

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA****STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ROBERT P. MIKULAK PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE OPCW AT THE SEVENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

On 23 June, the international effort to disarm Syria of its chemical weapons arsenal achieved an important milestone, but as US Secretary of State John Kerry has cautioned, “it should not be lost on anyone that our work is not yet finished.” Of course, we should begin today by acknowledging the extraordinary effort and commitment of all international partners who enabled the removal effort to occur. Over a thousand tons of declared chemical weapons agent, precursors, and associated chemicals are no longer a threat to the Syrian people.

Last September, Secretary Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov achieved a diplomatic breakthrough toward ensuring Syrian chemical weapons would no longer threaten anyone. Fully cognisant of the dangerous conflict in Syria, the diplomatic framework achieved in Geneva envisioned an unprecedented removal operation – one far beyond anything ever conceived by the framers of the Chemical Weapons Convention. It was the international community that turned the promise of the Kerry-Lavrov framework into a reality. Recognising the threat that these weapons posed to the Syrian people, the international community quickly undertook extraordinary actions in this Council and in the United Nations Security Council to establish a special mandate for Syria. These decisions set into motion a complex removal operation founded on the cooperation, commitment, expertise and financial support of a broad swath of States Parties to the Convention, as well as the OPCW and the UN-OPCW Joint Mission.

The United States of America expresses its deep gratitude to the many partners who contributed to this effort, namely:

- Denmark and Norway for providing vessels to transport over 1000 metric tons of chemicals from Syria to destruction facilities around the globe; and to Finland for deploying a CBRN defense unit to support this effort.
- China, Denmark, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for providing naval escorts to the transportation vessels.
- Italy for hosting the transloading of the highest priority chemicals to the U.S. vessel, the MV CAPE RAY.
- The United Kingdom, Germany and Finland for facilitating the final destruction of Priority 1 and two chemicals effluent at their commercial and government facilities.



- Austria, Belarus, Canada, China, Denmark, the European Union, Italy, the Russian Federation, Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom for a variety of in-kind contributions of equipment and services to the elimination effort.
- Cyprus for hosting OPCW-UN Joint Mission support offices as well as cargo and naval vessels; and Lebanon and Jordan for enabling the transit of essential material and personnel through their territories.
- Spain for providing the MV CAPE RAY port facilities while awaiting the removal of all declared chemicals from Syria.
- Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey for offering security support for the MV CAPE RAY while it conducts neutralisation in international waters.
- Finally, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge and express our sincere appreciation for the generous financial contributions that have been provided to support this effort from Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, the European Union, Finland, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

For our part, the United States began yesterday, aboard the MV Cape Ray, the neutralisation of mustard agent and DF binary precursor from Syria's chemical weapons arsenal. It is expected that destruction will be completed within several months. The United States of America will keep the Technical Secretariat and the Executive Council periodically informed of progress.

It is unfortunate that Syria consistently disregarded removal dates set by this Council and as a result of successive missed deadlines, the costs of the removal operation were substantially increased: these additional costs were paid by the international partners, not Syria, which has refused to fund its own destruction obligations under the Convention.

Despite the overall success of completion of the removal effort for declared chemicals, Secretary Kerry has made it very clear that "very serious issues remain to be resolved." Syria continues to drag its feet in complying with its obligation to destroy chemical weapons production facilities. The international community has questions that must be adequately answered by Syria regarding the declaration of its entire chemical weapons programme. Finally, the United States remains deeply concerned by the reports of systematic use of chlorine gas and other chemicals in opposition areas by Syrian government forces. Let me address each of these concerns in detail.

As is well known to this Council, Syria failed to comply with the 15 March destruction date set by this Council for destruction of its twelve chemical weapons production facilities. It also failed to meet the general deadline set by United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Syria has not undertaken any destruction actions whatsoever and all of the twelve facilities remain structurally intact.

From the start, Syria has engaged in a concerted effort to retain these twelve former chemical weapons production facilities. Delegations should recall that Syria originally proposed to convert these former production facilities for military purposes. The Executive Council responsibly refused to approve that conversion request. Syria then sought, in effect, to retain these chemical weapons facilities by proposing "inactivation" rather than the physical

destruction required by the Convention. When this cosmetic proposal encountered opposition within the Council, Syria attempted to minimise the area subject to destruction, allowing it to largely retain use of its underground facilities.

Due to the efforts of the Technical Secretariat, Syria made some revisions to this proposal in March, but continued to seek a substantially lower destruction standard than is mandated by the Convention and has been imposed on other countries. Since then, Syria's position has hardened and it refused to engage in meaningful negotiations. Syria's position on what must be destroyed has not changed since March. In effect, Syria continues to seek especially lenient treatment.

