



OPCW

Executive Council

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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, Mr Director-General, distinguished delegates,

Last Tuesday many of us gathered a few metres away from this meeting room to observe the annual Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare. It is equally fitting that we meet here today, and as many times as it takes, to ensure that there are no more victims of chemical warfare in Syria, and that the Syrian chemical weapons programme is completely and irreversibly eliminated as soon as possible.

The US delegation recognises the accomplishment of having 92 percent of the declared stockpile removed from Syria. But we also share the strong concern and growing disappointment of many delegations here with the reality that 100 metric tons of chemicals remain in Syria. The 27 metric tons of sarin precursor remaining would be enough to conduct scores of sarin attacks against civilians on the scale of the 21 August 2013 attack. We also are very concerned that the physical destruction of twelve chemical weapons production facilities declared by the regime has not yet begun.

The responsibility to complete the removal and to start destroying those facilities resides solely with Syria. The OPCW as a whole, as well as the United States and other OPCW Member States, has undertaken extraordinary efforts to assist Syria. There are steps that Syria could be taking right now to prepare for the final chemical removal operation. While we note news that Syria is “considering positively” taking some steps, it has not yet taken them. The regime's performance—insufficient and late steps for completing removals, and refusal to negotiate on a destruction plan for its chemical weapons production facilities that meets treaty standards—is contrary to its obligations as set forth in numerous Executive Council decisions and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

Furthermore, outstanding questions about the completeness and accuracy of the Syrian declaration are not yet resolved. Tragically, there are several recent credible allegations that chlorine gas was used repeatedly as a chemical weapon. And videos posted on the internet appear to indicate the use of chlorine gas—a World War I chemical weapon that inspired the movement to ban all chemical weapons—in barrel bombs dropped from regime helicopters.

The OPCW fact-finding team must meaningfully address all credible allegations of the use of chlorine as a chemical weapon in Syria. The Executive Council decision of 27 September 2013 is crystal clear in providing the OPCW fact-finding team with the



immediate and unfettered right to inspect any and all sites in Syria. Consistent with this decision, and with United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the United States calls upon all parties in Syria to cooperate fully with the fact-finding team and provide OPCW personnel with immediate and unfettered access to all sites where there are credible allegations that toxic chemicals have been used as a chemical weapon. They must also allow immediate and unfettered access to individuals whom the OPCW has grounds to believe are of importance to this mandate. Just as the world investigated the use of sarin against opposition neighbourhoods of Damascus on 21 August 2013, the world must look into allegations of the use of chlorine gas against opposition villages in the north as well. The United States strongly supports the Director-General's action to send a team to determine the facts, and we look forward to hearing the results and will be ready to consider any appropriate next steps.

At the same time, the regime must immediately take steps to transport the remaining one hundred metric tons of Priority 1 and Priority 2 chemicals to the port of Latakia. As both the United Nations Secretary-General and the OPCW-UN Joint Mission have made clear, the security situation is cause to complete the removal more rapidly, not more slowly. It is Syria's responsibility to find ways to deliver these final materials to Latakia as rapidly as possible.

At the 29 April meeting of this Council, the United States underscored the importance, as a matter of good faith, of "the need to see immediate and tangible signs that Syria intends to transport, in the very near future, the remaining chemicals from the last site." They should have included such steps as: on-site destruction of the remaining isopropanol; pre-positioning transport equipment; decanting chemicals; packing and site preparations; and maintaining readiness at the port of Latakia to receive the chemicals. It has been almost ten days and the regime has undertaken almost none of these actions despite an active airfield in the immediate proximity that could be used to deliver the material necessary to prepare the chemicals for ground transportation. We need to see immediate action.

My delegation is ready today, as we have been for weeks, to engage in technical discussions to resolve the concerns that we—as well as others—have about Syria's approach to the destruction of its chemical weapons production facilities. However, the Syrian delegation has refused to discuss technical matters with the international community. In fact, Syria seems to consider its destruction plan as a "take-it-or-leave it" document. No questions, no changes. For good reason, under the Chemical Weapons Convention, it is the Council's prerogative to decide if a destruction plan is satisfactory. We are not satisfied with the Syrian plan because we do not believe it meets the Convention's requirements, and we share the concerns expressed by other members of the Council in this regard.

The current situation on this issue, in which Syria refuses to discuss its plan, is highly regrettable and contrary to the spirit of the OPCW. The Council has no hope of ever reaching consensus if Syria refuses even to discuss differences. As a result of Syrian refusal to negotiate directly, the only communication is taking place through the good offices of the Technical Secretariat, which is endeavouring to facilitate an approach that can achieve consensus. But ultimately the Member States of the Executive Council must agree to the approach on destruction. The US delegation welcomes the Director-General's efforts to overcome differences on this issue and is cooperating fully with him.

Destruction of chemical weapons production facilities is an essential aspect of the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme. The United States wants to see the destruction accomplished without further delay. Our delegation does not have an inflexible approach and wants to find practical solutions that are consistent with Chemical Weapons Convention requirements, but we cannot do so if Syria refuses to discuss our questions and refuses to negotiate. We do believe that destruction of hangars could begin soon, while efforts to try to resolve issues regarding the tunnels could be accomplished in parallel. But recognising Syria's position that there must instead be a package solution, we are also prepared to work hard to find such a solution. We hope that, with the help of the Technical Secretariat and with Syrian cooperation, this Council can find a mutually acceptable approach.

My statement today has focused on three issues that are most in need of immediate action by Syria. There is another issue that is also very important – resolution of discrepancies in the Syrian declaration. The Director-General has taken a first step that is consistent with United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the Executive Council decisions and the Chemical Weapons Convention. The United States supports what he has undertaken and looks forward to learning the results so that we can consider appropriate next steps. This issue may take some time to resolve and this Council must continue to pursue it diligently.

In closing, let me remind the members of this Council that every step Syria has taken toward the elimination of its chemical weapons programme has been the result of international pressure, not because of Syria's moral abhorrence to chemical weapons. We must, both as a Council and as the international community, remain steadfast about Syria's obligations until all remaining declared 100 metric tons of chemicals are removed, until the accuracy of Syria's declaration is fully verified, until the chemical weapons production facilities are destroyed, and until all the facts are brought to light regarding the recent allegations of use.

I request that this statement be considered an official document of this meeting of the Council and that it be posted on the OPCW's public website and external server.

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