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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
AT THE FORTIETH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

Our delegation, like others, also wishes to speak about the progress of the operation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

We note the progress, the significant progress, since as of now about 60% of the chemical weapons have been removed, but when also considering the chemical weapons that have already been destroyed, the figure is more than 60%.

Of course, it is hard to ignore the fact that the real situation concerning the removal of the chemical weapons is not what we would wish to see: it is well known that only two movements have taken place in the last three weeks. But let us take a look at the reasons that have led to this situation.

Recently, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has received numerous reports from the Syrian Government of attacks by militants targeting chemical weapons transportation routes and storage facilities. Information about radio intercepts, indicating that the militants were preparing to carry out terrorist attacks against the chemical facilities, was also provided. The most unpleasant aspect of this situation is that there are constant reports of massive attacks in the area of the port of Latakia which is crucial for the success of the operation to remove the chemical weapons.

Here we have heard views that these reports are not confirmed by facts. In this regard, we would advise these “suspicious delegations” to ask the members of the UN-OPCW Mission who were in Latakia at the time of the shelling, whether such attacks really happened and how serious and dangerous they were. Maybe some of the delegates should even go to Latakia to see with their own eyes what is happening there. Perhaps then they will no longer have reason to doubt the facts of the militant attacks.

How, therefore, in such a difficult situation should the Syrian Arab Republic ensure the timely removal of the chemical weapons? It has been argued here many times that the responsibility for ensuring security rests with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. Nobody objects or is going to object to that. But then it turns out that, when removing the chemical weapons, the Syrian Government should do so only when it is confident about the security situation. After all, if, for example, during an attack against a convoy of chemical weapons a shell hits the container with chemicals, only the Syrian Government will be held



accountable for all the consequences of such a disaster. Or maybe someone else—someone who insisted on the transportation of chemical weapons in such dangerous conditions—would be ready to take responsibility for the consequences of such an incident? We think it is unlikely that these people would be ready to do so. That is why none of us has the right to impose on the Syrian side what it should do and how it should ensure the safe removal of the chemical weapons.

The recent surge in the activity of the opposition terrorist groups in the Syrian Arab Republic has fully coincided with the active and decisive phase of removal of the chemical weapons. We are convinced that this is no accident. These provocative actions are aimed at disrupting the work of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to implement the decisions of the Executive Council and the United Nations Security Council. The militants, operating in the border areas of the Syrian province of Latakia (and it is well known that they have certain external support), continue to hamper the safe and orderly transportation of the chemicals and pose security threats to the Norwegian and Danish vessels carrying out their removal.

In this regard, we are deeply concerned that the international community has thus far failed to send a clear message to the armed opposition in the Syrian Arab Republic about the need to comply with the provisions of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118, which is the basis for the Syrian operation, and United Nations Security Council resolution 1540, preventing weapons of mass destruction from falling into the “wrong hands”. We cannot but regret the fact that some states, including those present here, and which have constantly urged the Syrian Arab Republic to accelerate the removal of the chemical weapons, unfortunately, have in fact blocked the statement of the President of the United Nations Security Council which could have become a serious warning signal to all those who intended to undermine the process of chemical demilitarisation in the Syrian Arab Republic.

We would like also to mention the destruction of 12 former chemical weapons production facilities in the Syrian Arab Republic. We honestly do not understand the statements by several delegations, insisting on how exactly these Syrian facilities should be destroyed. I would like to recall in this connection that, in accordance with the decision of the Seventy-Fifth Session of the Executive Council, it was the Technical Secretariat that was requested, in cooperation with the Syrian side, to study this issue. This task was successfully fulfilled by the Technical Secretariat experts. And the result is now on the table: the combined plan for verification and destruction of the Syrian chemical facilities. So why, then, do a number of delegations continue to talk about some other principles and approaches, when the principle and the approach proposed by the Technical Secretariat are already before us. Does this mean that these delegations are ignoring the work done by the Technical Secretariat experts? And does this mean that they call into question the competence, experience, knowledge, and impartiality of the Technical Secretariat experts, who prepared the combined plan? I hope this is not the case.

There was also much talk here today about how the Syrian Arab Republic is delaying the process of taking a decision on the destruction of its facilities. Let us look at the real picture. The Syrian Arab Republic, as well as a number of other delegations, including ours, for instance, was ready to take a decision today. And it was not the intention of our delegation to split this decision into two separate parts—hangars and underground structures—since the logic of the document prepared by the Technical Secretariat and its contents require that these issues be addressed jointly. How is it possible that two weeks after the submission of the plan some States Parties have not been able to examine it thoroughly and in detail, and need

more time to clarify the issue of underground structures?! I should recall that it took the Technical Secretariat experts the same two weeks to prepare the combined plan itself. So is it easier to prepare a document than to understand what is written therein?!

Let me add one more aspect relating to the destruction of these facilities. We believe that those who read the combined plan prepared by the Technical Secretariat understand the criteria on which the experts based their work. These are the requirements of the Convention, the existing OPCW practice, and the need to take into account the actual ability of the Syrian Arab Republic to destroy these facilities within the timelines outlined in this plan. Therefore, perhaps we should not demand the impossible and what did not happen in this Organisation, and stop interpreting the concept of physical destruction, which is neither interpreted nor clarified in the Convention. Leave this task aside, because it has already been done by the Technical Secretariat experts, and I believe that we and other delegations have no reason not to trust them.

I request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Fortieth Meeting of the Executive Council.

Thank you.

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