At a meeting in Moscow on 27 and 28 June that was attended by Syria, the United States, the Russian Federation and the Joint Mission, the Technical Secretariat presented a compromise proposal based on further Technical Secretariat analysis and historical information provided by Syria. That compromise proposal would involve acceptance by all parties of revised tunnel perimeters and would also entail more effective monitoring measures.

The United States appreciates the continued efforts of the Director-General and the Executive Council Chair to help end the impasse.

Washington has carefully reviewed the Technical Secretariat's proposal for a compromise solution to the chemical weapons production facility destruction issue. While this proposal requires serious compromises and is not entirely in keeping with the extraordinary decision this Council took in September, the United States is prepared to support that compromise solution in the interests of reaching a Council decision this week, as long as Syria also accepts it. We are not, however, prepared to go further or engage in further haggling. It is our hope that Syria will support this compromise, including the TS' proposal for destruction of the seven hangars. In that case, the Council could take a decision and destruction would finally begin.

Let me be clear, however, that if Syria rejects this compromise proposal and continues its intransigence, there must be consequences. Syria cannot be allowed to stall every attempt at resolution and continue to defy its obligations and this Council by indefinitely keeping its former CW production facilities.

The singular purpose of the Geneva Framework, the decisions of this Council, United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) and the Convention itself is the total elimination of Syria's chemical weapons arsenal and programme. The Syrian declaration on its very face contains gaps, discrepancies and inconsistencies, giving rise to important questions and concerns about the accuracy and completeness of that declaration. Syria's accession to the Convention took place under exceptional circumstances and Syria is subject to a special mandate established by the 27 September decision of this Council and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). After gassing its own people three weeks before announcing its accession, Syria's good faith cannot be assumed; its declaration must be fully corroborated and carefully scrutinised by the Technical Secretariat and States Parties. Therefore, Syria must respond to all outstanding questions and requests for information and demonstrate that it has fully declared all aspects of its chemical weapons arsenal and programme. It is incumbent upon Syria to build international confidence that it will comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention, Executive Council decisions and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). The United States strongly supports the need for

intensive efforts by the Technical Secretariat to clarify Syria's declaration and we expect Syria to fully cooperate. In the report of this session, the Council should underscore the importance of verifying the accuracy and completeness of Syria's declaration and continue its diligent oversight until the international community achieves the necessary confidence that Syria has fully declared and dismantled its chemical weapons programme.

The United States remains deeply concerned with credible indications that Syria is again using chemical weapons, as it did last August and in prior incidents, this time reportedly involving chlorine and other chemicals in attacks against the opposition. The preliminary findings of the Fact-Finding Mission seriously heighten these concerns. The systematic nature of the attacks, the intended targets and publicly-available video evidence – which U.S. information supports – that a helicopter was over the alleged attack site during at least one incident all point to one perpetrator – the Syrian Government.

We commend the courage and dedication of the Fact-Finding Mission to get at the truth. It is most unfortunate that the OPCW team came under attack and was forced to abandon its attempt to examine the alleged attack site in Kafr Zayta. Given the gravity of these allegations and the serious implications for Syrian compliance with the Convention, we urge the Director-General to continue the efforts of the Fact-Finding Mission to examine all credible allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria. There is no greater threat to the purpose and integrity of the Convention than use of chemical weapons. The Council must remain seized of this matter until all of the facts are uncovered and appropriate actions are taken.

Progress has been made since 27 September in eliminating Syria's chemical weapons. However, despite the hopes and best efforts of the international community, the goal of completely eliminating Syria's chemical weapons programme was not achieved by 30 June. Regrettably, this Council will need to acknowledge that Syria has fallen short of that deadline and failed to meet key obligations to destroy all of its chemical weapons facilities; that Syria has failed to engender international confidence that its declaration is fully accurate and complete; and that the specter of chemical weapons use by the Assad regime continues to threaten the Syrian people. In its report of this session, the Council will need to face the facts and hold Syria fully responsible and accountable for the unfinished international effort to disarm it of all chemical weapons and the means to ever make them again. The Council will need to take steps to ensure Syrian compliance with all of its international obligations.

Last September, this Council took a historic decision on the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons. This decision constituted an unstated promise on our part to the region and to the people of Syria for complete elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons threat. Our work is not yet done, our promise is not yet fulfilled. Let us summon the resolve to fulfill that promise and not falter in our efforts to disarm Syria of its chemical weapons programme.

In addition to the urgent and important discussions that this Council is rightly holding about Syria, there are other important issues before us. I will address those under the corresponding agenda items.

Mr Chairman,

In closing, I would like to request that the full text of this statement be circulated as an official document of the Seventy-Sixth Session of the Executive Council, and posted on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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