



OPCW

Executive Council

Ninety-Ninth Session

8 – 10 March 2022

EC-99/NAT.57

8 March 2022

ARABIC and ENGLISH only

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MILAD ATIEH
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC TO
THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,

Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate Her Excellency Dr Eniola Olaitan Ajayi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the OPCW, on her election as Chairperson of the Ninety-Ninth Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW. I wish her success in steering this session. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my profuse thanks to His Excellency Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki for his successful steering of the Council sessions from May 2021 until the end of last year.

My delegation also aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan in this session on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

My country's delegation regrets that this technical Organisation has been dragged once again into issues that are purely political and security-related. Yesterday, the target was Syria and today it is Russia. We affirm that the Russian Federation has the legitimate right to defend its national security and eliminate threats to its people and citizens, in line with the principles of justice and humanity. In this context, we support Russia because we believe in the rightness of its position, as it has consistently put forward practical proposals and maintained the highest degrees of self-restraint against all attempts of escalation by Western States. These States bear the responsibility of the chaos and the bloodshed resulting from their policies aimed at controlling other peoples in Ukraine and in different parts of the world and destabilising the world, as well as from their persistence in imposing unilateral, immoral, and coercive measures and sending to Ukraine all sorts of weapons and mercenaries, including Syria's terrorists, without any accountability.

The United States of America and its Western allies should be the last to speak about interference in internal affairs of States. Modern and contemporary history is rife with their acts of aggression, invasion, and interference, leading to the displacement and killing of millions of innocent victims in many countries. We do not forget what they did in Syria, causing thousands of victims, destroying infrastructure, supporting terrorism, and imposing economic terrorism since 2011.



The false-flag chemical attacks raised by some States to incriminate Russia are now well known in the archives of the OPCW. Those States fabricate scenarios of chemical weapons use in order to accuse the Syrian Government of such use. This is occurring again today with the baseless, false accusations levelled against Russia during the special operation it is currently conducting in Ukraine to defend its security and people.

Achieving the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention is a significant step towards ensuring an effective global regime against chemical weapons. However, this cannot be achieved unless Israel is compelled to join the Chemical Weapons Convention and all other international conventions relative to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It is regrettable that States that claim to be committed to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons are impeding any endeavour to establish a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East, in order to protect Israel and keep it outside the scope of any international control over its nuclear, chemical, and biological facilities.

The widening scope of chemical terrorism threats poses a serious threat to international peace and security. No State is safe from this grave threat. In this context, the Syrian Arab Republic affirms that the conduct of certain States Parties covering up the crimes and practices of terrorist groups in Syria has encouraged those terrorists to commit more atrocious crimes against Syrian citizens, including the use of toxic substances over the past eight years. Syria has consistently informed you that terrorist groups and the “White Helmets” terrorist group continued to prepare false-flag chemical attacks, particularly in the countryside of the Governorates of Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia, in order to accuse the Syrian Government of those attacks.

In 2013, Syria acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention voluntarily and in good faith, as it believes in the rejection of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances. Syria has faithfully and credibly implemented its sovereign decision to end the Syrian chemical dossier, which was achieved in record time. Despite the very difficult and complicated circumstances it has been going through, Syria has accomplished what some other States which had acceded to the Convention many years before did not accomplish. Unfortunately, what Syria has been subjected to within the OPCW over the past years has made us raise a serious question about the Organisation’s ability to carry out its mandate under the Convention and to withstand the pressure it is facing from the United States of America and its Western allies. This serious challenge is not specific to Syria but is rather part of a broader global problem of a systemic nature. This is because the OPCW has turned into an instrument of political manipulation, which has alienated it from its professionalism and thus its credibility, particularly as a result of the Western States’ approach of passing decisions of the OPCW decision-making organs through voting, with no consensus and no respect for the views of other States. In light of this, we are extremely concerned about the current state of affairs. It has become necessary to put an end to this continuous deterioration in the Organisation’s course of action and to begin seriously and urgently to correct this course and take the Organisation back to implementing its mandate as the principal and neutral pillar of the chemical weapons non-proliferation regime. Despite all this, Syria reiterates its extreme keenness on pursuing positive and constructive cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. As a token of its sincerity, Syria welcomed the convening of a meeting between Dr Faisal Mekdad, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, and the Director-General of the OPCW, as soon as possible, in order to discuss the latest developments in relation to the Syrian chemical dossier. Preparations are under way to hold this meeting.

