



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9207th meeting

Monday, 5 December 2022, 3 p.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Raguttahalli (India)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Hoxha
Brazil	Mr. Leite Novaes
China	Mr. Liang Hengzhu
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Ms. Bouanga Ayoune
Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
Ireland	Mr. Brady
Kenya	Ms. Ndegwa
Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
Norway	Ms. Syed
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Al-Ali
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Phipps
United States of America	Mr. Kelley

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 November 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/897)

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22-72208 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 30 November 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/897)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Syrian Arab Republic and Türkiye to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/897, which contains the text of a letter dated 30 November 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to Mrs. Nakamitsu.

Mrs. Nakamitsu: I thank Security Council members for the opportunity to brief them again on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Since the previous consideration of this matter by the Council (see S/PV.9184), and consistent with established practice, the Office for Disarmament Affairs has been in regular contact with its counterparts at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on its activities related to resolution 2118 (2013). On 22 November, I held my usual monthly call with the OPCW Director-General to receive an update on developments and ascertain his views.

Efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration and subsequent declarations of the Syrian Arab Republic have not progressed since the Council last met on this issue. Unfortunately, all efforts by the OPCW Technical Secretariat to organize the

next round of consultations between the DAT and the Syrian National Authority continue to be unsuccessful. As Council members were previously informed, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has provided the Syrian Arab Republic with the list of pending declarations and other documents requested by the DAT since 2019, with the aim of assisting the Syrian Arab Republic in resolving the current 20 outstanding issues. However, I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not yet received the requested information from the Syrian Arab Republic.

I have also been advised that, with the aim of advancing the implementation of the OPCW Technical Secretariat's mandate, the Technical Secretariat proposed to hold a meeting with the Syrian Arab Republic in Beirut in November to identify limited in-country activities in line with the plan of activities agreed in 2019, to receive declarations or documents it had previously requested and to provide the Syrian National Authority with the results of the analysis of samples collected in April 2019, together with an assessment of an outstanding issue opened in 2016. However, it is my understanding that efforts by the OPCW Technical Secretariat to convene that meeting were unsuccessful. The Technical Secretariat informs me that it will continue to engage on the matter and will revert to the Syrian National Authority on ways to implement the mandate it received from the policymaking organs.

I note that, in November, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the OPCW Technical Secretariat the document entitled "The General National Document Regarding the Cooperation of the Syrian Arab Republic with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Between 2013 and 2022". I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat will circulate that document once it is translated and analysed.

Full cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW Technical Secretariat is essential to closing all outstanding issues. As has been stressed on a monthly basis for many years now, due to the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the Technical Secretariat continues to assess that, at this stage, the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat remains fully committed to ensuring the complete implementation by the Syrian Arab Republic of all its declaration requirements and to assisting Syria in fulfilling its obligations under the Convention, OPCW policymaking organs' decisions and resolution 2118 (2013). I take this opportunity to once again reiterate my support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of the work of the OPCW.

With regard to the inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre, I have been advised that the round of inspections scheduled for December was postponed due to operational reasons. The OPCW Technical Secretariat has started planning the next round of inspections, to be held in 2023.

I regret to inform the Council that the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet provided sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the OPCW Technical Secretariat to close the issue related to the detection of a Schedule 2 chemical at the Barzah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre in November 2018. Neither has it received the information requested from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the unauthorized movement of the two cylinders, related to the chemical-weapon incident that took place in Douma on 7 April 2018, that were destroyed in an attack on a chemical-weapon production facility. I call on the Syrian Arab Republic to respond with urgency to all of the OPCW Technical Secretariat's requests.

With regard to the invitation to an in-person meeting extended by the OPCW's Director-General to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, I note that while the Technical Secretariat was still awaiting a response from the Syrian Arab Republic on the most recent version of the agenda, submitted in December 2021, the Syrian Arab Republic suggested holding a preliminary meeting in Beirut. Since then, as Council members were previously informed, communication between the focal points in charge of the preparations for the meeting between the Director-General and the Minister has been reinitiated by the Technical Secretariat, and the Syrian Arab Republic has responded. With regard to the tripartite agreement concluded among the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Syrian Arab Republic, it is my understanding that all the parties have agreed to sign a further extension for a period of six months.

As per previous briefings to the Council, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) is still in the process of studying all the available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. I have been advised that the FFM was deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic from 6 to 12 November to conduct interviews with witnesses regarding several of the incidents under review. I understand that the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) is continuing its investigations into incidents in which the FFM has determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic. The IIT will issue further reports in due course.

With regard to the decision entitled "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic" (C-25/DEC.9), adopted on 21 April 2021, I have been informed that unfortunately the Syrian Arab Republic has not yet completed any of the measures stipulated in paragraph 5 of decision EC-94/DEC.2. The OPCW Technical Secretariat will continue to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic with regard to their completion and to report to the OPCW Executive Council, as mandated.

