



Thirty-Second Meeting
27 March 2013

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STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS THIRTY-SECOND MEETING

Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,

1. I welcome you all to this Thirty-Second Meeting of the Executive Council and appreciate your attendance.
2. As you will all be aware, on 20 March the Secretary-General of the United Nations received a request from the government of the Syrian Arab Republic to conduct a mission to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons on 19 March in Khan al Asal near Aleppo. The following day the Secretary-General received another request from France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for an investigation in other locations within Syria using the same mechanism.
3. On 21 March, the Secretary-General announced that he had decided to “establish a UN investigation on the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria” under his mandate pursuant to UN General Assembly resolution 42/37C of 1987 and Security Council resolution 620 of 1988.
4. Consistent with paragraph 27 of Part XI of the Verification Annex of the Convention and subparagraph 2(c) of the Relationship Agreement between the OPCW and the UN, the Secretary-General requested the cooperation of the OPCW in the conduct of this investigation. The modalities of such cooperation are contained in the Supplementary Arrangement signed between myself and the UN Secretary-General last September. WHO has also been asked to support this investigation.
5. On 21 March I informed the States Parties through the General Committee about the informal exchanges we had with the UN. Furthermore, on 23 March, the States Parties were provided with a copy of the letter that I had received early that day from the Secretary-General, about his decision to conduct an investigation of alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria. Since then I have been in close contact with the Secretary-General, his Senior Advisers, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, as well as the WHO Director-General. I have also kept the Chairperson of the Conference of the States Parties and the Chairperson of the Executive Council informed of developments.
6. The UN Secretary-General has been in contact with the Syrian government and they have already provided some further information on their allegations. He has also been



provided, in response to his request, additional information by the governments of France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

7. As you will be aware, yesterday the Secretary-General announced that he had appointed Mr Åke Sellström of Sweden as the head of the fact-finding mission. I look forward to working with him. The terms of reference of the mission, which we anticipate will constitute the formal request, are still in preparation and we are awaiting their receipt. We have provided our inputs on the technical aspects related to the OPCW's support.
8. The Technical Secretariat is meanwhile undertaking the necessary preparations to participate in the mission. This week we have completed our refresher training for the inspectors. The first and overriding priority will be for the UN to obtain assurances regarding the safety and security of the personnel deployed. Once the formal request is received and satisfactory assurances on safety and security have been provided, we will dispatch a team to participate under the auspices of the UN mission. We are also in daily contact with the UN Department for Safety and Security to assess the situation on the ground. On Monday we sent a staff member to UN Headquarters in New York to provide technical support in relation to the OPCW's role. I hope you will understand that I will not at this stage elaborate on specific details, in particular any operational aspects concerning this fact-finding mission. I should emphasise that the safety and security of the OPCW team is of paramount importance to me, as I am sure it is to all of us.
9. I should inform the Council that the conduct of the mission, and any other provision of assistance in the form of personnel services and equipment by the OPCW to the UN under the Supplementary Arrangement, is on a full cost recovery basis. I should also stress that all data and information collected and generated during the mission will be the property of the UN.
10. I will keep the Chairpersons of the Conference of the States Parties and the Executive Council fully informed of developments regarding this mission.
11. I would like to conclude by repeating my earlier statements that the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances would be reprehensible and is completely contrary to the legal norms and standards of the international community.

Madam Chairperson,

12. This concludes my statement. Thank you for your attention.

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