

EC 99 – Syria

Thank you Madame Chair,

The UK Delegation was grateful for the briefing organised on 23 February by the Heads of the FFM, IIT and DAT. As Covid restrictions start to ease we look forward to again holding more meetings in person in the OPCW HQ. It is particularly useful to have the opportunity to air issues which are held by Syria to be classified. It is remarkable that a country that claims to have given up all its chemical weapons and says it has 'nothing to hide' should still insist that all discussions and reporting on the details of its programme remain classified.

The United Kingdom pays respect to the work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission and in particular the two reports issued in recent weeks. The FFM has established reasonable grounds to believe that chemical weapons were used in Marea on 1 September 2015 and in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016.

These two additional confirmed cases of chemical weapons use add to the litany of atrocities committed in Syria. It is imperative that the FFM and other OPCW special missions continue their painstaking work to

document these violations and help ensure that one day those responsible, whether state or non-state actors, can be held to account.

Madame Chair,

It is deeply regrettable that Syria is still refusing to grant a visa to enable the Declaration Assessment Team to continue their work. Syria's claims that it has the right to pick and choose OPCW staff members are nonsense. It cannot be a coincidence that this blatant obstruction began shortly after the Conference of States Parties took action in response to Syria's violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention. No-one in this room needs reminding that Syria is bound by UN Security Council resolutions and decisions of this Council to cooperate in full with the Technical Secretariat.

Nor does anyone need reminding about the seriousness of the outstanding issues; the thousands of missing munitions and the clear evidence of undeclared chemical warfare agent in large storage containers. These are not minor discrepancies. They are indicative of deliberate subterfuge and a determination to maintain a secret chemical weapons capability in violation of international law. This is an outrage and one which cannot be tolerated. The United Kingdom will continue to

work with the vast majority of OPCW states parties who share our deep concern at any use of chemical weapons by any actor.

Thank you Madame Chair.