The use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone, under any circumstances is intolerable and a serious violation of international law. There can be no justification for the use of those abhorrent weapons. We must remain united and determined in preventing their use or the threat of their use. It is imperative that those who use, or have used, chemical weapons be identified and held accountable. As the Secretary-General urged on the Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare, commemorated on 30 November, we must honour them and reaffirm our commitment to achieving a world free from that threat.

The President: I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Kelley (United States of America): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her informative briefing. We appreciate her persistent efforts, as well as those of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), to provide independent, thoroughly researched and detailed information about serious progress, or the lack thereof, towards Syria's complete and verifiable elimination of its chemical-weapons programme.

As we saw last week at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the international community overwhelmingly supports continuing to hold the Al-Assad regime to account for its use of chemical weapons against civilians, including many children. Those efforts must continue. The OPCW Director-General was quite clear in his opening statement to the Conference that the Syrian regime has made no effort to resolve the outstanding discrepancies with its declaration or taken any steps to ensure the verified destruction of its chemical-weapons programme. We were grateful to our French colleagues for delivering a statement on behalf of 57 countries at the Conference, reminding Syria of its obligations under the CWC and rightly admonishing it for its appalling lack of cooperation with the OPCW. Unfortunately, obfuscation and delay continue to be the only terms we can use to describe the Al-Assad regime's effort to address its chemical-weapon stockpiles.

Just last month, the regime agreed to a meeting with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in Beirut to identify opportunities for the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team to conduct activities within Syria in the coming months. Despite initially accepting the invitation, the Al-Assad regime promptly sank any prospect for engagement by stating that it would not attend unless the OPCW Technical Secretariat paid for the travel of Syrian officials — a request that the regime knew the OPCW could not fulfil. Such antics have become typical of the regime's approach to the OPCW and the Declaration Assessment Team. That such a meeting even needed to occur in Beirut, rather than the Team visiting Syria itself, demonstrates how unnecessarily difficult the regime has chosen to make the process.

Given Syria's track record, it has had to amend its declaration of chemical weapons 17 times at the behest of the Declaration Assessment Team. The OPCW will have to corroborate any further Syrian declarations with on-the-ground follow-up by the OPCW's impartial and exceedingly qualified experts. The Al-Assad regime, however, has prevented any such developments since 2021 — a clear violation of its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013), which requires Syria to accept personal designation by the OPCW and to provide it with immediate and unfettered access and the right to inspect any and all sites. The United States reiterates its call on the regime to immediately and without preconditions allow the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team back

into Syria so that it can resume its important work of verifying the complete declaration and destruction of Syria's chemical-weapons programme. The Al-Assad regime's persistent obstruction of the OPCW's work is an affront to the OPCW, the Council and the international community. Yet the regime continues to enjoy the full support of the Russian Federation as it openly flouts its international obligations. The regime's actions pose real-world threats, undermine our collective security and make the world less safe.

The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the OPCW's Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) have independently confirmed the regime's use of chemical weapons on eight occasions. The IIT's work is ongoing, and we look forward to its future reporting. We call on the regime to end its intransigence and comply with its obligations under both resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Doing so would be a positive step towards enhancing our collective security and would help to ensure that the horrific scenes of chemical-weapon attacks — which we have too often witnessed in Syria — are never repeated.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The report presented by Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu on behalf of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2022/897) again provides no added value in comparison to previous one (see S/2022/828), which is not surprising given that there have been no developments on the ground in relation to the Syrian chemical dossier. That is the result not of the actions of Damascus, as our Western colleagues will try to prove today, but rather of the persistent unwillingness of the OPCW Technical Secretariat to rectify its biased anti-Syrian policy. In each new report, the same clichés and politicized accusations continue to be levelled against the Syrian authorities, while nothing has been done to correct the errors that we have repeatedly pointed out. I am sure that our Syrian colleagues will address that in greater detail today.

I see no reason to dwell on the content of the report, and therefore will simply highlight that we have a number of criticisms to make of the products of the Technical Secretariat, which continue to become less and less credible as sources of information on the Syrian chemical dossier. We do not recognize the predetermined conclusions of the report of the Fact-Finding Mission on the Douma incident (see

S/2019/208) or any of the findings of the illegitimate Investigation and Identification Team, the sole aim of which is to portray Damascus in a bad light and force the conclusions to fit the political orders of the United States and its allies. The connivance of the OPCW leadership in response to the attempts by the West to make the OPCW an instrument of its own policies and implement its opportunistic objectives leads to the degradation of this Organization, which used to be a very reputable institution, and causes irreparable damage to its authority. Such a blatant and very unflattering situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the Director-General of the OPCW, Mr. Arias, has failed yet again to make an appearance at the Security Council and refuses to speak directly with members of the Council. It is becoming increasingly obvious that he has something to hide.

