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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 TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE STATES PARTIES UNDER AGENDA ITEM 8**

Mr Chairperson,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate H.E. Ambassador Vusimuzi Philemon Madonsela, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa, on his election as Chairperson of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my profuse thanks to the representative of the Kingdom of Norway, Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen, for his professional and competent steering of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference.

My country's delegation submitted a general statement that was posted on the external server of the OPCW and on Catalyst. It contained Syria's position on many important issues related to the Syrian chemical dossier, which we believe that the States Parties need to be informed about.

We followed what was said in the general statements of some States and the opening statement of the Director-General at this session of the Conference of the States Parties. We regretfully say that these statements included a lot of baseless information and accusations. They are nothing but false accusations aiming at presenting a negative and false image about the relationship of my country Syria with the OPCW and ignoring or even denying all the cooperation and facilitations provided by Syria to the Technical Secretariat and its teams over the past 10 years. This full cooperation is nowhere to be found in the reports of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, and the reports of the Director-General and some States Parties. It is rather ignored and instead, it is suggested through certain formulations that Syria is hindering the work of the Technical Secretariat and is not cooperating with it. Some States have even gone so far as to accuse Syria directly and explicitly of non-compliance.

My country affirms that this approach must stop. The Syrian chemical dossier needs to be addressed objectively and in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and the principles of logic, reason, and truth, far from politicisation. On previous occasions, we have asked a key and critical question for which we received no answer: on what basis are some States levelling their false accusations? The answer is that they are levelling their accusations on a political, unprofessional, non-objective, and unethical basis. Has the Technical Secretariat ever complained, for more than nine years, about Syria's non-cooperation? Has Syria prevented any team or staff member of the Technical Secretariat from entering its territories? The answer is that Syria has fully cooperated and provided all facilitations. No State Party has provided what



Syria has provided. Syria has granted dozens of visas to the teams and staff members of the Technical Secretariat this year.

With regard to the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the rounds of consultation, everything that we heard and read from the Secretariat and some States is a prejudgment of the final outcome of the consultations and is an attempt to influence that outcome. To them we say that the consultations are still ongoing and are not over yet. Why then pre-empt the outcome and level accusations?

Concerning the twenty-fifth round of consultations, the Director-General states that since April 2021, the Technical Secretariat's attempts to hold this round of consultations have remained unsuccessful. Anyone reading these statements, without knowing the detailed efforts made by Syria to hold that round, would think that Syria is obstructing these consultations. We have already explained in detail how Syria has insisted on the Technical Secretariat to hold that round of consultations as soon as possible and how Syria has agreed to all the proposals made by the Technical Secretariat to hold that round in Damascus, The Hague and Beirut. This round of consultations is being obstructed by the Technical Secretariat which keeps insisting on not sending the DAT unless Syria grants all members of that team the required visas. Syria has asserted that it was willing to grant all members of the team the required visas and asked the Director-General to replace one DAT member with any other member that he deemed fit. However, the Technical Secretariat insisted on sending all members of the DAT to Syria without exception. This is clearly a disruption and obstruction by the Technical Secretariat. Does the Secretariat have no other experts? It is the Technical Secretariat that is imposing conditions on a State Party.

On 7 November 2022, the Secretariat requested that a meeting be held in Beirut on 15 and 16 November 2022 between a team from the Secretariat and a team from the Syrian National Authority, in order to discuss certain issues related to the Syrian initial declaration. Syria agreed immediately and informed the Secretariat on 9 November about its readiness to hold that meeting. Given the disastrous consequences of the unilateral coercive measures imposed by Western States in an unethical and inhumane manner on all walks of life in Syria, including the economy, we asked the Technical Secretariat to cover the travel expenses of the Syrian delegation to Beirut. We were surprised by the reply of the Secretariat that it cannot cover the expenses of the Syrian delegation. Moreover, the Director-General of the OPCW accused Syria, in an undiplomatic language and contrary to his impartial role as a Director-General of an international organisation, of agreeing to hold the meeting in Beirut on the condition that the Syrian delegation's expenses would be covered, although it knew that the Secretariat would not cover these expenses! This is an irrational accusation against Syria of hindering the holding of that meeting. The same happened in October 2021 when Syria agreed to hold a meeting in The Hague with the DAT upon the proposal of the Technical Secretariat. Back then, the Technical Secretariat responded that Syria may ask other States Parties to cover the expenses! Syria is not making spurious excuses. Everyone knows that the difficult economic situation, as a result of the unilateral coercive measures imposed by Western States, the United States' occupation of parts of Northeast Syria, the Turkish occupation of parts of North and Northwest Syria, the looting and stealing of Syria's resources and oil in broad daylight, and the war that Syria is fighting against terrorism and Western-backed separatist movements, are the main reasons behind the deterioration of the economic situation in Syria. Why not embarrass Syria by covering the expenses of its delegations' activities related to their meetings with the teams of the Technical Secretariat to test Syria's sincerity and see whether the accusations against Syria of evading participation in these meetings are true or not?

Before the Western-terrorist war against Syria in 2011, Syria was not asking anyone in this world to cover the expenses related to the activities of its delegations. It was in a position to cover the expenses of its delegations and those of other States.

