



STATEMENT AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
STATEMENT ON AGENDA ITEM 6 (c)
ELIMINATION OF THE SYRIAN CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMME
TO THE 110TH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr. Chair, Colleagues,

The Chemical Weapons Convention exists to permanently and verifiably eliminate chemical weapons – including those developed by the Assad regime. Though the regime fell last year, its aftermath is still very much with us today. The chemical weapons left undeclared by the regime serve as a stark reminder of why we have all made a commitment to uphold the Convention.

Though the OPCW had to contend with a decade of Assad's lies, that era has ended and Syria's new government is working to uphold its international obligations and the OPCW has already found further evidence of the former regime's undeclared chemical weapons and facilities.

Given this evidence, it is imperative that Syria and the OPCW do their utmost to find, declare, and destroy all remnants of the former regime's chemical weapons as soon as possible. The task that lies ahead is challenging, but the challenge does not lessen its urgency or importance.

Syria and the Syrian people are ready for closure, and Syria has already demonstrated remarkable dedication to this task. Despite limited resources and capacity, it is working side by side with the OPCW. We welcome Syria's submission of a concept plan for destruction and verification in July, and the decision on expedited on-site destruction of any remnants of chemical weapons tabled in front of us for adoption.

We applaud Qatar's efforts to represent Syria's interests at the OPCW and its commitment to transparency and consultation throughout this process. We hope that this Council will be able to adopt the decision by consensus as a sign of our resounding support for the need to ensure any remaining chemical weapons in Syria do not fall into the wrong hands.

These are all steps in the right direction. We hope that by the time this Council meets again in March, there will be even more progress to report.

We must all support the OPCW as it seeks to close the Syria chemical weapons dossier. In concrete terms, this means supporting the newly established Office of Special Missions. This also means securing the resources, financial and in-kind, needed for the Technical Secretariat inspectors to do the work we entrust them with, in challenging and unprecedented conditions. As Syria and the OPCW do their part, we call on States Parties to translate their words into action and make concrete pledges in support of the Syria mission.

We advocated for the inclusion of the Syria Special Fund within the biannual budget because eliminating the very real threat posed by the former regime's undeclared chemical weapons program goes to the heart of the OPCW's mandate and should be supported at least in part from the general budget. But the amount of assessed funding going towards Syria will not come close to the total amount needed.

The United States has long been one of the top donors to the Syria Trust Fund, and we encourage more countries, especially those in the region, to step forward to contribute.

The OPCW and Syria must focus on making progress on the ground. We hope this Council will do what it can to help them succeed.