



## Director-General's Statement on Executive Council Decision on Destruction of Syria Chemical Weapons

Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Executive Council has just adopted an historic decision.

It is momentous for its promise and not just its programme.

It kindles the first rays of hope after a long dark night for the Syrian people.

They have endured enough suffering including the atrocity of use of chemical weapons. This decision sends an unmistakable message that the international community is coming together to work for peace in Syria, beginning with the elimination of chemical weapons in that country.

I have always praised the policy-making organs of the OPCW for their ability to forge consensus on difficult issues.

Today has not been any different except that you took action as the world watched.

I take this opportunity to sincerely commend the Russian Federation and the United States of America. They have led this effort by their own example in this Organisation. The Framework Agreement for the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons that was reached between the two countries in Geneva on 14 September established a credible basis for the Executive Council to act. Since then, they have worked tirelessly with other delegations to reach consensus.

Another important development is Syria's accession to the CWC and its declarations to destroy its chemical weapons stockpiles as soon as possible. We look forward to Syria's close cooperation to translate this commitment into action and to reach the defined goals. The Syrian representatives have assured me that this pledge follows their strategic decision to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons and related capabilities.

Syria's accession to the Convention takes place against an extraordinary background. Its request for provisional application of the Convention which has been endorsed by the EC enables us to make an early start to what will be, under the Council's decision, an accelerated programme of demilitarization. Our advance team to commence verification activities in Syria is scheduled to depart on Monday 30 September.

The Council's decision also establishes the parameters within which this work will be undertaken and completed.

Never before has the OPCW faced a task of this magnitude and importance. The Executive Council has placed a heavy burden on our shoulders. It has established a far-reaching mandate with ambitious target dates.

The mission will also be conducted in demanding circumstances, with security remaining an overriding concern.

The pledges of support from States Parties are re-assuring and we look forward to working closely with them to create the conditions necessary for our teams to perform their duties in Syria.

Our mission will incur major financial costs. I have established a Trust Fund, in line with our Financial Rules and Regulations, to manage the voluntary contributions to conduct the inspection activities in Syria.

Other verification costs will be reflected in a revised Programme and Budget of the Organisation for 2014.

Destruction of chemical weapons itself will involve significant expenditure. Syria has already requested support in order to fulfill its responsibilities to destroy its chemical weapons.

We have known all along that an OPCW mission of this extraordinary character will require the support of the United Nations. There are three areas of particular importance, namely, security, logistics and field support. I look forward to working closely with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Ban Ki-moon. He will present, within ten days of the adoption of the UNSC Resolution, recommendations regarding the role of the United Nations in this endeavour.

I assure the Council that I and my colleagues are ready to take up this historic responsibility. A few days ago, I stated that we approach this mission with a sense of destiny. What this means is that we will not allow the significant organizational and managerial challenges to obscure the vision of peace and security that is embedded in this noble undertaking.

The recent investigation of alleged use in Syria proved that chemical weapons were indeed used which I strongly condemned. This outrage makes it all the more imperative for us to work with single-minded dedication to make the programme of demilitarization in Syria a complete success.

The OPCW team in that investigation played its part; bravely and professionally. We now face a mission of much bigger proportions. Yet, every staff member in this Organisation will bring the same zeal, commitment, and motivation to this endeavour. We approach this historic moment not just as a professional obligation but from the depths of human commitment.

I thank you.

---

*As the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW oversees the global campaign to permanently eliminate these weapons. Since its entry into force in 1997 the Convention has become the fastest growing arms treaty in history with 189 States Parties, and more than 80% of all declared chemical arsenals have already been destroyed under OPCW verification - an unprecedented achievement in the annals of disarmament.*