



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATEMENT BY H.E. NICOLE SHAMPAINE AT THE THIRTIETH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES AGENDA ITEM 9 (C) - SYRIA

This year marks the first CSP in more than a decade where a Director-General has detailed meaningful progress towards finding and eliminating the Assad regime's chemical weapons program.

Clearly, the Assad regime lied to the OPCW. It lied about producing chemical weapons; it lied about using chemical weapons; as the Technical Secretariat has made clear, it tried to block the OPCW from doing its job; and it lied to us, States Parties, year after year.

Today, it is well within our grasp to close this file once and for all.

Of course, none of this would be possible absent the new Syrian government's commitment to address this issue, and we hope that in the coming year we can revisit the question of restoring Syria's rights and privileges. We need to identify the full scope of the Assad regime's chemical weapons program and verifiably destroy any remnants in order to eliminate the proliferation threat that has long haunted the region.

The Executive Council's adoption of the decision on expedited on-site destruction in Syria was a step in the right direction, but more is needed. The United States has supported the Syria Trust Fund since its inception. Today, we urge all States Parties, especially those from the region, to contribute to this fund.

Syrians were the victims of Assad's use of chemical weapons, and they need the international community's help to rid their country of this unwanted legacy that has caused so much pain and suffering. There is a six million euro shortfall in the Trust Fund for 2026. This shortfall could be eliminated today if enough new contributors to the Trust Fund stepped forward. States must recognize that we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of the convention, and failing in Syria undermines that responsibility.

Regarding the OPCW's work on the ground in Syria, let us be clear: identifying perpetrators and those responsible for confirmed chemical weapons' use in Syria is essential and the Technical Secretariat has a clear mandate to do so, fully in line with the Convention. It is no coincidence that the loudest supporters of the Assad regime's farce of engagement with the OPCW are now pressing to abandon the work being done to determine the full scope of the program and attribute chemical weapons attacks.

Preventing the use of chemical weapons, the core mandate of the OPCW, requires identifying the perpetrators of such use – whether they be state or non-state actors. Though some States Parties may fear attribution efforts because of their own actions, attribution is also an essential component of justice for the Syrian people.

We hope, in this regard, that the Investigation and Identification Team's report on Kafr Zeita will be published soon.

In the face of the Assad's regime's obstructionism, the OPCW's professionalism and dedication are to be commended. The Office of Special Missions is the right vehicle to ensure the OPCW's hard won knowledge is not lost, and a welcome innovation by Director-General Arias that will benefit the overall mission of the organization.

We hope that accelerated progress on the ground can be made over the next seven months, so that a robust effort is well underway when the next Director-General takes up her post.

Thank you.