduct of further deployments remains subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.
16. With regard to the finding of a Schedule 2.B.04 chemical that was detected during the third round of inspections at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC, the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the Secretariat to close this issue.

**Other activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic**

17. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) continues to provide support to the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement concluded between the OPCW, UNOPS, and the Syrian Arab Republic. This agreement facilitates the Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and to any subsequent decision or resolution of the relevant organs of the OPCW or the United Nations, as well as any bilateral agreements concluded between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic. On 31 March 2021, the three parties finalised a six-month extension to the Tripartite Agreement that will cover the period from 1 April up to and including 30 September 2021.
18. As at the cut-off date of this report, one OPCW staff member was deployed as part of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria**

19. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 4 February 2015 and 23 November 2015, respectively), as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), the FFM continues to study all available information relating to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.
20. The FFM is continuing its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic and other States Parties with regard to a variety of incidents. Between 29 March and 13 April 2021, the FFM deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic to collect information and conduct interviews regarding an incident that took place in Kafr Zita, Hama, on 1 October 2016. The FFM will report to the Council on the results of its activities in due course.
21. The planning and conduct of further FFM deployments are subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 of the Conference of the States Parties at its Fourth Special Session related to the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic**

22. Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018), adopted by the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter "the Conference") at its Fourth Special Session, addresses, inter alia, the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.
23. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat established the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic by identifying and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those chemical weapons in those instances in which the FFM determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, and cases for which the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism did not issue a report.

24. On 12 April 2021, the Secretariat issued a Note entitled “Second Report by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team Pursuant to Paragraph 10 of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” Saraqib (Syrian Arab Republic) – 4 February 2018” (S/1943/2021, dated 12 April 2021). In this report, the IIT concluded, on the basis of all the information obtained and its analysis, that there are reasonable grounds to believe that at approximately 21:22 on 4 February 2018, during ongoing attacks against Saraqib, a military helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force under the control of the Tiger Forces hit eastern Saraqib by dropping at least one cylinder. The cylinder ruptured and released a toxic gas, chlorine, which dispersed over a large area affecting 12 named individuals.
25. As mandated by paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the report has been provided to the Council and to the United Nations Secretary-General for their consideration.
26. The IIT is continuing its investigations and will issue further reports in due course, subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2**

27. With regard to the inspections mandated by paragraph 8 of EC-94/DEC.2, the Secretariat is monitoring the current security situation and will inform the Syrian Arab Republic when it is prepared to deploy for this purpose. The conduct of these inspections will also be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Decision on addressing the possession and use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic**

28. At its twenty-fifth regular session, the Conference adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC.9, dated 21 April 2021). In paragraph 7 of this decision, the Conference decided, after careful review, and without prejudice to the Syrian Arab Republic’s obligations under the Convention, pursuant to subparagraph 21(k) of Article VIII and paragraph 2 of Article XII of the Convention, to suspend the following rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention:
  - (a) to vote in the Conference and the Council;
  - (b) to stand for election to the Council; and
  - (c) to hold any office of the Conference, the Council, or any subsidiary organs.
29. In paragraph 8 of the decision, the Conference decided that the Director-General shall regularly report to the Council and States Parties on whether the Syrian Arab Republic has completed all of the measures contained in paragraph 5 of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2, and decided also that the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic suspended in accordance with paragraph 7 of decision C-25/DEC.9 are reinstated by the Conference once the Director-General has reported to the Council that the Syrian Arab Republic has completed all of these measures. The Secretariat will continue to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic with regard to the measures contained in paragraph 5 of decision EC-94/DEC.2.

30. In paragraph 12 of decision C-25/DEC.9, the Conference further decided that the Director-General shall provide a copy of this decision to all States Parties and to the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly through the United Nations Secretary-General.

### **Supplementary resources**

31. The Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the FFM and other remaining activities, which presently include the work of the DAT and the IIT, as well as the biannual inspections of the SSRC and the two sites identified in paragraph 8 of EC-94/DEC.2. As at the cut-off date of this report, total contributions to this fund stood at EUR 34 million. Contribution agreements had been concluded with Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

### **Conclusion**

32. The future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will focus on the work of the FFM; the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration-related issues; inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah sites of the SSRC; the implementation of Conference decision C-SS-4/DEC.3; the implementation of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2; and the implementation of Conference decision C-25/DEC.9.

-----o-----