



OPCW

Executive Council

Forty-First Meeting
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UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY-PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE OPCW AT THE FORTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr Chairman,

At the outset, the United Kingdom aligns itself with the statement given by the distinguished Ambassador of Greece on behalf of the European Union, but I will take this opportunity to highlight a few points.

Like previous speakers, Mr Chairman, I would like to start with a warm welcome to you in your new role as our Chair. We look forward to working with you and pledge you and your Vice Chairs our full support. We anticipate a productive year in the Executive Council under your chairmanship.

As always, we are grateful for the update provided this morning by the Director-General. We would like to reiterate our support for the Director-General and his staff and their tireless efforts to oversee the demise of the Syrian chemical weapon programme. It has proved a slower business than this Council intended at the outset of this international endeavour, but the commitment of the Director-General and his staff, as well as the commitment of their colleagues in the OPCW-UN Joint Mission, remains steadfast and we thank them for that. This is all the more commendable given the hazardous environment in which the individuals have to work.

I have said this before, but since we last met there has been very little ‘progress’ to report. It remains the case that one site in Syria holds the remaining elements of Syria’s declared chemical stockpile. Just the day before this Council meeting we were briefed that some deliveries of packing material have been made and packing to prepare for removal has taken place, and we also note that the isopropanol has been destroyed. But there is still no sign of any movement of chemicals, nor any indications of a timescale for a move.

As I said last time we met, the 100 metric tonnes of chemicals awaiting removal are both Priority 1 and Priority 2 material and their destruction will take place aboard the Cape Ray, and also in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and in Finland. So both the Danish and Norwegian ships still sail the Mediterranean with partial loads, waiting for their final shipments. Syria is holding up the next steps of transportation, transshipment, unloading and ultimately destruction – a complicated endeavour which has been planned and prepared,



but awaits Syrian action. Other States Parties have done their part, but Syria has failed miserably to complete its undertakings and these latest delays all fall fully at Syria's door.

Another area of no progress to report today is the destruction of Syria's former chemical weapon factories: destruction of these is part of Syria's obligations under the Convention. There appears no reason why the seven hangars at least should not be destroyed as soon as practicable, as agreement seems to be reachable on those. We call on Syria to accept the technical recommendations for destruction of these facilities and to move forward while talks continue on the more complex tunnels – we do not understand why they wish to delay if they are genuinely committed to fulfilling their obligations.

The lack of progress on all these issues is entirely unsatisfactory. It is growing ever clearer that the 30 June deadline will not be met. Syria seems to be showing little regard for the decisions of this Council, or for that matter Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). The longer the delay in reaching completion, the greater the question mark over Syria's commitment to the Convention, and the greater our concern.

It is in the interests of all Syria's people that the Syrian chemical weapon programme is verifiably and completely destroyed, and that any concerns about discrepancies or gaps in Syria's declaration are investigated and resolved both so that these weapons can be eliminated as a threat to them, but also so that we, the international community, can have confidence that elimination has been completed. We strongly support the Director-General and his staff as they pursue this work and call on Syria to provide all the necessary information to resolve such discrepancies.

Finally, but not least, we also support the vital Fact-Finding Mission that the Director-General has despatched to establish the facts about the recent renewed allegations of the use of chemicals in the Syrian conflict. As we have said before, an independent and thorough investigation is essential, and we remain ready to support the Director-General and his staff in this undertaking. We expect that both sides of the conflict will facilitate their work and we look forward to a report of the findings.

I ask that this statement be circulated as an official document of this meeting.

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