



Security Council

Distr.: General
29 December 2015

Original: English

Letter dated 29 December 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the twenty-seventh monthly report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) (see annex). The present report covers the period from 24 November to 21 December 2015.

With respect to the destruction of the 12 chemical weapons production facilities, one hangar has yet to be destroyed. That hangar continues to be inaccessible owing to the prevailing security situation.

Progress towards the destruction of all chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic has continued and is very close to completion. I look forward to the confirmation of the complete destruction of all chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic.

As of the end of the reporting period, the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team was deployed for its thirteenth visit to the Syrian Arab Republic. The Team continued to pursue outstanding issues: through visiting sites and taking samples; by continuing its consultations with Syrian authorities; and by conducting technical-level discussions.

As you are aware, the OPCW Director-General will be reporting to the OPCW Executive Council before its eighty-first session in March 2016 on the details of all unresolved issues, in particular those on which no further progress has been made. I therefore welcome the continuing cooperation between the Syrian authorities and OPCW, which is essential for further progress.

At the time of my previous letter ([S/2015/908](#)) dated 24 November 2015, I transmitted to you the three recent reports of the OPCW fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, along with discussions within the OPCW Executive Council on the work of the mission. You will recall that one of those three reports was identified as an interim one.

In accordance with the OPCW Executive Council decision of 4 February 2015, which takes note of the statement of intent of the Director-General of OPCW to include reports of the OPCW fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Director-General has included the final version of the above-referenced interim report, along with his letter to me dated 22 December 2015.



I take note of the conclusions contained in this report, including the determination of the OPCW fact-finding mission that further investigation is required.

I understand that the attached report is currently available only in English, and that the OPCW Technical Secretariat is working to translate the report into all official languages. I likewise understand that the Director-General has circulated the report in English to all OPCW States parties. In this regard, and in advance of its translation into all official languages, the report transmitted to me by the Director-General will therefore be circulated to you, for information, as a Note by the Secretariat.

In connection with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, Virginia Gamba, Head of the Mechanism, signed the status-of-mission agreement with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic on 11 December 2015. Following the signing of the status-of-mission agreement, the three-member leadership panel of the Joint Investigative Mechanism visited Damascus for meetings with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic on 17 December 2015. During the visit, the panel met with His Excellency Mr. Faisal Mekdad, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, and other officials of the Government, who confirmed the readiness of the Syrian Government to cooperate with the Mechanism. They discussed the implementation of Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) and the status-of-mission agreement. The leadership panel of the Mechanism is looking forward to the Government's cooperation, pursuant to the resolution.

Finally, the leadership of the Mechanism is grateful for the voluntary contributions received thus far to the trust fund of the Mechanism.

(Signed) **BAN** Ki-moon

Annex

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled “Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme”, which was prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Council. My report covers the period from 24 November to 21 December 2015 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013. Please also find attached the Note by the Technical Secretariat: Report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria Regarding the Incidents Described in Communications from the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates and Head of the National Authority of the Syrian Arab Republic. This is the final version of the interim report already provided on 2 November.

(Signed) Ahmet **Üzümcü**

Enclosure

Note by the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.
2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities” (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation “in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, also adopted a decision entitled “Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria” (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015).
4. This, the twenty-seventh monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions, and includes information relevant to the period from 24 November to 21 December 2015.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

5. Progress within the reporting period by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:
 - (a) As previously reported, the Secretariat has verified the destruction of 11 of the 12 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) in the Syrian Arab Republic, namely five underground structures and seven aircraft hangars. The remaining hangar yet to be destroyed continued to be inaccessible during the reporting period due to the security situation.
 - (b) On 18 December 2015, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its twenty-fifth monthly report (EC-81/P/NAT.3, dated 18 December 2015) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.
 - (c) The Syrian authorities have continued to extend the necessary cooperation in accordance with the implementation of subparagraph 1(e) of EC-M-33/DEC.1 and paragraph 7 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

6. Significant progress has been made in destroying all the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic, which were removed from its territory in 2014. A combined total of 99.6 per cent of all declared chemical weapons has been verified as destroyed, which includes the isopropanol previously destroyed in the Syrian Arab Republic, 100% of the Category 1 chemicals, and 98.1% of the Category 2 chemicals. The effluent produced by the neutralization process of sulfur mustard and DF has also been destroyed. As at the cut-off date of the report, a total of 84.3% of the remaining Category 2 chemical, hydrogen fluoride (HF) has now been destroyed, as Veolia ES Technical Solutions, LLC in the United States of America continued its destruction activities. The Secretariat will continue to brief States Parties in The Hague on this activity, which is expected to be completed in January 2016.

Activities carried out by the Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

7. The Secretariat and the United Nations Office for Project Services continued their cooperation in the context of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. Six OPCW staff members were deployed as part of that mission as at the cut-off date of this report (this includes the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT)).

8. The Director-General has continued to communicate with senior representatives of the States Parties hosting a destruction facility or providing assistance with the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, and with senior officials of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. As requested by the Council at its Seventy-Fifth Session (paragraph 7.12 of EC-75/2, dated 7 March 2014), the Secretariat, on behalf of the Director-General, has continued to brief States Parties in The Hague on its activities.

9. The Secretariat and the Syrian authorities have maintained their ongoing cooperation on outstanding issues regarding the Syrian initial declaration, as encouraged by the Council at its Seventy-Sixth Session (paragraph 6.17 of EC-76/6, dated 11 July 2014). During its thirteenth visit to the Syrian Arab Republic, which began on 13 December and is expected to be complete on 22 December 2015, the DAT continued to pursue outstanding issues through site visits, discussions with Syrian authorities, technical consultations, and interviews with principals from the Syrian chemical weapons programme. While the DAT held some of its technical meetings in Beirut during the first three days of its visit due to the security situation in Damascus, it was able to continue with its work in Damascus thereafter.

Supplementary resources

10. In addition to the Syria Trust Fund for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons, which had a total contribution of EUR 50.3 million, a new Trust Fund for Syria Missions was created in November 2015 to support the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and other remaining activities, such as those of the DAT. As at the cut-off date of this report, EUR 600,000 had been received from Germany, with pledges from other donors currently being processed.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

11. A further report by the FFM team that investigated incidents reported by the Syrian Arab Republic as involving the use of toxic chemicals has been issued to States Parties on 17 December 2015 for their review. The report deals with 11 incidents. Based on the work of the FFM, involving interviews and other procedures, the FFM is of the view that in some instances, those affected may have been exposed to some non-persistent, irritating substance. However, it did not come across evidence that would shed more light on the specific nature or source of the exposure. In one instance, analysis of some blood samples indicates that individuals were at some point exposed to sarin or a sarin-like substance. Further investigation would be necessary to determine when or under what circumstances such exposure might have occurred. The Secretariat continues to offer its assistance and to work with the Joint Investigative Mechanism through the OPCW FFM.

Conclusion

12. The main focus of the future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will be on the DAT and FFM activities, as well as the destruction and verification of the remaining aircraft hangar.