Despite the difficult circumstances that the Syrian Arab Republic is going through, as a result of the economic war waged on it by the United States of America and some Western States, namely the illegal “unilateral, coercive measures” imposed on it, which have had a significant impact on the socio-economic conditions of Syrian citizens, in addition to the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, Syria has never ceased to cooperate fully with the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat and teams in implementation of its obligations.

The Syrian Arab Republic has faced an unprecedented campaign of scepticism and false accusations of not cooperating with the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat, with some States pre-empting the outcome of the technical consultations that are still ongoing between the Syrian National Authority and the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and taking advantage of the content of some reports related to the Syrian declaration and other OPCW reports on the matter. This is despite Syria’s assertion that some of the technical issues under discussion between the Syrian National Authority and the DAT relate to different scientific interpretations, and that the process cannot be resolved in a distorted and selective manner. Therefore, no one has the right to jump directly to accusations regarding issues that are still under discussion and examination. The behaviour of those States is in blatant contradiction with the provisions of the Convention, the principles of international law, and the Charter of the United Nations, and is nothing more than an attempt to use the OPCW and the remaining technical aspects of the Syrian chemical dossier to serve their political purposes, in order to exert pressure on Syria. Yet, Syria continued its full and positive cooperation with the OPCW and committed itself to a structured dialogue with the DAT through rounds of consultations, of which twenty-four have been held so far, with the aim of closing the remaining outstanding technical issues.

Recently, some Western States have built their positions and false accusations on erroneous information contained in some fabricated reports suggesting that the Syrian Arab Republic does not want to hold the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the experts of the Syrian National Authority and the DAT. The truth, however, is that Syria welcomed the holding of this round and informed the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW of its readiness to receive the DAT, as Syria is very keen to end the dossier of outstanding issues and has welcomed the round of consultations and expressed its serious desire to close this dossier once and for all.

On more than one occasion, the Syrian Arab Republic, along with many States, has made objective observations regarding the work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM). Yet, Syria cooperated with FFM teams, providing them with all the facilitations required for the success of their missions. The Mission has failed more than one test, and the evidence is clear to all States Parties. The FFM has proved to be biased and unprofessional, falsifying the facts in more than one of the reports that it has issued. Examples include the reports on the Khan Shaykhun incident (2017), the Aleppo incident (2018), the Saraqib incident (2018), the Douma incident (2018) and lately the Kafr Zeita incident (2016). Such an approach will not lead to fair and objective conclusions and findings. In this context, we stress the need for the FFM to correct the flaws marring its approach and working methods, comply with the provisions of the Convention, and abide by its professional standards and Terms of Reference agreed upon with Syria. My country’s Government is of the view that, after all these professional scandals, it has become unacceptable to remain silent on the fact that the FFM continues to operate according to those wrong methods. Praising the FFM’s reports, professionalism, and integrity is part of the endeavour to use the Mission’s reports to exert more pressure on Syria and cover up the crimes of terrorists and their arm, “the White Helmets” group.

The Syrian Arab Republic maintains its position on the Investigation and Identification Team, which is lacking legitimacy. Therefore, Syria, together with other States, does not recognise the legitimacy of this Team and rejects any and all of its past and future outcomes, out of respect for and adherence and commitment to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In conclusion, Syria calls for international cooperation to confront the illegitimate restrictions imposed by some known States on the transfer to developing States of scientific technology for peaceful purposes, and the imposition of illegitimate, unilateral, and coercive measures on some other States, in order to prevent them from achieving economic and scientific development for their people and from using chemistry for peaceful purposes, in clear violation of the provisions of the Convention and international law.

I thank you and I request that this statement be considered an official document of the Ninety-Ninth Session of the Executive Council and posted on both the OPCW public website and Catalyst.

--- 0 ---