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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 10**

Mr Chairperson,

We have reviewed the Draft Report of the OPCW on the Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction in 2021. In this regard, we state the following:

I. It is stated in paragraphs 1.23 and 1.24 of the draft report that the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) has continued to hand over to the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) information and material on alleged incidents in Syria, pursuant to the decision of the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties held in 2018 and the memorandum of understanding between the OPCW and the IIIM regarding the provision of access, storage, and handling of information and evidence.

With regard to the exchange of information among the IIIM, the IIT and the FFM on alleged incidents in Syria, the content of the draft report is inconsistent with the OPCW Confidentiality Policy. By signing a memorandum of understanding with the IIIM, the Secretariat has gone beyond the mandate of the OPCW. This is a violation of Article VIII, paragraph 5, of the Convention, which stipulates that “The Organization shall conduct its verification activities provided for under this Convention in the least intrusive manner possible [...]. It shall take every precaution to protect the confidentiality of information on civil and military activities and facilities coming to its knowledge in the implementation of this Convention and, in particular, shall abide by the provisions set forth in the Confidentiality Annex”. It is also a violation of Article VIII, paragraph 43 of the Convention. The Convention does not provide for direct contact between the OPCW and United Nations bodies nor for the transfer of protected data without the consent of the State concerned and without consideration for the Confidentiality Annex. Also, it is a violation of 2(c)(ii), Section A of the Confidentiality Annex, which stipulates clearly that “[a]ny information may be released with the express consent of the State Party to which the information refers”.

II. Paragraph 1.32 of the draft report linked the failure to conduct the rounds of inspection, according to the plan, due to Covid-19 pandemic, to the delays caused to the DAT deployment, which seriously affected the planning and conduct of these inspections. We do not know the reasons for linking the failure to conduct inspections to the delay in the DAT deployment. We hope this will be corrected.



III. Paragraph 1.29 of the draft report states that “the Secretariat additionally attempted, unsuccessfully, to convene a limited meeting with Syrian experts in The Hague in late October 2021. Since then, through exchange of correspondence, the Secretariat continued its engagement with the Syrian National Authority regarding the next DAT deployment to the Syrian Arab Republic.” The report failed to mention why this limited meeting was not held in The Hague with the team of the Syrian National Authority. The reason for this is that the Technical Secretariat refused to cover the costs of this delegation in this mission, although the Technical Secretariat knew that Syria was not able, under the current circumstances, to cover the costs of such delegations in view of the disastrous repercussions of the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States of America, the European Union and some other Western States on Syria. It should be emphasised here that the Technical Secretariat had previously covered the costs of Syrian delegations whose activities and missions related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme from 2013 to 2018.

IV. Paragraph 1.32 of the draft report stated that the Technical Secretariat “conducted one round of inspections (i.e., the eighth round) at the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the SSRC in December 2021. The results of this round of inspections will be reported in due time”. The report ignored the outcome of this round as contained in the report issued by the team on 24 June 2022, although the draft report on the implementation of the Convention was issued on 6 July 2022. The inspection team stated in its report that Syria provided an invaluable assistance to the team and all that is required of it in full, and that the team did not observe any activities inconsistent with the obligations of the State Party under the Convention. In addition, no issues requiring further attention and no uncertainties were noted. Why is such information nowhere to be found in the reports and statements by the Director-General? We hope that the conclusions of the report of the eighth round of the inspection team will be incorporated in the draft report on the implementation of the Convention in 2021.

V. Syria reaffirms its refusal to recognise the illegitimate Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and does not recognise the results of its investigations, as the team’s mandate expressly and clearly violates the provisions of the Convention. My delegation insists that attribution is inconsistent with the technical nature of this Organisation, the provisions of the Convention, and the powers of the United Nations Security Council. Accordingly, Syria refuses the inclusion of the activities of the IIT in several paragraphs of the draft report, namely paragraphs 1.34 to 1.42 and requests their deletion from the report, in line with the spirit and letter of the Convention because this team contravenes the Convention.

VI. Paragraph 1.39(c) of the draft report states that “[t]he authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic did not to engage with the IIT, despite [...] the obligation incumbent on the Syrian Arab Republic, pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013)”. The question to be asked to the Technical Secretariat is: what relation is there between Security Council resolution 2118 and the IIT? and did the Security Council resolution request some States Parties to pass the establishment of an illegitimate team that clearly contravenes the provisions of the Convention? We hope that this paragraph will also be deleted from the draft report.

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 Catalyst.