

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon and thank you for being here today.

Following the Executive Council decision and Resolution 2118 adopted by the Security Council on 27th September, the OPCW has acted promptly and diligently.

Within a span of three days, 19 experts from the Organisation were deployed to Damascus. Part of this team discussed with Syrian authorities the disclosure made by the Syrian Government on 19th September. The rest of the team prepared the plan for inspections. In fact the first inspection on a production facility took place on Sunday and Monday. Some equipment was destroyed. And this work continues. Another inspection is being carried out today and an additional team of 12 experts is being deployed.

The timelines in the EC Decision are tight. The initial declaration and a general plan for destruction have to be submitted by Syria by 27th October. A plan for destruction has to be adopted by the Executive Council by 15th November, with a view to destroying all CW capabilities by mid-2014.

First verification activities have to be completed by the end of this month. All production facilities and mixing and filling equipment have to be rendered unusable.

Our experts both on the ground and here at the Headquarters are working hard to meet these targets.

The mission is a joint OPCW-UN mission. We are grateful to the UN for their substantive support in logistics and security.

The Secretary General will soon appoint, in consultation with me, a Special Coordinator who will report to me and the Secretary General at the same time.

This is an extraordinary situation for the OPCW. It is unprecedented. We are at the beginning of a difficult process and there are significant challenges. Nevertheless, the OPCW is well equipped in terms of knowledge, expertise and experience to fulfil this mandate.

With Syria becoming the 190th member of our Organisation as of 14th October, we are getting closer to full universality of the Convention.

The motto of our Organisation is “Working together for a world free of chemical weapons”. The international community has come together in a visible and significant way to show how this can be done.

Thank you and I will take a few questions now before I depart to attend the Session of the EC which is underway this week.