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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 FORTY-EIGHTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
ON THE BRIEFING BY THE DECLARATION ASSESSMENT TEAM**

Mr Chairman,

The United States remains very appreciative and supportive of the efforts of the Declaration Assessment Team. We would like to thank Mr Alihodzic and his team for today's briefing and their status report on DAT activities.

In its September report to the Council, the DAT identified unresolved issues and concerns touching upon all of the basic elements of the Syrian chemical weapons programme – agent and precursors, munitions, and chemical weapons-related facilities. Since September, the Declaration Assessment Team has conducted two more rounds of consultations and engaged Syria on additional transparency measures offered by the government.

Despite considerable activity, there is little discernible progress in resolving the many outstanding issues and concerns. In sum, the Technical Secretariat has been unable to verify that all of the chemicals, munitions, and facilities that comprised the Syrian chemical weapons programme have been declared and, as required by the Convention and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), eliminated. Indeed, significant chemical weapons capabilities may very well remain in the hands of the Syrian Government. For this reason the Council should be fundamentally concerned about the report of the Declaration Assessment Team.

In the Council, some delegations have complained that Syria is being singled out for special treatment that goes beyond the Convention and the obligations imposed on all other States Parties. It is true that Syria is subject to special treatment. Indeed, this Council, by consensus on 27 September 2013, explicitly recognised “the extraordinary character of the situation posed by Syrian chemical weapons,” and the Council established a special framework for the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons programme involving verification measures not applicable to any other State Party.

The Council's decision in September 2013 is based upon the provisions of Article IV and Article V regarding chemical weapons possessor States Parties which have ratified or acceded to the Convention after the 10-year period for destruction ended in 2007. The Convention stipulates that such States Parties shall be subject to “procedures for stringent verification” to be determined by the Executive Council. For example, the Council required



Syria to make special information disclosures and curtailed the timeline for its Article III declaration. The Council required that Syria complete the elimination of its chemical weapons programme according to a highly expedited timeline. Unlike any other State Party, Syria is also potentially subject to so-called “section 2(d)” inspections which would allow the Technical Secretariat personnel to quickly access any site another State Party identifies as involved in the Syrian chemical weapons programme. I hope these examples help to clarify the special framework for Syria established by the Executive Council under the Convention.

This special framework has direct relevance for the verification of Syria’s declaration. Its objective is the complete destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. Verifying that Syria has indeed declared its entire chemical weapons programme is essential to the achievement of that objective. For example, with respect to chemical weapons which Syria claims to have destroyed prior to entry into force, the Technical Secretariat must independently verify such claims. It is highly detrimental to international confidence that Syria has failed to provide any records or other original documentation to corroborate this prior destruction that has been claimed. In fact, Syria has further undermined its credibility by first claiming that no records were kept and later saying that records were kept but destroyed. The United States of America is profoundly skeptical of this evolving cover story and wonders what is in those records that Syria does not want any of us to see. We are mindful, for example, that Syria initially said that it had not produced any ricin toxin and eventually declared having a ricin weapons programme.

In closing, let me emphasise that the United States of America continues to strongly support the efforts of the Director-General and his Declaration Assessment Team to resolve the many remaining issues and concerns about the Syrian declaration. Ultimately, however, the success of this effort will depend upon the Syrian Government. It still remains to be seen whether Syria will do what is necessary to instill confidence that it has finally and fully declared its chemical weapons programme and demonstrate it has truly renounced the possession and use of chemical weapons.

Thank you, Mr Chairman. I ask that this statement be made an official document of the meeting and posted to the external server and to the public website.

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