Our regular mechanical discussions of the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) could take first place in the rankings of the least productive meetings of the Security Council. Basically, we waste two hours every month repeating the same statements verbatim, simply for the Western capitals to tick a box for having adhered to the prescribed frequency of meetings during which they condemn the Syrian leadership. It is obvious that such an approach devalues any discussion of the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) and undermines the authority of the Council, which instead of pouring from the empty into the void, as the saying goes, could be discussing far more dynamic and relevant situations. Rather than reach the point of absurdity, let us instead optimize the schedule of Security Council meetings on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): I deliver this joint statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Gabon, Kenya and my own country, Ghana (A3).

We thank the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her briefing and welcome the participation in this meeting of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Türkiye.

We take note of the 110th monthly report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2022/897) and welcome the submission to the OPCW of the 108th report of the Syrian Arab Republic. We are reminded yet again of the lack of

substantive progress in efforts to eliminate the country's chemical weapons programme. We also note the Syrian Arab Republic's submission to the Technical Secretariat on 15 November of a document entitled "The General National Document Regarding the Cooperation of the Syrian Arab Republic with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons between 2013 and 2022" and look forward to receiving a copy of it.

However, we are deeply worried about the lack of tangible progress by the stakeholders to fully address the issue in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013) and bring closure to the matter. We underscore that the full cooperation of the Syrian National Authority with the OPCW and its compliance with all aspects of the decision by the Executive Council of 27 September 2013 is critical to the breaking of the current impasse on the elimination of the country's chemical weapons programme. To that end, we regret that the meeting between the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic scheduled to be held in Beirut on 15–16 November this year to deliberate on matters pertaining to the country's chemical weapons programme did not take place as agreed. In that regard, we reiterate our call on the Syrian National Authority to engage constructively with the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW in order to satisfactorily resolve all outstanding issues and hold the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team.

It is our hope that the ongoing communication between the focal points of the two sides to agree on the agenda for the proposed high-level meeting will yield the desired outcome and will ultimately lead to the establishment of a road map to address the persistent divergence between the positions of the OPCW and the Syrian authorities with regard to the outstanding gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies. The prompt resolution of the investigation will allow both the Syrian National Authority and the Security Council the opportunity to rededicate precious time and resources to the other existing challenges facing the Syrian people. We remind the international community that the use of chemical weapons in Rif Dimashq on 21 August 2013 and the resulting deaths of civilians, which outraged the world and spurred it into action, should continue to galvanize us in our quest to completely eliminate the country's chemical weapons programme and ensure justice for the victims.

Meanwhile, we acknowledge the generous contributions and pledges by a number of countries of up to €37 million for the OPCW's Trust Fund for Syria Missions, which was established in November 2015 to support the Fact-Finding Mission and other remaining activities of the OPCW in the country, including the work of the Declaration Assessment Team and the Investigation and Identification Team. We remain committed to the established norms against the use of chemical weapons and support all efforts to eliminate their production, storage and use. The A3 collectively reiterates its position against the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances.

In conclusion, as we reaffirm our support for resolution 2118 (2013), we renew our call for enhanced engagement between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Syrian National Authority to address all outstanding issues that constrain meaningful progress on the full implementation of the resolution.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Let me thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Last week, on 30 November, we commemorated the Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare. We reiterate our full solidarity with all victims of chemical attacks and reaffirm our solemn resolve never to use or produce chemical weapons, as well as to do everything in our power to prevent and punish those who do. As we heard from the High Representative, the situation regarding the issue of chemical weapons in Syria remains unchanged. Syria continues to refuse to cooperate fully with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Its declaration is incomplete and inconsistent. And we have been unable to note any progress.

In such a situation, the normal course of the members of the Security Council would be to take a firm and united position, avoid repeating ourselves and move forward. It is deeply regrettable that the issue of the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime against its own people, which in several instances was confirmed by the OPCW, continues to divide the Council. It is deplorable that this organ is unable to ensure full clarity on the matter and hold to account those who have repeatedly crossed that red line. It is distressful that, by doing so, we are in fact shielding one of the most despicable behaviours. Moreover, this is happening at a time when 193 members of the OPCW have voluntarily

agreed to uphold the absolute prohibition on chemical weapons. Therefore, making the Council deliberately unable to deliver on this issue becomes a collective problem because it means tolerating the intolerable and accepting the unacceptable, and it might serve as incitement to other rogue regimes to do the same.

We must not tolerate such depravity — not only because we have the obligation to uphold the law, but also because not adopting the right course offends the victims of this atrocity erodes the non-proliferation regime and further diminishes the credibility of the Council. We should not let the division of the Council become permission for crimes and atrocities because, as we know, Council inaction always has deadly consequences.

We strongly support the work of OPCW in verifying the complete destruction of the biological weapons programme in Syria and condemn in the strongest terms the intolerable behaviour of the regime. We support the impartial and professional work of the OPCW's technical teams, which deserve our full and unconditional support. Equally, we strongly support the Fact-Finding Mission, which continues its valuable work in determining the use of chemical weapons in Syria, as well as that of the Office of the Investigation and Identification Team, which seeks to identify the perpetrators of those atrocities. We look forward to the publication of their reports. We await with equal interest the report of the ninth round of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities, conducted by the Technical Secretariat in September.

