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SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

**STATEMENT BY MS RANIA ALRIFAIY
CHARGÉ D’AFFAIRES OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF
THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(C)**

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on assuming the chairmanship of the Council and to express to you our full readiness to cooperate with you for the success of your mission, in line with the Convention. We would also like to thank His Excellency Ambassador Vásquez Gómez of El Salvador for having professionally chaired the Council over the past year. We thank the Technical Secretariat for its efforts to organise this session.

Due to the intensive campaign designed to obfuscate every Syrian effort, we find ourselves compelled to recall some basic facts. Syria joined the Convention amid a war to which well-known countries brought up over 400,000 terrorists from more than 80 countries, training and financing them to kill the Syrian people and destroy the Syrian State. The terrorists were also provided with political and media cover by States that are today shedding crocodile tears for the Syrian people. In those complex circumstances, Syria was requested to implement its obligations under the Convention. Still, Syria made the decision to comply and did honour its commitment.

Syria prepared its initial declaration within a period of seven days. To that effect, it requested the OPCW’s assistance to draft the declaration, since it lacked the required expertise at the time. The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) was required to provide assistance in drafting that declaration and the subsequent supplementary submissions.

Syria adopted a positive, constructive, open, and transparent approach throughout the consultations held with the DAT. If Syria had something to hide, as claimed by the representatives of some States, it would not have adopted such an approach. Syria expected that the OPCW would cooperate with it in the same manner and that it would at least assess its work impartially. However, Syria found out that the OPCW turned into a tool to exert pressure on it and level baseless accusations against it. Everything was interpreted by some States in an unscientific way, in line with their well-known agendas. They based on those interpretations so many conclusions, anticipating the outcome of the still on-going technical consultations.

Syria accepted to work with the Technical Secretariat to provide clarifications complementing the Syrian declaration. This is a right that is guaranteed by the Convention and there is no reason to make all this fuss about it. Many States continue to make supplementary submissions, sometimes in an irrational manner. A case in point is one of the sponsors of decision C-25/DEC.9



of the Conference of the States Parties. After more than 19 years of accession to the Convention, this State has declared a facility which had been used for two years for the production of a pure chemical agent. These operations took place at a time when the said State was under an obligation to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention. In declaring the end of those operations, if indeed they ended, it simply said that “it was not aware of the obligations under the Convention”. The issue was closed without any questions from those hotheads in the Council about whether that was consistent with the Convention, about the reason for these production operations, about whether it was a production and/or a weaponisation, about the location of the pure agents produced, or about the size of the containers in which they were kept.

On the other hand, Syria is confronting all types of queries and denunciations at a time when it is cooperating with the DAT to complete its initial declaration and opening its facilities for repeated visits and sampling time and again, without any end on the horizon.

We have said that the issues relating to the declaration are purely scientific and technical, that they are linked to different scientific interpretations, and that they require time. Without going into the details of confidential information, we would like to address one of the outstanding issues, namely that of ammunitions. This issue has been a major focus in discussion, during which the Syrian National Authority provided all that was requested by the DAT and explained the complete processes of conversion and use, including some available documents. The DAT was allowed to conduct interviews with the persons concerned. Discussions on this issue continued during the twenty-fourth round of consultations, but the DAT informed the National Authority that it was running short of time, requesting that the work be continued in the next round of consultations. Therefore, the issue remained outstanding and is still unresolved.

There is yet another example I want to share with you: one of the outstanding issues has been ready for closure for over a year and samples were taken which prove that. But we were surprised at the leakage of these samples at the OPCW laboratories, in a serious precedent in the work of the Organisation, casting a shadow on the causes of that leakage. What is more confusing is that this issue never finds its way to the reports of the Director-General who considers it behind us and does not mention it in the successive reports, whereas he keeps drawing attention in his reports to years-old issues. Today, after over a year from the leakage of these samples, this issue, which these leaked samples were supposed to help resolve, remains open but all the talk about the leaking samples is over. Where are the States claiming that they defend the OPCW? Would they not inquire about the cause of the leakage and how to avoid it?

