

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION****STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A.V. SHULGIN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO
THE OPCW AT THE 100TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(C)**

We welcome the unprecedented openness of the Syrian authorities and their efforts to remove the outstanding issues with their initial declaration under the Convention from the agenda as soon as possible. Over the course of its activities, the specialised Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) had the opportunity to conduct hundreds of meetings and dozens of interviews. The results of this work are obvious, and resulted in the removal of four problematic issues, with several more under way. Even if the pace is not the fastest, and in spite of the difficulties that Damascus has been facing, the progress is clear.

Moreover, we have been discussing the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the DAT for over a year now. Damascus's non-issuance of a visa to one of the members of this Team has become a bone of contention.

As far as we know, this could involve a DAT expert who was concurrently on the OPCW inspector roster. In this case, the Syrian Arab Republic has the full right to decline the candidacy of an inspector who it finds to be unsuitable, and to do so at any time (paragraphs 2 and 4 of Part II of the Verification Annex to the Convention). The Technical Secretariat, then—if possible—should propose someone else.

In light of the above, it becomes clear that Syria is being blamed for exercising its rights under the Convention. We call upon the States Parties to stop politicising this deeply technical matter and exerting artificial pressure on Damascus; and we call upon the Secretariat to take measures to rectify the situation, when the work of the DAT as a whole is rendered dependent on one expert.

Now, a few words about the legal basis of the DAT's activities, as it was presented by the Secretariat at a recent briefing for States Parties on the Syrian Arab Republic. Per the request of the Syrian side, the DAT provided assistance in preparing the initial declaration. Syria carried out its obligations under Article III of the Convention and submitted a full and accurate declaration, as much as it could do in the circumstances at the time. The DAT is not responsible for the verification of destruction under Articles IV and V of the Convention—that falls to the Inspectorate. As regards the references to the decision of the Thirty-Third Meeting of the Executive Council and resolution 2118 of the United Nations Security Council, these were adopted in 2013 and did not stipulate the establishment of any specialised team to assess the declaration.



We express our hope for the soonest possible agreement on holding a meeting between the Director-General of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, Mr Arias, and the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Mekdad. The arrangement of this meeting serves as a prime example of the Director-General's readiness to act for the benefit of the OPCW, to discuss pressing matters on its agenda at anytime, anywhere. We believe that the best place for this meeting would be Damascus, as doing so would open a wide range of opportunities for a meaningful and professional dialogue.

We request that this statement be distributed as an official document of the 100th Session of the Executive Council and published on the Catalyst platform and the OPCW website.

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