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### REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

#### PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION C-SS-4/DEC.3 ON ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE

1. The Conference of the States Parties (the Conference), at its Fourth Special Session, adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018). In paragraph 24 of the decision, the Conference decided that “the Director-General shall provide a copy of this decision and a report on its initial implementation to all States Parties and to the United Nations Secretary-General within 30 days of this decision and thereafter provide a report on progress to each regular session of the Council”, in reference to the Executive Council (the Council).
2. In furtherance of paragraph 7 of the decision, the Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat) has continued its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify all gaps, discrepancies, and inconsistencies noted in its initial declaration and subsequent submissions.
3. The twenty-fifth round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and the Syrian National Authority took place in Damascus from 30 October to 5 November 2023. This was the first round of consultations to take place since February 2021, following the Syrian Arab Republic’s withdrawal of conditions preventing the deployment of all DAT experts. The Director-General reported on the details and outcomes of the twenty-fifth round of consultations through his report to the Council on the work of the DAT (EC-104/HP/DG.2/Add.2, dated 22 November 2023).
4. Furthermore, the twenty-sixth round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority took place in Damascus from 23 January to 1 February 2024. During this round of consultations, the DAT conducted technical meetings with experts from the Syrian National Authority, revisited the status of outstanding issues, discussed the ways towards their resolution, interviewed seven persons who were involved in the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and discussed the results of the analysis of samples collected by the DAT between 2019 and 2023, with a focus on the unexpected presence of indicators of potentially undeclared activities involving research and development, production, storage, and/or weaponisation of unknown quantities of chemical weapons.
5. As a result of the latest rounds of consultations, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted two amendments to its initial declaration, as well as additional information, which was sufficient for the Secretariat to consider three outstanding issues as resolved, while 17 outstanding issues remain open. Further details and outcomes of the twenty-sixth round of consultations were provided through the Director-General’s “Report on the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team” (EC-105/HP/DG.1, dated 29 February 2024).

6. In that report, the Secretariat concluded that, at this stage, considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the Secretariat assesses that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention) and, inter alia, Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 (dated 27 September 2013), EC-81/DEC.4 (dated 23 March 2016), and EC-94/DEC.2 (dated 9 July 2020), Conference decisions C-SS-4/DEC.3 and C-25/DEC.9 (dated 21 April 2021), and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).
7. Consistent with paragraph 8 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, and following current practice, the Secretariat continues to update States Parties on the operations of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) through, inter alia, the monthly progress report entitled “Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme”, and through reports detailing the FFM’s activities and findings regarding specific incidents of alleged use of chemicals as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic.
8. On 22 February 2024, the Secretariat issued a report by the FFM entitled “Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission Regarding an Alleged Use of Toxic Chemicals as a Weapon in Al-Yarmouk, Syrian Arab Republic on 22 October 2017” (S/2254/2024).
9. In this report, the FFM analysed information obtained in line with its mandate to gather facts about incidents of alleged use of toxic chemicals as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic. Due to gaps and inconsistencies in the information provided to it, the FFM concluded that it did not have reasonable grounds to determine that toxic chemicals were used as a weapon in the reported incident that occurred at Al-Yarmouk, Syrian Arab Republic, on 22 October 2017.
10. The report was shared with all States Parties to the Convention as well as transmitted to the United Nations Security Council through the United Nations Secretary-General.
11. The FFM is continuing its work and will issue further reports in due course.
12. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat established the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic by identifying and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those chemical weapons in those instances in which the FFM determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, and cases for which the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism has not issued a report.
13. On 22 February 2024, the Secretariat issued a report by the IIT entitled “Fourth Report by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team Pursuant to Paragraph 10 of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 ‘Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use’, Marea (Syrian Arab Republic) – 1 September 2015” (S/2255/2024).
14. In this fourth report, covering the IIT’s sixth investigation, on the basis of all the information obtained and its analysis, the IIT concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that, on 1 September 2015, between 9:00 and 12:00 (UTC+3), during sustained attacks aimed at capturing the town of Marea, units of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Islamic State) deployed sulfur mustard, using one or more artillery guns.