We noted that the DAT advances a specific hypothesis and tries to prove it, ignoring all the information provided by the Syrian side. It moves, even before the end of discussions, to confirming categorically the existence of a pure chemical agent at one of the sites. The Director-General is demanding us to declare this site as a production site used for production and/or weaponisation. In its initial declaration, Syria had declared that the site had never been used to produce chemical weapons. The Syrian side explained that the existence of a chemical in no way means the existence of a prohibited chemical activity at that site. Lengthy technical discussions were held on the matter with the DAT. The Syrian side explained the reasons for the existence of such sample/samples. Technical consultations on the issue are still ongoing with the DAT. Nevertheless, the choice was made to shed light exclusively on this issue in the last few months, amid the escalating campaign against Syria to lay the ground for the adoption of decision C-25/DEC.9. This campaign continues to date. Much space is dedicated to one issue among many others to support the claim of some States that Syria is hiding something, although the DAT has taken numerous samples from the site over many years, with the full knowledge and cooperation

of the Syrian State. If Syria had something to hide, it would not have allowed the DAT to visit the site repeatedly and take samples time and again.

The second new issue, which the DAT added to the outstanding issues, is the one mentioned in the Director-General's ninety-first and ninety-second monthly reports, although this issue is still under scientific and technical discussion. The Syrian National Authority provided the Technical Secretariat with an initial response on this subject, pending the continuation of discussions during the upcoming round of consultations.

It has become clear that, no matter how much information is provided by Syria, the file of outstanding issues will not be closed. Instead, the intention is to increase the number of outstanding issues every time the DAT visits Syria, since the instructions given to the team require that the file remain open. This happens at a time when the largest chemical arsenal in the world, that of the United States, which poses a threat to all peoples and States of the world and is a tool for threatening international peace and security, has not been destroyed yet, under many pretexts, including COVID-19. Imagine what would have happened if a small State made a similar declaration to evade its obligations?

Like previous rounds, the twenty-fifth round of consultations will be held in accordance with arrangements to be agreed upon by both sides, in line with their respective commitments. It is thus natural that any round of consultations be postponed if the timing is not convenient. Syria did not refuse to grant entry visas to the DAT and has never done so for eight years.

The Technical Secretariat sent a request for an entry visa for the head of its office in Damascus. I would like to inform you that the Mission sent the OPCW note No. 61, dated 5 July 2021, notifying it of the issuance of an entry visa for the head of the OPCW office in Damascus who could obtain it at the Jdaidet post on the borders with Lebanon. We would like to state here that the Syrian Arab Republic's approval to grant this entry visa does not mean, in any case, its acceptance of the unjust decisions taken against Syria by the Conference of the States Parties at its Twenty-Fifth Session.

Regarding the two reports on the seventh round of inspections at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre, we reaffirm that the team explained that "[n]o chemicals [...] were detected in the samples [taken from the Centre]" and that no "activities inconsistent with the obligations of the State Party under the Convention" were observed. Furthermore, no issues requiring further attention or uncertainties were found.

We were expecting the focus to be on these positive remarks, which underscore the extent of Syria's cooperation and commitment. Had the case been different, we would have heard a plethora of allegations and threats from the States hostile to Syria and the case would have been reflected in the Director-General's earliest subsequent report.

The Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic sent to the Director-General note No. 51, dated 23 June 2021. Enclosed to the note was a letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Head of the National Authority, on the content of the Director-General's briefing to the United Nations Security Council on 3 June 2021 and the serious fallacies in the briefing. We requested the Technical Secretariat to circulate the letter to the States Parties and to post it on the website and external server of the OPCW as an official document of the current session of the Council. We are still waiting for the Technical Secretariat to do so. The Director-General announced a little while ago that the letter had been posted on the external server, but none of my colleagues has found it. We request the Secretariat to provide us with the correct link.

In conclusion, eight years have elapsed since Syria joined the OPCW, demonstrating cooperation and amending its initial declaration, among other steps. But until when will this dossier remain open? Until when will the OPCW be used for the designs of States hostile to the Government and people of Syria? I ask all States Parties hearing us: had you known that this Organisation would be used as a tool for aggression against a State Party, would you have joined it? I put this question to you.

The Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic requests that this statement be considered an official document of the Ninety-Seventh Session of the Council and be posted on the public website and external server of the Organisation.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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