To those who are ignoring what happened in contemporary history we say that, after acceding to the Convention in 2013, Syria requested that the elimination of its chemical programme be funded by the OPCW. This is not new. The reason behind this request is the deteriorating economic situation, as a result of the war on Syria. Many decisions have been made by the decision-making organs of the OPCW in that regard.

If the intention behind Western States' denial of and disregard for Syria's cooperation is to push Syria to cease its cooperation with the OPCW, we say to these States that Syria's sovereign decision is to pursue constructive cooperation with the OPCW, thereby guaranteeing its sovereign rights.

I will give examples of these most recent forms of cooperation. In August and September 2022, Syria provided all facilitations to two teams from the Technical Secretariat that visited Syria. The initial assessment is that Syria fully cooperated with these teams and provided all facilitations for the success of their mission. Syria granted visas to the Secretariat's staff and provided them with the required facilitations. Also, have you seen in any report by the Technical Secretariat or certain known States any mention of Syria's full cooperation and the facilitations it provided to the inspection team on its eighth round of inspection at the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in November 2021?

A few days ago, the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) visited Syria. Syria provided it with all facilitations and cooperated with it for the success of its mission. This constructive cooperation is nowhere to be found in any report by the Technical Secretariat or the Director-General.

Regarding the high-level meeting between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Director-General, as a token of goodwill, and based on its keenness to hold this meeting, Syria submitted a proposal to the Technical Secretariat on 21 September 2022 to hold a preparatory meeting between representatives of the Syrian National Authority and representatives of the Technical Secretariat to discuss the preparatory work necessary for holding that meeting, including its agenda. In a note dated 23 September 2022, the Secretariat replied by asking for a response to its previous proposal regarding the agenda. Subsequently, in a note addressed to the Technical Secretariat, dated 30 September 2022, the National Authority requested a reply from the Secretariat on its proposal to hold that meeting in Beirut as soon as possible, in order to reach an agreement on the necessary preparations for that meeting.

On 5 October, the focal point appointed by the Director-General requested a reply regarding the agenda of the high-level meeting, just to be able to continue looking into Syria's proposal to hold a meeting in Beirut.

On 20 October 2022, the Syrian National Authority submitted what the focal point had requested. The National Authority agreed to all the items of the draft agenda proposed by the Secretariat on 20 December 2021 with some objective additions that would guarantee the success of that important meeting.

On 21 November 2022, the Technical Secretariat replied through the focal point appointed by the Director-General with a letter full of contradictions, ignoring and even denying the Syrian response with regard to the agenda that the Secretariat had proposed on 20 December 2021. In

an undiplomatic manner, it set the condition that the Technical Secretariat be informed that the Syrian National Authority would not request coverage of the expenses of the Syrian delegation attending the preparatory meeting in Beirut, so that it can continue considering the Syrian proposal to hold a meeting in Beirut in preparation for the high-level meeting.

On 27 November 2022, the Syrian National Authority replied through the focal point to the letter of the Technical Secretariat and the Director-General by affirming its keenness to hold the preparatory meeting in Beirut, expressing its regret for the language used by the focal point in the Director-General's letter and indicating that with this approach, the Technical Secretariat was seeking to hinder this important upcoming meeting.

In their statements, some States have expressed their concern for the OPCW, its role and its future. They praised the professionalism and integrity of certain OPCW teams. Anyone caring truly about this Organisation should stop politicising its work and endeavour to correct the serious mistakes in the approaches and working methods of some of the OPCW teams, which are unprofessional and contrary to the provisions of the Convention, such as the Fact-Finding Mission. Those who are making constructive and objective observations and criticism to the work of the Technical Secretariat and the OPCW teams are the ones who are concerned for the future of the OPCW in performing its technical and humanitarian role, as established by the Convention.

It has become clear to all who is politicising the Syrian chemical dossier, justifying the successive aggressions on the Syrian people, supporting terrorism which has claimed the lives of thousands of Syrians and led to the displacement of a large part of the Syrian people in broad daylight, and who is falsely accusing Syria of continuing to possess chemical weapons or to conduct prohibited chemical activities and of using chemical weapons.

On more than one occasion, the Syrian Arab Republic, along with many States, has made objective observations regarding the working methods of the FFM and the reports it has issued so far. Yet, Syria has cooperated with FFM teams, providing them with all the facilitations required for the success of their missions. The latest example of such cooperation was Syria's cooperation with the FFM team during its most recent visit to Syria this November. In this context, the Syrian Arab Republic affirms that the professionalism and credibility of the FFM are contingent on the correction of the flaws marring its approach and working methods, its compliance with the provisions of the Convention, its abidance by its professional standards and the Terms of Reference agreed upon with Syria, and proving that its future reports will be unbiased, unlike its previous misleading and fabricated reports on the Khan Shaykhun incident (2017), the Aleppo incident (2018), the Saraqib incident (2018), the Douma incident (2018) and the scandals and falsifications surrounding the report on that incident, which were clear to all. The government of my country calls on the United States of America and its Western allies to stop exerting pressure on the FFM team and refrain from covering up the crimes of terrorists and their arm, "the White Helmets" group in that regard.

I thank you and I request that this statement be considered an official document of the Twenty-Seventh Session of the Conference of the States Parties and posted on the OPCW's public website and on Catalist.