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SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MILAD ATIEH
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC TO THE
OPCW AT THE 101ST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(C)**

Mr Chairperson,

I. Regarding the reports by the Director-General

We have read carefully and with interest the 106th and 107th monthly reports by the Director-General. In paragraphs 11 and 12 of the reports, the Director-General states that the work of the Secretariat continues to be hampered by the Syrian Arab Republic's failure to fulfil its declaration-related obligations, as well as its obligations to cooperate with the Organisation by putting various conditions on the DAT's deployment and that since 30 April 2021, all efforts by the Secretariat to organise the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority have remained unsuccessful. These statements are a direct accusation to Syria of failing to cooperate and refusing to hold the twenty-fifth round of consultations. For the sake of time, I will keep my reply short:

1. Syria did not put any conditions on holding the twenty-fifth round of consultations. Those who are hampering the holding of that round of consultations are those who are rejecting Syria's repeated requests to hold it as early as possible. I refer the esteemed members of the Council to the Syrian monthly reports and to what we have explained in detail in this regard during the previous session of the Council.
2. Accusing Syria of failing to fulfil its obligations is a broad and vague accusation. Did Syria not fulfil its obligations, as acknowledged by the OPCW? We are still in the phase of consultations regarding the declaration and no final conclusions have been reached yet so as to judge Syria and assert that it did not fulfil its obligations or cooperate or that it had something to hide. However, if the Director-General meant the decision adopted by the Executive Council at its Ninety-Fourth Session, and the decision adopted at the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties, I would like to address the following question to all Council members: is Syria supposed to declare chemical weapons production and storage facilities and means of delivery that it does not possess at all?



3. The non-objective information and escalation of accusations in the reports by the Director-General have formed a basis and pretext for known States to level accusations against Syria, becoming a fundamental part of the campaign of incitement against Syria, and providing grounds for accusing Syria of failing to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW.
4. This approach is unprecedented in the history of the OPCW and constitutes a clear departure on the part of the Director-General from his mandate under the Convention. We hope that he will be an impartial and unbiased party and that he will not take sides or adopt a hostile position against a State Party, in line with his mandate under the Convention.

II. Regarding the Syrian monthly reports

Syria continued to provide the Technical Secretariat, and through it the States Parties, with monthly reports, submitting three reports between July and September 2022, namely the 104th, 105th, and 106th reports. In each monthly report, Syria has clarified lots of important information and corrected lots of non-objective information contained in the reports by the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat. We hope that the Missions of the States Parties have made themselves familiar with the content of these reports.

III. Regarding the report by the Director-General on the work of the Declaration Assessment Team

The report contained a great deal of non-objective information and accusations similar to those contained in the monthly reports by the Director-General, on which many known States, in anticipation, have built false and non-objective accusations against Syria.

The report stated that, as at the date of its issuance, Syria had not submitted the information requested in the note by the Secretariat, dated 14 September or in the meeting held on 21 September 2022. As you see, only a few days have elapsed since the dates of the aforementioned note and meeting. Nonetheless, the issue should not have been addressed using this language.

The Director-General repeats the same language, stating that, since April 2021, all efforts by the Secretariat to organise the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian National Authority have remained unsuccessful. If you read this paragraph in good faith, without knowledge of the previous and current efforts made by Syria to hold the twenty-fifth round of consultations, you might think that it is Syria that is not cooperating and that is impeding the holding of the twenty-fifth round of consultations. The reality, ladies and gentlemen, is completely different. The party that is hampering the holding of this round is the Technical Secretariat. We declare before you that we are ready to hold this round now, in any place proposed by the Secretariat and with all members of the Declaration Assessment Team who are appointed by the Director-General, except for the expert whom Syria asked repeatedly to be replaced, for objective reasons. If intentions are good, why not replace that member by any other member? Are there no other experts in the Secretariat?

The report refers to the meeting that was held on 21 September 2021 between the representatives of the Syrian Permanent Mission and officials from the Technical Secretariat. We agreed on the Secretariat's proposals and discussed several issues, without going into details. The atmosphere was positive. Therefore, we ask all States to let Syria and the Technical Secretariat reach important positive outcomes, rather than make accusations and threats and exert pressure. Here, I would like to raise an important issue. It was mentioned in the report that the Secretariat informed Syria that some of the outstanding issues will be settled as soon as the next round of consultations is held, and that the Secretariat's assessment of the information provided by Syria regarding one of the issues was positive and important. Thus, this outstanding issue and other issues can be resolved quickly. Is this not proof that consultations would lead to the resolution of outstanding issues and that these outstanding issues are neither evidence nor a basis for levelling false accusations against Syria?

Syria reaffirms that it will pursue its constructive approach and unprecedented cooperation with the Technical Secretariat and that it will remain committed to fulfilling its obligations. Syria is willing to move forward, in line with the provisions of the Convention, and is ready for a structured and constructive dialogue. We hope that all States Parties would encourage Syria to keep cooperating with the OPCW and stop using the DAT and its reports as a tool for political pressure and blackmail against Syria. We also hope that they would ask the Technical Secretariat to hold the twenty-fifth round of consultations immediately, stop putting conditions on the holding of this round, and take Syria's rightful concerns and comments into consideration.

IV. Regarding the classified briefing session on the Syrian chemical dossier

We will not repeat what we mentioned during that session which was held on 28 September 2022. We do not fear these sessions. We would like to stress that we do not wish these sessions to become another platform for implying that Syria is not cooperating and is not committed, and that it is impeding the Technical Secretariat's work. It is time to approach the matter objectively, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and common sense and far from politicisation. I would like to mention briefly and comment on the content of the briefing by the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM). Syria, along with other States, has pointed out to the grave and serious flaws in the working methods of the FFM and its departure from the substance and provisions of the Convention, the Verification Annex, and its own Terms of Reference. Conversely, the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and some known States are turning a deaf ear to these substantive comments regarding the working methods of the FFM. More still, some States have been providing blind support to the FFM and its reports for blatant political reasons, rather than for professional and ethical reasons, without any regard for the rules of integrity and fairness.

Facts and practical experience in relation to the FFM have proven that, since it started issuing its reports on some alleged incidents, the FFM has been consistently working in a manner that is far from professionalism and integrity. Yet, the FFM pursues this approach and has issued reports with questionable findings. Examples abound to attest to this. Some of these reports served political and military purposes to cover up an aggression by some States against my country, Syria, even before the FFM initiated its investigations, as was the case with the alleged Douma incident in April 2018.

Syria affirms that the time has come to say the truth and to work earnestly in order to correct the working methods of the FFM.

I thank you and I request that this statement be considered an official document of the 101st Session of the Executive Council and posted on the OPCW's public website and on Catalyst.

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