



UK Delegation to the OPCW

***Statement to the Sixty-Eighth Meeting of the
Executive Council of the Organisation for the
Prohibition of Chemical Weapons***

***By David True, Deputy Permanent Representative of
the United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland***

Mr Chair, Director-General, your Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates

Thank you, Director-General, for convening this meeting to receive and consider information on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr Chair, the UK's support to Syria remains unwavering.

We are deeply concerned by violence in Southern Syria over the last week, including the Israeli airstrikes in Damascus. The safety and security of Technical Secretariat staff and Syrian colleagues working with the OPCW, and Syria's ability to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention depend upon a stable, predictable security environment.

We note President Al-Sharaa's statement on prioritising protection of civilians, including the Druze community, and his vow to hold perpetrators to account. We expect the Syrian Government to conduct a full investigation into the crimes committed.

Mr Chair,

Assad's chemical weapons programme exacted a horrendous human toll and continues to present a risk, including to regional security. At the 109th Session of the Executive Council two weeks ago, this Council was united, commending Syria's efforts to eradicate Assad's chemical weapons programme and its clear, unequivocal commitment to meet its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Technical Secretariat and numerous States Parties here undertook to provide direct assistance to Syria to ensure it succeeds in this endeavour.

In stark contrast, the violence in Southern Syria and Israeli strikes have reduced Syria's capacity to facilitate Secretariat work to address proliferation risks and put the people working directly on the elimination of Assad's chemical weapons programme at risk.

Mr Chair,

We remind signatory states, alongside States Parties, of their obligations to the CWC; they must refrain from acts that would defeat the object and purpose of the CWC.

The situation in Syria remains fragile. We welcome the work of all those involved in de-escalating the situation in Syria. It is important that the ceasefire is upheld and civilians protected by all parties. The cessation of violence will enable critical Syrian and Technical Secretariat work to eradicate Assad's legacy.

It is in all our interests to ensure that chemical weapon proliferation risks are dealt with in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, by Syria working in concert with the OPCW, supported and helped by other states parties.

Thank you.