In conclusion, allow me to highlight that the future of Syria cannot be built on impunity. It cannot rise on the graves of innocent victims, including children, without accountability. If we want to help Syrians design their future to be different from the nightmare of the past 11 years, we must do our part and discharge our responsibilities. That means ending support for delays and evasive tactics, bringing full clarity to the issue and taking appropriate action, instead of siding with those responsible for crimes. Our duty is not to shield perpetrators, but rather to expose them and hold them to account. Syria remains a serious test of the resolve of the Council to act decisively in that respect.

Mr. Leite Novaes (Brazil): At the outset, I would also like to thank High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. I also welcome the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye

and the Islamic Republic of Iran. I would also like to thank the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for his latest report (see S/2022/897).

As in previous months, little seems to have changed in the situation on the ground or in the relationship between the Syrian Arab Republic and the organization. That reinforces our perception that there is a mismatch in the frequency of these meetings. While the Security Council should pay close attention to progress in the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria, holding monthly meetings when there is little or no relevant development on the ground does not seem an efficient use of time or resources.

Brazil welcomes the efforts made to hold a meeting between representatives of the OPCW and Syrian authorities in Beirut last month. We regret that the meeting could not take place. Furthermore, we take note of the submission by the Syrian Arab Republic of a document entitled “The General National Document Regarding the Cooperation of the Syrian Arab Republic with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Between 2013 and 2022”, and we look forward to its circulation by the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

In the face of the absence of relevant recent developments on the Syrian chemical-weapons file, allow me to reaffirm our traditional position on the matter. Chemical weapons are utterly incompatible with international humanitarian law, and therefore must have no place in the practices and doctrines of today’s world. The use of such weapons violates international agreements and poses serious threats to international peace and security. Incidents must be addressed with transparency and be subject to thorough and impartial investigations, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Liang Hengzhu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing.

China firmly opposes the use of chemical weapons by any country, organization or individual under any circumstances or for any purpose. China sincerely hopes to see a world free from chemical weapons at an early date.

China’s position on the Syrian chemical-weapons issue remains unchanged. Dialogue and consultation

are the only way to solve the problem. We welcome the extension of the tripartite agreement reached by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the United Nations Office for Project Services and the Syrian Government on the destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons until June 2023.

Regarding the meeting between the Director-General of the OPCW and the Syrian Foreign Minister, China encourages the Syrian Government and the Technical Secretariat to strengthen coordination through the liaison channel and facilitate preparations for the meeting in the spirit of mutual respect and cooperation on an equal footing. We also call on the Technical Secretariat to respond positively to the issues raised by the countries concerned and remove obstacles to the holding of the twenty-fifth round of technical consultations. I would like to stress that the OPCW’s investigation and attribution of the alleged use of chemical weapons should be strictly limited to the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention, with compliance procedures, reliable evidence, credible conclusions and no presumption of guilt. We hope that the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat will take practical measures to maintain the technical attributes of the OPCW.

Lastly, given that the Security Council has limited resources and a busy schedule, China calls on the Council to reduce the frequency of its deliberations on the Syrian issue or consider consolidating the deliberations on the Syrian issue in order to save conference resources and improve the efficiency of the Council.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mrs. Nakamitsu for her briefing.

The lack of progress is frustrating, but we must face facts. The sole responsibility lies with the Syrian regime, which stubbornly refuses to cooperate. As everyone knows, we are gathered here because the Syrian regime has used weapons of mass destruction against its own population. Independent investigations by the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have demonstrated that on eight occasions. I recall that resolution 2118 (2013) was adopted unanimously and that the reality of the heinous attack on Ghouta in 2013 has never been disputed.

The Syrian regime initially agreed to a bilateral meeting on 15 and 16 November, only to later set

conditions that it knows the Technical Secretariat cannot meet. In the face of such bad faith, the Technical Secretariat has had to back down once again. We urge Syria to respond in writing to the Technical Secretariat's questions on its initial declaration and to clarify its full stockpile. It must comply if it is to restore its rights and privileges. France will pay very close attention to the conclusions of the forthcoming reports of the Investigation and Identification Team.

Despite the obstacles, the OPCW Technical Secretariat continues its investigative work with tenacity, independence and professionalism. I commend it once again. The fight against impunity remains our priority. It is the foundation of the effectiveness and credibility of the prohibition regime.

Mr. Phipps (United Kingdom): I would like to join others in thanking High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing and the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), Mr. Arias, for his latest monthly report (see S/2022/897).

Let us remind ourselves why we continue to discuss this agenda item. In the early hours of 21 August 2013, the Syrian regime targeted its own citizens in three suburbs of Damascus with rockets containing the nerve agent sarin. As many as 1,500 people died. Following those attacks, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013), which called on Syria to cooperate fully with the OPCW and eliminate its chemical weapons programme and stockpile.