15. The IIT was able to reconstruct the organisational structure and chain of command that led to the use of chemical weapons by the Islamic State in Marea on 1 September 2015.
16. Strategic military operations such as the attack carried out in Marea, involving the large-scale deployment of chemical weapons, would only have occurred pursuant to direct orders from ISIL's executive branch, i.e., the Delegated Committee, operating directly under ISIL's so-called "Caliph".
17. The IIT was further able to link additional organisational structures and individuals to the use and deployment of chemical weapons by the Islamic State, including ISIL's *Diwan Al-Jund* (Department of Soldierly) and the Committee for Military Development and Manufacturing, identifying a total of four named individuals as perpetrators. Two further ISIL members were identified as the primary drivers of ISIL's chemical weapons programme.
18. As per paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat provided its report on the IIT investigations to the OPCW Council and to the United Nations Secretary-General for their consideration.
19. The IIT is continuing its investigations and will issue further reports in due course.
20. The voluntary funding requirements for the IIT for 2024–2025, as specified in the Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2024–2025 (C-28/DEC.9, dated 29 November 2023), have been set at EUR 1,320,877 for 2024 and EUR 1,322,831 for 2025. Contributions and pledges have been received from Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union.
21. In continuation of its regular briefings to States Parties on chemical weapons-related activities in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 28 September 2023 the Secretariat provided States Parties with a presentation to inform them of the status of the Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The next such briefing is expected ahead of the 105th Session of the Council, on 29 February 2024. The Secretariat will continue to keep States Parties informed of activities and progress with regard to the Syrian chemical weapons programme through existing reporting modalities and through briefings.
22. Pursuant to paragraph 12 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat has put in place appropriate measures to preserve and provide information to the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (IIIM), the body established by the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 71/248 (2016). All transfers of information to the IIIM are being implemented in a manner consistent with the OPCW's rules and policies on confidentiality.

23. In accordance with paragraph 18 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat continues to develop options for further assistance to States Parties to help prevent the chemical weapons threat posed by non-State actors, and to aid States Parties' contingency planning in the event of a chemical weapons attack. Taking into consideration, inter alia, the decision of the Council entitled "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors" (EC-86/DEC.9, dated 13 October 2017), the Secretariat is building on existing activities related to preparedness, prevention, and response.
24. Pursuant to paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Director-General, if requested by a State Party investigating possible chemical weapons use on its territory, can provide technical expertise to identify those who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons. Accordingly, the Secretariat is working to ensure that it has the necessary capabilities to respond to such State Party requests, including through assessing relevant forensic tools and capabilities that may be useful in fulfilling them.
25. As reported previously, the Secretariat is implementing a series of capacity-building measures to expand the existing skills of relevant Secretariat staff. These measures include, inter alia:
  - (a) training to further build investigative capabilities in areas such as crime scene management, witness interviews, evidence collection, and forensics;
  - (b) the revision of job descriptions to recruit applicants with the skills and knowledge to match the evolving needs of the Secretariat;
  - (c) through internal and external consultations, the assessment of potential additional investigative tools and capabilities that could be useful for the Secretariat if called upon to assist a State Party in identifying perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise, of chemical weapons use on its territory; and
  - (d) support for the procurement of software and equipment through the creation of a test and evaluation programme.
26. The Secretariat will continue to expand these activities in order to scale up knowledge and expertise within the Secretariat, and the Centre for Chemistry and Technology (ChemTech Centre) will further underpin these efforts. The biennial Programme and Budget for 2024–2025 builds on the completion in July 2023 of destruction of declared chemical weapons stockpiles. It provides for the continued integration of expertise from all the contingency missions and activities, in line with the Convention and decisions adopted by the policy-making organs, into standard operations. The capabilities provided by the ChemTech Centre in this regard allow the Secretariat to continue the adaptation and transition of the Inspectorate Division to facilitate readiness and flexibility of staff resources to support all types of missions and training. The Secretariat has developed specific projects, listed in the Note "Anticipated New Programmes and Activities at the Centre for Chemistry and Technology" (S/2102/2022, dated 30 September 2022). States Parties are invited to consider providing voluntary contributions to support these priority projects.

27. In furtherance of paragraph 23 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat will continue to prioritise the realisation of the universality of the Convention, on the understanding that this goal is essential to achieving its object and purpose, to enhancing the security of States Parties, and to international peace and security. The Director-General continues to call upon all States Parties to support the Secretariat's efforts in this regard. In this connection, on 3 October 2023 the Director-General met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of South Sudan, where both signed a joint communiqué agreeing to cooperate in order to complete the process of accession of South Sudan to the Convention as soon as possible.
28. At its Twenty-Eighth Session, the Conference adopted a decision entitled "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use and the Threat of Future Use" (C-28/DEC.12, dated 30 November 2023). The Secretariat is analysing the best ways to incorporate reporting on the elements in the decision concerning the Syrian chemical weapons dossier into its existing reporting obligations.

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