



**OPCW**

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**FRANCE**

**STATEMENT BY MR LAURENT PIC  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE OPCW AT THE  
EIGHTIETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

I of course fully support the statement made by my colleague of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union.

The Eightieth Session of the Executive Council provides an opportunity to note the progress towards universality of the Convention. The recent accession of Myanmar and the deposit by Angola of its instrument of ratification are good news, reflecting the nearly universal desire to ban chemical weapons once and for all, and sending a signal to the few States that have not yet joined us.

The second piece of good news is the compromise that has been reached to provide our Organisation with a budget for 2016, without a rise in national contributions.

Nevertheless, there are a few lessons to be learned from those negotiations:

- first, the Technical Secretariat's activities must be in line with the Organisation's priorities. This must be the focus of our discussion on the future of the OPCW, which was the timely subject of our retreat last week. France supports the work on the future of the Organisation. The adaptation of the OPCW's activities from the verification and destruction of chemical arsenals to the prevention of the re-emergence of chemical weapons requires that credible inspection and verification expertise be preserved, through strengthening and not decreasing the Organisation's operational capacities. Only this way can the OPCW remain a credible actor that contributes to international security. This priority must certainly be reflected in the Organisation's annual budget;
- second, an evaluation must precede any request for the financing of new activities. This sound management rule must also be respected in order for our Organisation to remain relevant. This is why the increases agreed within the framework of the 2016 budget are not, in principle, to be made permanent, so that in future the budget better reflects the priorities of the Organisation. France will also support the evaluation of the implementation of the special fund for special missions that is to be created. This fund should help the Organisation to better cope with emergencies and unexpected situations and to draw the best lessons from the management of the Syrian crisis;



- finally, emphasis should be placed on each State Party's responsibility to ensure that our Organisation can function by paying their contributions on time. Countries that are in arrears must meet their obligations as quickly as possible. Similarly, France would recall the financial responsibilities of the Syrian authorities for the verification and destruction activities. To evade those responsibilities, including by systematically refusing the solutions proposed by the European Union, is simply unacceptable.

And it is still in the Syrian Arab Republic where, despite the success of the destruction programme, the main challenge for our Organisation remains. We know the situation all too well: a people oppressed, martyred, killed, and gassed by its own government, which played a part in the emergence of the monster Daesh that we all are faced with today.

In this context, our Organisation must obey one sole imperative: provide a full account of the use of chemicals in the Syrian Arab Republic for hostile purposes; help to identify the perpetrators; and shed light on all the uncertainties surrounding the Syrian chemical weapons programme, which is a prerequisite for preventing its re-emergence.

Following the condemnation by the Executive Council and the United Nations Security Council of the use of chlorine gas, the Fact-Finding Mission continues its work, which my delegation would reiterate is of fundamental importance. It is the role of this Organisation to examine all of the allegations of use, and it is the obligation of the Syrian authorities to facilitate its inquiries in the field. We therefore look forward to the next report of the Mission, whose work should continue as long as is necessary.

In our decision adopted in February, we rightly underscored the need for the perpetrators of these crimes to be prosecuted. This is why we must welcome the establishment last August of the mechanism to investigate and establish responsibility, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2235. There is now an urgent need for this mechanism to begin its work. The joint nature of the mechanism underscores the OPCW's crucial role in identifying the facts through its Fact-Finding Mission, without which the mechanism could not carry out its mandate. Likewise, the mechanism must be provided with the actual technical expertise that will be essential to its accomplishing its mission. France knows that it can fully count on the good cooperation of the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat to this end.

The complete and verified dismantling of the Syrian chemical arsenal is a fundamental objective, but also insurance for the future because it limits any subsequent efforts to rebuild chemical weapons capabilities as well as any risk of non-State actors acquiring and then using such weapons. This is why the verification of the initial declaration is so important, and we will examine the report on this matter during this Council session. And, here again, what have we seen? A worrying and ever-growing number of inconsistencies and grey areas, which my delegation will come back to. A lack of cooperation on the part of the Syrian authorities who fail to say the whole truth. An attempt to consider the Syrian Arab Republic as a State Party like the others. Let us recall the circumstances under which the Syrian Arab Republic joined the Convention, those of the large-scale use of chemical weapons against its population, at a time when the very existence of a chemical arsenal was denied. Let us remember that it is these circumstances that place the burden on the Syrian authorities to restore trust. At this stage, there is unfortunately a long way to go. It is therefore important, here again, for the Declaration Assessment Team to fully complete its mission.

In all, Mr Chairperson, Mr Director-General, the Organisation still has a lot to do in the Syrian Arab Republic. This is why it was important for the Technical Secretariat to maintain the conditions for the Organisation to carry out the rest of the tasks assigned to it by extending the length of its contract with UNOPS. We would like to thank the Director-General for this.

Finally, the allegations of use of chemical weapons by non-State actors in Iraq are a reason for great concern. We welcome the report presented by the Iraqi authorities on this matter and invite them to continue to inform the Executive Council as necessary. We applaud the decision announced by the Director-General in his statement this morning to follow up on the Technical Secretariat's offer to provide assistance.

I thank you for your attention and would ask that this statement be considered as an official document of this session of the Executive Council and be posted on the OPCW website and extranet server.

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