



Eighty-First Session
15 – 18 and 23 March 2016

EC-81/NAT.12
17 March 2016
ENGLISH only

AUSTRALIA

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR DR BRETT MASON
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA TO THE OPCW
ON THE DRAFT DECISION ON THE REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
REGARDING THE DECLARATION AND RELATED SUBMISSIONS BY
THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC**

Thank you, Mr Chairperson,

Australia strongly supports the draft decision on the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration, and we urge Executive Council members to adopt it by consensus.

During the closed session yesterday, we heard some distressing – yet sadly, far too regular – interventions from the Syrian delegation and its supporters.

Claims, Mr Chairperson, that Syrian authorities have provided nothing but unmitigated, whole-hearted support and cooperation to the Technical Secretariat.

This then was coupled with the Syrian Arab Republic's vague charges of incompetence against the Declaration Assessment Team.

And then unfounded allegations that any delegation rightfully demanding certainty of the Syrian Arab Republic's declaration has, quote, “a hostile political agenda”.

Australia's only agenda – and I think it is fair to say, that of nearly all contributors to this debate – is to safeguard the strength and integrity of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and to ensure that toxic chemicals will never again be used as a tool of war.

Revelations about the extent of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme have been the result of the Declaration Assessment Team's investigations, not of the Syrian Arab Republic's compliance or transparency.

It is readily apparent that the Syrian Arab Republic believes that it is not in its interest to come clean on its chemical weapons programme.

But I urge both the Syrian delegation and its supporters to look beyond its immediate interest and see what is best for the Syrian people.



To all Executive Council members, Australia urges you to discount cynical interventions urging you to 'close the file' and to ignore the glaring inconsistencies and gaps in the Syrian Arab Republic's narrative.

What we all want to achieve, I truly hope, is accountability for the development, possession and use of chemical weapons. Accountability is a vital step towards stopping their use. Without accountability, the people of the Syrian Arab Republic will continue to suffer. And this Council, and the OPCW, will be seen to indulge impunity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is one of the most critical challenges facing the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW. We must not fail this test.

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