



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

Thirty-Third Meeting  
27 September and 3 October 2013

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ENGLISH and RUSSIAN only

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION  
AT THE THIRTY-THIRD MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Distinguished Mr Chairman,

First of all, allow me to express to you my sincere gratitude for the efforts that you personally made towards the timely adoption by the Executive Council on 27 September of the exceptionally important decision on measures for the elimination of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

We are pleased to note that this decision is based on the Russian-United States framework agreement, which was reached on 14 September this year as a result of talks in Geneva. The decision of the Executive Council establishes a special procedure for the elimination of the Syrian chemical arsenals, not entirely consistent with the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention, but determined by the extraordinary situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. This process must be completed within the tightest time frame and under the strictest supervision of the Organisation.

We would particularly like to emphasise that the decision provides for a central role for the Organisation in the mission to the Syrian Arab Republic, which is to ensure that the entire process of chemical weapons destruction is verified, with assistance from the United Nations as appropriate.

In order to successfully implement this decision, we must focus on the expeditious and effective fulfilment of the proposed practical tasks, while avoiding any politicisation.

We expect the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, under the leadership of Director-General Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, to do everything possible to this end. We are also convinced of the high level of professionalism, dedication and impartiality of the staff of the Technical Secretariat, which will guarantee the successful implementation of the tasks before them.

It is our understanding that the start of the chemical demilitarisation process in the Syrian Arab Republic became possible thanks to the political will of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, manifested under the most difficult of internal political circumstances. We welcome the sovereign decision by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic on 12 September to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention, as well as the fact that Damascus immediately declared its readiness to observe all the obligations under the Convention on a provisional basis before the Convention enters into force for the Syrian Arab Republic (on 14 October 2013), and that it has equally promptly set up a National Authority



for implementation of the Convention. The Syrian Arab Republic is establishing official and working contacts with the OPCW and is preparing to set up its own Representation to the Organisation in The Hague.

On 19 September—two days in advance of the date mentioned in the Geneva arrangement—the government authorities submitted initial disclosure on the Syrian chemical arsenals. We wish to draw attention to the fact that this information was acknowledged by experts from the United Nations, the OPCW, the European Union, and the United States of America to be more than satisfactory. Despite the difficult situation in the country and the extremely short deadlines, additions and updates to be made to the initial information on the Syrian chemical arsenals, which must be submitted to the OPCW no later than 4 October, are currently at the completion stage.

All of this is testimony to the fact that the Syrian Arab Republic is fully aware of its responsibility to observe international legal obligations in the field of chemical weapons destruction, that it is by practical actions confirming its commitment to the spirit and letter of the Convention, and that it is cooperating honestly and in good faith with OPCW personnel on the ground. At the same time, of course, certain problems may arise as a result of the tight deadlines set by the decision of the Executive Council, but the Syrian Arab Republic is showing willingness to address such problems by means of constructive cooperation, openness, and goodwill. We hope that this approach will also be adopted by other parties taking part in the process in contacts with the Syrian side.

Resolution 2118 adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 27 September urges all Syrian parties and interested Member States of the United Nations which are capable of doing so to work closely together and with the OPCW and the United Nations to ensure the safety of the mission in the Syrian Arab Republic and the earliest possible destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles in this country.

Thus the decision of the United Nations Security Council and the decision of the Executive Council of the OPCW are addressed not only to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, but to all parties involved in the conflict, all interested States, and, above all, to the Syrian Arab Republic's neighbours in the region.

Therefore, we cannot help but be concerned by the threats aimed at OPCW personnel from the Syrian opposition, its intention not to grant OPCW inspectors access to areas controlled by opposition groups, and not to allow them to fulfil the mandate prescribed by the decisions of the United Nations and the OPCW.

In this context, we call upon all States to put due and unyielding pressure on the conflicting parties in the Syrian Arab Republic, primarily on extremist groups of intransigent armed opposition to ensure the safety of inspection activities at chemical weapons storage facilities as well as verification of the subsequent destruction of these weapons.

The Russian Federation fully supports the United Nations efforts to investigate the alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Like the other members of the international community, we strongly condemn the use of chemical weapons wherever and under whatever circumstances it may occur. Those who commit such acts should not go unpunished.

At the same time, we would like to draw the attention of the Council to the fact that, in accordance with its mandate, the Sellström team did not make any findings or draw any conclusions as to who exactly used chemicals in the Syrian Arab Republic. Therefore, any conclusions about who is behind the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic made on the basis of that report are unfounded and incorrect.

Therefore, we strongly object to the baseless allegations which were made here with reference to certain provisions in the report of the United Nations investigation team, that responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Guta on 21 August should be placed on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

For our part, we can not disregard the existence of abundant evidence confirming that a large-scale provocation, prepared by one or several opposition groups, was staged on 21 August. Everybody is aware of the recent reports from neighbouring countries of the Syrian Arab Republic that Syrian extremists have already tried to acquire or even acquired access to chemical warfare agents. There are facts of discovery by the Syrian forces of numerous underground facilities and laboratories for the production of chemical weapons in areas recaptured from the rebels, as well as cases of chemical poisoning among the Syrian military.

We believe that the tragedy in Guta could have possibly been avoided had there been a prompt investigation of the use of chemical weapons in Aleppo on 19 March. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic requested the United Nations to conduct an immediate investigation. However, this never happened, not least because of opposition from those States that had previously insisted on investigating all cases of alleged use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic—regrettably, as it turned out, only in words.

In these circumstances, Russian experts have done their analysis and their findings have been submitted to the Secretariat of the United Nations. Our investigation has clearly shown that extremist anti-government forces are behind the use of chemical weapons at Aleppo.

In view of the above, we believe that persistent attempts by a number of States to put the blame for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic—a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention—on the government of the country which demonstrates full cooperation in the investigation of these cases are totally unfounded.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone and anywhere deserves the harshest reaction of the international community. But this does not mean that someone can usurp the right to accuse or mete out sentences. All incidents involving the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic must be professionally and impartially investigated using the proper expertise of the OPCW, and only then be considered by the Security Council solely on the basis of facts, not speculation or assumptions.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Thirty-Third Meeting of the Executive Council.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

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