



OPCW

Executive Council

Fortieth Meeting
28 March and 11 April 2014

EC-M-40/NAT.2
28 March 2014
ENGLISH only

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ROBERT P. MIKULAK, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE OPCW AT THE FORTIETH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr Chairman,

At the recent Seventy-Fifth Session of the Council, many delegations, including my own, stressed that the month of March would be a critical test for Syria—and for the international effort to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons programme. Since that session, the Government of Syria has made limited progress toward the removal of all designated chemicals from the territory of Syria. However, it is also undeniable that two thirds of the Priority 1 chemicals still remain in Syria.

As underscored in the report of the Seventy-Fifth Session of the Executive Council, the Council expects the Government of Syria to undertake systematic, predictable, and substantial movements of chemicals to the port of Latakia. Further, the Council requested that Syria accelerate its efforts wherever possible in order to complete removal in the shortest possible time to allow sufficient time to complete destruction.

Syria's plan calls for the removal of all chemicals by 27 April; however, it must complete the transport of all chemicals to Latakia more expeditiously. All equipment requested by Syria has been provided; all elements necessary for removal are in place. Syria can accelerate removal and complete it in the first half of April. In particular, the security issues raised by Syria with respect to two of its chemical weapons storage sites need to be addressed and resolved immediately—not left to be addressed only after the rest of the chemicals are removed. Further delays in removal operations at these two sites are simply unacceptable. Clearing out these sites should be a top Syrian priority.

In this connection, I want to comment on the uncorroborated allegations that were made by another speaker that elements of the opposition forces in Syria are trying to interfere with the international effort to eliminate Syrian chemical weapons or might even try to use chemical weapons themselves; the United States has no evidence that would support such allegations.

The Council should not forget the increasing financial burden that Syrian delays have imposed on the States Parties involved operationally in the removal effort. This constellation of international effort was set in place many months ago to ensure milestones established in the Council's 15 November decision on removal could be met, including the removal of Syria's most dangerous chemicals by 31 December 2013. At great and growing expense, the international community has been waiting for Syria to honour its removal obligations.



In addition to the removal of chemicals and their destruction outside Syria, the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons production facilities is a fundamental element of the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme. As in the case of removal, Syria is well behind schedule in meeting its commitments. In particular, twelve facilities—seven above ground and five underground—remain to be physically destroyed as required by the Convention. The extended completion date, set by the Council by consensus, was two weeks ago. Syria needs to demonstrate immediate and tangible progress on the physical destruction of those facilities.

The twelve facilities that remain to be destroyed have unusual technical features that complicate their physical destruction. To achieve consensus, the methods chosen must, of course, meet the Convention's general requirement for physical destruction. They must also be consistent with the specific requirements that other States Parties have been obligated to follow. As my delegation and others stressed during the Seventy-Fifth Session of the Executive Council, the approach initially proposed—simply making the facilities unusable would not meet the Convention's requirements, nor would it be consistent with specific requirements mandated for others. We cannot agree to a double standard with lower standards for Syria.

We are hopeful that the Council can reach consensus very soon on a revised approach to the destruction of all twelve facilities, drawing on the recent visit of the Technical Secretariat team to Syria after the Seventy-Fifth Session of the Executive Council. Further discussions among technical experts on an urgent basis may well be necessary to clarify specific aspects in order to reach consensus. Disagreements regarding the approach for a few facilities should not prevent decisions being taken with respect to facilities on which agreement already exists.

In closing, although progress has been made in eliminating Syria's chemical weapons programme, much still remains to be done before the historic promise of the Geneva Framework is fully realised. The international community is waiting for Syria to fulfill its obligation to rapidly remove all chemicals that are designated for destruction outside of the country.

As the removal operation concludes in the coming weeks, the Council will still need to continue its intense oversight on issues related to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The original deadline of 15 March for destruction of the twelve hardened chemical weapons production facilities has already passed. This Council will need to ensure that these facilities are physically destroyed—not merely deactivated or made unusable—as soon as possible, in full alignment with the requirements of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Finally, this Council, States Parties, and the Technical Secretariat need to review and further assess the declaration, amendments, and disclosures of the Syrian Arab Republic to verify that these submissions are fully accurate and complete. As needed, appropriate steps must be taken to resolve ambiguities and concerns that exist, in order to achieve international confidence that Syria has met its obligations and the programme has been fully eliminated.

There is a singular purpose that binds together the Geneva Framework, the decisions of this Council, United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118, and the Convention itself. That singular purpose is the total elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme. Nothing

short of that is acceptable to the United States. Nothing short of that should be acceptable to this Council.

All of these steps will be key parts of the larger effort to ensure that the Assad regime will never again use chemical weapons against the Syrian people.

I ask that this statement be considered an official document of this Executive Council meeting and be placed on the OPCW website and external server.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

--- 0 ---