



**STATEMENT BY**

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Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons  
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EC-M-45**

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## CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mister Chairman,

The Council meets today under grave circumstances. As States Parties to the Convention, we have all expressed our determination, in the words of the Preamble, "to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons." There can be no greater affront to the Convention than the actual use of chemical weapons. Yet, just two weeks ago, the Council was informed that chemical weapons are again being used in Syria.

Beginning in early spring of this year, a steady stream of alarming allegations emerged of the widespread use of chlorine as a chemical weapon in attacks against opposition-controlled areas in Syria. We now know these allegations are true. In its September 10, 2014, report, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission concluded that there is "compelling confirmation that a toxic chemical was used as a weapon, systematically and repeatedly" against three opposition-held villages in northern Syria (Talmanes, Al Tamanah, and Kafr Zeta). The report further concludes "with a high degree of confidence, that chlorine, either pure or in mixture, is the toxic chemical in question." Deaths and serious injuries caused by these chemical attacks were carefully documented by the Fact-Finding Mission.

Mister Chairman,

Adding to the importance of today's meeting of the Council is the grim prospect that these chemical weapons attacks are continuing. The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission emphasized that it has received reports about additional attacks in late August, "with accounts of the incidents bearing strong resemblance to those that are now confirmed as having been chlorine attacks."

Mister Chairman,

The Fact-Finding Mission report did not explicitly address who is responsible for these confirmed attacks with chemical weapons. However, the report allows the facts it has uncovered to speak for themselves, and these facts speak very loudly and clearly. The Fact-Finding Mission reported that witnesses invariably described the attacks as being carried out by helicopters, a capability that opposition elements in Syria do not possess – but government forces do possess. That fact leads directly to the logical conclusion that Syrian government forces carried out the attacks. Moreover, it defies credulity that opposition forces in Syria would be attacking their own people.

Mister Chairman,

The United States is profoundly alarmed by this report. This Council has been presented with clear evidence that the Syrian Arab Republic has used chlorine as a chemical weapon. The use of any toxic chemical as a weapon is clearly and explicitly prohibited by the Convention, as well as by UN Security Council Resolution 2118

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with respect to Syria. In sum, the evidence and conclusions presented in the report raise serious questions about the willingness of Syria to comply with its fundamental treaty obligations not to possess or use chemical weapons.

Mister Chairman,

It is essential that the Council remember that Syria joined the Convention last year under extraordinary circumstances tied directly to its confirmed use of chemical weapons. The report of the Fact-Finding Mission is a reminder that those extraordinary circumstances remain, necessitating continued oversight and scrutiny by this Council and the international community. Put bluntly, Syria is not just like other members of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Its decision to accede to the Convention was not an enlightened renunciation of chemical weapons, rather it was a decision taken only as an expedient action. Just weeks before it submitted its letter of accession last year, the Assad regime, on August 21, 2013, used chemical weapons against an opposition- controlled suburb of Damascus, in attacks killing over one thousand four hundred people. Now there is direct confirmation that Syria continues to systematically and repeatedly use chemical weapons.

Mister Chairman,

The special mandate for Syria established by the Council's historic September 27, 2013, decision must continue. Indeed, the Council is now compelled at its next regular session in early October to strengthen that verification regime and to take other actions to deter and prevent further CW attacks against the people of Syria and to hold the government of Syria accountable. The Fact-Finding Mission must continue its work and thoroughly examine and report on every credible allegation of chemical weapons use in Syria. And those individuals responsible for such chemical weapons attacks must be held fully accountable for their actions.

Mister Chairman,

As documented by the Fact-Finding Mission, people are still being injured and killed in Syria by chemical weapons attacks. This Council has a solemn responsibility to the people of Syria, and indeed to the world at-large, to speak loudly and clearly and to act with resolve and vigilance. The Syrian government's actions, flying in the face of the Chemical Weapons Convention and UN Security Council Resolution 2118, demand a meaningful response by this body. Chemical weapons are an abomination that have long been rejected by the international community. The only thing necessary for this evil to endure is for this Council, and the rest of the States Parties to the Convention, to do nothing.

Thank you, Mister Chairman.

I request that this document be circulated as an official document of the Council and posted to the public website and to the external server.