As we are reminded every month, Syria's initial chemical-weapons declaration, on which the destruction of its chemical weapons stocks depended, was and remains inaccurate and incomplete. When the evidence of Syria's retention of chemical weapons has proved too compelling, the regime has changed its story. It has now amended its declaration 17 times. We know, by the regime's own admission, that at least one chemical-weapons production facility, four laboratories, five previously undeclared chemical warfare agents, hundreds of tons of chemicals and thousands of munitions were omitted from its initial declaration.

These issues are not academic. Independent investigations have shown that the Syrian regime went on to use chemical weapons in further attacks against the Syrian people, even after having claimed it had given up all of its chemical weapons. Several of those attacks have involved the use of chlorine dropped onto

civilian centres from helicopters, in particular by a division of the Syrian armed forces known as the Tiger Forces, under the control of Brigadier General Suhail Al-Hassan. The OPCW Investigation and Identification Team found that the Tiger Forces were responsible for a chlorine attack on Saraqib in February 2018.

But the Al-Assad regime has not limited itself to chlorine attacks alone. On 4 April 2017, a Syrian SU-22 aircraft delivered an aerial bomb filled with sarin into the centre of Khan Shaykhun. The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) attributed responsibility for the attack to the regime. As the OPCW reported in April 2020, the attack in Khan Shaykhun was preceded by two sarin attacks carried out by the Syrian Arab Air Force in Ltamenah in March 2017. Sarin, as I am sure we all know, is a nerve agent that suffocates people to death as their muscles spasm into paralysis. The chemical profile of the sarin used in all those attacks bears the unique signature of the sarin production process declared by Syria in its declaration.

Those Syrian attacks are all a matter of record, established by detailed and thorough investigations by the OPCW and the JIM. The OPCW has found Syria responsible for multiple chemical-weapon attacks and other serious failures to meet its obligations as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. As my colleague from the United States mentioned, during last week's Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, 57 countries joined a France-led statement unequivocally condemning Syria's use of chemical weapons and refusal to live up to its obligations as a State party. The scale of support for that statement speaks to the overwhelming desire of the international community to uphold the collective progress that we have made in recent decades towards a world free of chemical weapons.

It is our responsibility as of members of the Council to continue to support the OPCW as it seeks to resolve outstanding issues in Syria's declaration. In addition, as High Representative Nakamitsu said, we must not forget the victims of chemical-weapon attacks in Syria. The United Kingdom continues to stand in solidarity with them, and we will continue to pursue justice for them and their families.

Mr. Brady (Ireland): First, I would like to join others in thanking High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

As Ireland looks back at its term on the Security Council, the lack of progress on the issue of Syrian chemical weapons is a matter of deep regret. If anything, the issue has worsened over that period. Over the past two years, Syria's cooperation with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has diminished to almost nothing. The last round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) took place in February 2021. Syria has sought to place conditions on those meetings, including by dictating the composition of the DAT team, in defiance of resolution 2118 (2013).

The number of chemical-weapon attacks attributed to the Syrian authorities by the United Nations and the OPCW has risen to eight, while further incidents remain under investigation by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team. Moreover, the number of significant issues with Syria's declarations to the OPCW has risen to 20. New issues have emerged with regard to the movement and alleged destruction of the chlorine cylinders from the Douma incident. Those are issues of real concern that go to the heart of the question the Council still needs to face as to whether Syria continues to use, produce or retain chemical weapons. Let us be clear. The issues with Syria's initial declaration were not disclosed at Syria's own initiative; rather, it was only when the Technical Secretariat discovered new information that the amendments were made.

Most worrisomely, the OPCW has come under sustained attack from Syria and Russia, as they actively attempt to undermine its authority and independence, in an attempt to mask Syria's culpability. The Council's reaction in the face of that should not be to reduce the attention it pays to the issue. Regular discussion by the Council is needed to show Syria that its lack of cooperation will not go unanswered. The Council laid out clearly in resolution 2118 (2013) what needs to be done. It must hold Syria to its obligations under that resolution and the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Council must push Syria to engage in a serious, urgent and meaningful way with the Technical Secretariat in order to resolve outstanding issues. And the Council must give its unequivocal backing to the OPCW.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the OPCW and Director-General Arias for their professionalism, integrity, technical expertise and flexibility in seeking to assist Syria in meeting its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention

and resolution 2118 (2013). I would also like to thank and commend High Representative Nakamitsu and her team for their handling of this file.

We have been clear over the past two years that it is Syria's actions, not its words, that are important. Syria must end its prevarication and commit to genuine engagement. That is the only way to enable the OPCW to provide the necessary assurance that Syria's chemical weapons programme is verifiably and definitively a thing of the past.

Mr. Al-Ali (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing today.

In the context of our meeting on the chemical weapons dossier in Syria, I would like to reiterate the United Arab Emirates firm position of explicitly rejecting and condemning the use of chemical weapons, under any circumstances, by anyone and anywhere. Their use constitutes a flagrant violation of the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention and international law.

