



**UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT  
BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND AT THE EIGHTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE  
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6 (C)**

Mr Chair,  
Director-General,

We were grateful to receive report EC-85/DG.25 provided for this session under Article 8 paragraph 40 of the Convention, on the work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). This important report concerns the fundamental question of whether or not the Syrian Arab Republic is in compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

It is to our great regret, but not surprise, that the Technical Secretariat is still unable to verify that Syria's Declaration of its chemical weapons programme, required under the Convention, and under United Nations Security Council resolution 2118, is accurate or complete. The report makes clear that many serious outstanding questions remain.

The UK commends the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat for their ongoing work to engage the Syrian Arab Republic, but we are disappointed that there has been little meaningful reciprocal engagement from the Syrian authorities. The report notes that while the Syrians provided some additional documents in response to OPCW's repeated requests, only 48 out of the 148 pages submitted by Syria in response to the Technical Secretariat's most recent request, contained information that had not been submitted earlier. The report notes—and I quote—that “while these documents provided some details with regards to a few of the outstanding issues under consideration, in the majority of cases this information failed to clarify, beyond doubt, any of these issues, including those related to:

- (a) the role of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in the Syrian chemical weapons programme and the declaration of the relevant parts of the SSRC under the Convention;
- (b) the presence of indicators of several undeclared chemical warfare agents in samples collected by the DAT;
- (c) the large amounts of chemical warfare agents and/or munitions reportedly destroyed and/or consumed in other activities carried out by the Syrian Arab Republic prior to entry into force of the Convention; and



- (d) open questions as to whether some of the declared facilities were used to either produce or weaponise the chemical warfare agents.”

These are all substantial issues that go to the heart of the veracity of Syria’s declaration – they are not merely “technical questions”. It is of deep concern, and wholly unacceptable that, despite the best efforts of the Technical Secretariat, such serious questions remain unanswered. This rightly calls into question Syria’s compliance with its obligations under the Convention. Since the Syrian Regime acceded to the Convention in 2013, we have sought assurance that Syria is in compliance with obligations that all Parties to the Convention take on. Rather than engaging with this Organisation in the collaborative spirit expected of States Parties, Syria has spent this time covering up its chemical weapons programme, denying scientific reality and obstructing those who only seek the truth on behalf of this Council.

Worst of all, Syria has continued to use toxic chemicals as weapons against its own citizens. The Syrian Arab Republic has been found, by a United Nations Security Council mandated independent panel, to have used chemical weapons on at least three occasions in 2014 and 2015. Widespread reports of chemical weapons use continue. This Council considered, just last week, the horrific account of an attack using sarin at Khan Shaykhun on 4 April, and we have heard that the OPCW’s Fact-Finding Mission has received allegations of more than 60 incidents of chemical weapons use in Syria since December 2015. Let us be clear, the Syrian regime is acting in contravention of international law. The use of chemical weapons is a war crime and must stop. The perpetrators must be held to account.

It is this Council’s duty to expect and demand the highest standards of all States Parties to the Convention. The Syrian authorities must engage meaningfully with OPCW to resolve all outstanding issues and meet their international obligations under the Convention, and United Nations Security Council resolutions 2118 and 2235 in full. It is vital that the decisions of this Executive Council are implemented in full. We do not offer a pick and choose selection box. The Syrian Arab Republic must cooperate with the OPCW, provide all the documents requested, and make available for interview all those senior officials involved in decision-making roles in the Syrian chemical weapons programme that the OPCW has asked to meet.

The only picture to emerge clearly and consistently from the Secretariat’s engagement with Syria since 2013 has been one of continued and deliberate Syrian evasion and obfuscation, and an ever-changing narrative from Syria on its chemical weapons programme in response to new evidence obtained by the Technical Secretariat. The Syrian account has been inconsistent, contains significant contradictions, is scientifically implausible, and is insufficient to explain the results of analysis of chemicals and the presence of undeclared chemicals at relevant sites. This can only lead us to conclude that Syria continues to conceal the truth about its chemical weapons programme; that it has retained elements of its programme; and that it is prepared to use chemical weapons again.

I kindly request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Eighty-Fifth Session of the Executive Council and posted on the OPCW external server and web site. Thank you.