My country reaffirms the importance of constructive dialogue between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian authorities to address outstanding issues. Communication through written correspondence alone will not achieve that objective. From that standpoint, we view the meeting proposed by the OPCW to be held in Beirut as a compromise. We hope that the Syrian authorities and the organization will reach consensus on it. We also hope that the meeting will indeed take place and pave the way to overcoming the outstanding issues. We also look forward to the meeting between Syria's Foreign Minister and the Director-General of the OPCW, which we hope will be fruitful.

Before I conclude, I would like to reiterate the need to use the time and resources of the Security Council wisely. That means holding meaningful meetings that go beyond the mere repetition of positions that are already well-known. It is our collective responsibility to reconsider the effectiveness of the Council's meetings. We reiterate once again that we remain ready to hold any meeting if necessary.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first of all like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

As this is the last time that my country will address a meeting on chemical weapons in Syria during its current term on the Security Council, I will make some general reflections.

In August 2013, Ghouta witnessed one of the deadliest chemical-weapon attacks on record in Syria. It is estimated that nearly 1,400 people died, including a significant number of children. In September of the same year, in contrast to the current polarization, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013). Shortly afterwards, Syria applied for accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

As was mentioned, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic collected evidence of 38 chemical-weapon attacks between March 2011 and December 2020. Non-governmental organizations estimate that more than 350 attacks took place. Many of those acts were carried out indiscriminately against civilians and, in some cases, essential infrastructure, such as hospitals. Almost 10 years after the first incident, it has still not been possible to bring those responsible for such atrocities to justice or provide reparations to the victims and their families.

Unfortunately, during the two years in which Mexico has participated in the Security Council discussions on the issue before us, there has been practically no progress, and, in some cases, there have even been setbacks. Let me cite a few examples.

First, it has not been possible to finalize the initial Syrian declaration. As of December 2020, 19 discrepancies were identified and, to date, there are even more, giving a total of 20 outstanding issues.

Secondly, despite numerous requests, since November 2018, the origin of the chemical residue detected at the Barzah facilities of the Scientific Studies and Research Centre has not been clarified.

Thirdly, the latest round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team and the Syrian authorities took place in February 2021. The Syrian authorities have not granted visas to all members of the Team, and therefore, 22 months later, it has not been possible to resume those consultations.

Fourthly, explanations for the unauthorized transfer of chlorine cylinders linked to the 2018 Douma incident have been awaited since July 2021.

Fifthly and lastly, although the timetable for the meeting between the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates was agreed a year ago, it has not yet been possible to set a date for the meeting.

In such circumstances, the Security Council has been limited to discussing month after month logistical and administrative issues, such as the granting of visas, the organization of meeting agendas and the exchange of communications. In line with that trend, the latest report (see S/2022/897) draws our attention to the request for the OPCW to cover the expenses of the Syrian delegation to the technical meeting in Beirut as a prerequisite for convening it.

The lack of substantive progress is more than evident. The current climate has taken us away from substantive discussions, and it does not contribute to effective accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. In our view, the Security Council's efforts and time should be focused on making substantive progress on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013). As Council members, we have the obligation to demonstrate that the use of chemical weapons is unacceptable to the international community and that those who violate their obligations in that regard should be held accountable for their actions.

I once again reiterate the full support of my country, Mexico, for the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its technical teams, which carry out their work professionally, independently and impartially and in accordance with the highest international standards.

I conclude by reaffirming Mexico's strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor and under any circumstances.

Ms. Syed (Norway): Let me also start by thanking High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

Despite the regrettable lack of progress on this dossier overall, let me start by highlighting the few positive elements during Norway's soon-to-be two-year tenure on the Security Council.

We applaud the important work undertaken by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) and the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) amid the challenges posed by the global pandemic. In the past two years, we saw them release several

reports. Norway will continue to support the OPCW's important investigative efforts, which are crucial to ensuring accountability. It is positive that the IIT and the FFM have continued to fulfil their engagement with the Syrian authorities, including the FFM's most recent deployment last month.

Norway also commends the Technical Secretariat for continuing its biannual inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities, as mandated by the Council. In addition, we highlight the tripartite agreement among the OPCW, the United Nations Office for Project Services and Syria as another vital component of the Technical Secretariat's activities. We welcome the recent agreement on an extension.

However, it is with great disappointment that we witnessed the breakdown in engagement between the Syrian authorities and the Declaration Assessment Team due to persistent delays in the issuing of visas. That undermines the priority of ensuring consistent cooperation, exchanges of information and technical assistance to Syria.

Norway again urges Syria to fully cooperate with the OPCW and provide sufficient technical information or explanations to close the 20 outstanding issues, which have remained outstanding for far too long. The Syrian Arab Republic must fulfil its obligations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). That resolution explicitly mentions Syria's obligation to accept personnel designated by the OPCW and to provide those personnel with immediate and unfettered access and the right to inspect any and all sites. Norway also reiterates its call on Syria to complete the necessary measures to lift the suspension of its rights and privileges as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Let me conclude by underlining that accountability for those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be ensured. Norway supports the work of Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and their commitment to ensuring that the international prohibition against the use of chemical weapons is upheld.

Norway strongly condemns any use of chemical weapons under any circumstances and by anyone. It is an abhorrent crime and a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which should be addressed seriously by the Council. We will remain steadfast

in our support to ensure accountability and prevent future use.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of India.

Let me thank the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu, for her update. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Türkiye in today's meeting.

India attaches high importance to the Chemical Weapons Convention and stands for its full, effective and non-discriminatory implementation. India is against the use of chemical weapons by anybody, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances. India has consistently maintained that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, credible and objective. We continue to caution against the possibility of terrorist entities and individuals gaining access to chemical weapons, including in the region. Therefore, any allegation of the use of chemical weapons needs to be dealt with the utmost attention. We note with regret that the recent communication between the focal points of Syria and the OPCW Technical Secretariat concerning a possible meeting has not been fruitful.

We continue to encourage sustained engagement between Syria and the OPCW Technical Secretariat to resolve all outstanding issues. We believe that discussions on Syria and chemical weapons should reflect progress on the ground. However there has been no forward momentum on the issue for several months. As a result, Security Council members often continue to repeat their well-known positions.

In conclusion, India continues to believe that progress on all tracks would help in facilitating the overall political peace process in Syria, as advocated in resolution 2254 (2015).

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Dandy (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to

thank your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Ghana, for his work during his country's presidency of the Council last month.

As with previous meetings, we are meeting today without any developments that would require the Council's deliberations. However, certain Western countries persist in wasting the Council's resources and time instead of discussing other important issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security and to upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic rejects the false accusations levelled by certain Western countries against my country, which are based on unprofessional and non-objective reports resulting from the political pressure exerted by those countries on the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and its various teams. Furthermore, my delegation reiterates its call for realigning the work of the OPCW, ending the politicization of its technical work and maintaining professional and impartial principles of work.

The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its categorical condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anytime, anywhere and under any circumstances. My country stresses that it voluntarily joined the Chemical Weapons Convention and honoured its obligations pursuant to the Convention. We destroyed all our stockpiles of chemical weapons and their production facilities in record time. From the time we joined the Convention to this very day, we have continued to cooperate with the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat. In that regard, I would like to refer to certain aspects of cooperation between Syria and the OPCW.

First, the Syrian Arab Republic has presented to the Director-General of the OPCW its 108th report number, dated 15 November 2022, which covers the activities carried out by Syria during the reporting period.

Secondly, the Syrian Arab Republic has agreed to extend the tripartite agreement among Syria, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) for six months, until 30 June 2023.

Thirdly, the Fact-Finding Mission visited Syria from 6 to 12 November and was provided with all the facilities necessary to succeed in its mission. Regrettably, that constructive cooperation is not reflected in the report of the Technical Secretariat (see S/2022/897). In that

regard, I would reiterate that we still expect the Mission to issue its reports on the incidents reported by the Syrian Republic since 2017. Those reports have been much delayed under groundless pretexts.

Fourthly, the Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that it is keen on holding a high-level meeting between the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, the Head of the Syrian National Authority and the OPCW Director-General as soon as possible, according to an agenda to be agreed by both parties that contributes to resolving the outstanding issues. In that regard, I note that the Syrian National Authority has responded to the proposed agenda by the Technical Secretariat, and we have put forward certain substantial proposals that will ensure the success of that meeting. We looked forward to discussing all those issues during the meeting that was supposed to be held between both parties.

Fifthly, my delegation regrets that the Technical Secretariat has refused to cover the expenses related to the participation by the Syrian party in the meeting that was proposed to be held in Beirut to discuss a number of issues. The meeting was therefore not held, notwithstanding the fact that the Technical Secretariat had been covering the participation expenses related to such meetings since we began cooperation between Syria and the OPCW. They have enough money to cover the expenses of such meetings. The economic hardships facing Syria resulting from the unilateral coercive measures must be taken into consideration. Those measures are illegitimate and imposed on Syria by well-known countries, knowing that the Technical Secretariat did not agree to meet with the Syrian National Authority in Damascus.

The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its position regarding the illegitimacy of the Investigation and Identification Team, as the agreement does not provide for the OPCW Technical Secretariat to conduct investigations on identifying responsibility for using chemical weapons. We also believe that granting that illegitimate mandate to the Team was authorized through flagrant violation by certain States putting pressure on and blackmailing Member States in service of its hostile agendas against Syria. Consequently, my delegation reiterates its categorical rejection of acknowledging the Team and its erroneous and unprofessional working methods, which will eventually lead to false conclusions.

The Security Council recently renewed resolution 1540 (2004), which aims to prevent non-State actors from possessing weapons of mass destruction and the means for producing and delivering them, including chemical weapons. My country strongly supports that resolution. We have always provided the 1540 Committee and the Secretariat with information on the possession and use by certain terrorist organizations of toxic chemical weapons or the fabrication of chemical incidents in Syria, which unfortunately are not dealt with properly. That is why my country looks forward to the implementation of all the aspects of that resolution in a more effective manner, according to its mandate and in cooperation with Member States.

In conclusion, my delegation calls on the Security Council to reconsider its approach with regard to discussing this topic by addressing all relevant developments objectively and preserving its technical nature, free from any politicization or exertion of pressure on the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

Before I conclude my statement, allow me to refer to what was said by my colleague the representative of Ireland — that Syria wants to impose its opinion with regard to the composition of the team. I would like to tell my colleague that that is inaccurate. Rather, it is erroneous, because Syria does not want to impose its views regarding the composition of the Team. However, Syria has the right to accept or reject whoever it deals with, especially if Syria has compelling evidence of the partiality and nonobjectivity of one of the Team's experts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mr. Keçeli (Türkiye): We thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing. We also commend the independence, impartiality and utmost professionalism that the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) continues to uphold.

The most recent report of the OPCW Director-General (see S/2022/897) shows that the outstanding issues in relation to the Syrian regime's initial and subsequent declarations persist. The OPCW still cannot consider those declarations accurate and complete. Moreover, the regime is obstructing the work of the Declaration Assessment Team in Syria by not issuing visas and by placing conditions on meeting with it in Beirut. Furthermore, the OPCW Technical Secretariat

is still awaiting responses to its inquiries regarding the regime's chemical-weapon production facilities and the unauthorized movement of chlorine cylinders used in the attack in Douma in 2018. We call on the Syrian regime to fully cooperate with the Technical Secretariat and provide the necessary information, in line with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. The current investigations by the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission and Investigation and Identification Team will be critical if we are to establish the truth about the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We look forward to the completion of the ongoing investigations, in particular the Investigation and Identification Team's next report on the Douma attack of 2018.

Last Wednesday, 30 November, was the Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare. It was a day to honour the innocent lives lost due to repeated chemical-weapon attacks. It is our collective responsibility not only to remember the victims but to know how many victims there are, ensure that there will be no more victims and pave the way for accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The use of chemical weapons is unacceptable in any circumstances. Impunity for those who deployed chemical weapons is unacceptable.

The lack of progress on the file underlines the Security Council's failure to fulfil its mandate. Questioning the cycle of these meetings will not bring justice or accountability. The OPCW needs the support of the Council, not discouragement. Moreover, we must bear in mind that the monthly meetings serve not only as an opportunity for the Security Council to receive updates on the file, but to send a message every month to the families of the victims that the United Nations has not forgotten them and that it will do everything in its power to ensure accountability for the crimes committed, which is a prerequisite for meaningful and lasting peace in Syria. As one of Syria's neighbours, we therefore believe that the Council's continued regular consideration of the Syrian chemical-weapons programme is a crucial item on the monthly calendar.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Jalil Irvani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I congratulate India on its assumption of the presidency of the Council in December and Ghana on its successful presidency in November.

Iran's position on chemical weapons is clear. Their use is a flagrant violation of international law, and as a main victim of such weapons of mass destruction, Iran strongly condemns their use by anyone, anywhere, under any circumstances. On the Syrian file, Iran supports the resolution of outstanding issues on their own technical track within the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), through dialogue and constructive cooperation between Syria and the OPCW. To that end, any investigation must be impartial, professional, credible and objective and must fully comply with the requirements and procedures of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). It is equally important to ensure that the Convention is implemented fully, effectively and without discrimination. Politicizing its application and exploiting the OPCW for political reasons therefore only endanger the credibility of the organization and the Convention.

We commend the Syrian Arab Republic for its positive engagement with the OPCW and believe it merits recognition. Syria regularly submits its monthly reports to the OPCW Director-General. The most recent report was submitted on 15 November and included a thorough account of the country's efforts to destroy chemical weapons and their manufacturing facilities. Syria made it possible for the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission to visit between 6 and 12 November and fully supported the completion of its mission. Syria has also consented to an additional six-month extension of the tripartite agreement among Syria, the OPCW and the United Nations Office for Project Services, using written correspondence to reach an understanding.

While promoting dialogue and engagement between the parties, we consider it essential to address the Syrian Government's legitimate concerns in that regard, such as its position on the illegal establishment of the so-called Investigation and Identification Team. According to Syria, the CWC does not mandate the OPCW Technical Secretariat to conduct investigations into the use of chemical weapons, which makes its mandate unlawful. That implies a flaw in the implementation of the CWC and a disregard for its provisions that can only infuriate Syria, as a State party to the Convention.

We hope that the high-level meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Foreign Minister of Syria will take place and pave the way for the parties to settle their unresolved concerns. We once again agree that the recurring meetings on this file are costly in terms both of United Nations resources and Security Council members' time. Furthermore, considering that the Syrian Arab Republic has complied with the Convention's requirements and cooperated with the OPCW, addressing the issue in a political or unfair way will serve only to detract from the technical nature of the discussions.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I shall now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.