



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9184th meeting

Monday, 7 November 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Agyeman. (Ghana)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Stastoli
Brazil	Mr. Leite Novaes
China	Mr. Xing Jisheng
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Ms. Bongo
India	Mrs. Kamboj
Ireland	Ms. Moran
Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
Mexico	Mr. González Jiménez
Norway	Ms. Syed
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
United Arab Emirates	Ms. Mohammad
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eckersley
United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 2 November 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/828)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 2 November 2022 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/828)

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/2022/828, which contains the text of a letter dated 2 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 the members of the Security Council 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.

In the brief time that has elapsed since the Council's previous consideration of this matter (see S/PV.9164), 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 this matter. Efforts by the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) to clarify all the outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration and subsequent declarations of the Syrian Arab Republic remain as previously outlined. Unfortunately, all efforts by the OPCW Technical Secretariat to organize the twenty-fifth 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 20 outstanding issues. I have been advised that the OPCW Technical Secretariat has not yet received the requested information from the Syrian Arab Republic.

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 has assured me that it 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 policy-making organs' decisions and resolution 2118 (2013). I take this opportunity to reiterate my support for the integrity, professionalism, impartiality, objectivity and independence of the work of the OPCW.

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 requested information 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, which were destroyed in an attack on a chemical weapons production facility. The Syrian Arab Republic must respond with urgency to all the OPCW Technical Secretariat's requests.

With regard to the invitation extended by the OPCW Director-General to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic to an in-person meeting to identify ways to ensure that the Syrian Arab Republic complies in the shortest time possible with all of its obligations under the Convention,

I note that, while the OPCW Technical Secretariat was still awaiting a response from the Syrian Arab Republic on the latest version of the agenda submitted in December 2021, the Syrian Arab Republic suggested a preliminary meeting in Beirut. As Council members were previously informed, since then, communication between the focal points in charge of the preparations for the meeting between the OPCW Director-General and the Syrian Minister has been re-initiated by the OPCW Technical Secretariat, and the Syrian Arab Republic has responded.

Consistent with previous updates to the Council, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission remains in the process of studying all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. I have been advised that the FFM continues to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic and other States parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention with regard to a number of incidents and preparing for upcoming deployments.

I understand that the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) continues 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. On 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. I therefore repeat my call for the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW Technical Secretariat in that regard.

As always, I take this opportunity to strongly reiterate Secretary-General Guterres’s message that the use of chemical weapons is intolerable and that impunity for their use is equally unacceptable. It is imperative to identify and hold accountable all those who used chemical weapons. The failure to do that not only means a failure to bring about justice for the victims of those inhumane weapons, but also continues the steady erosion of the taboo against the use of chemical weapons and sets a dangerous precedent. Only by attributing responsibility and holding perpetrators accountable can the taboo against such weapons be fully restored. It is my sincere hope that the members of the Council will unite on that issue. The Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever support and assistance it can.

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. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The previous meeting on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) (see S/PV.9164) was held on 25 October, that is, less than two weeks ago. There are no subjects within the Security Council’s mandate-reporting cycle that have been considered with such frequency. Given that, in the case of the Syrian chemical file, there has been no development of the situation at all on the ground, this is simply absurd.

The latest report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (see S/2022/828, annex) differs from the previous one (see S/2022/727, annex) in exactly two sentences. What is the point of convening a separate meeting of the Security Council for the sake of discussing them? It seems that today we are holding a meeting for the sake of a meeting and are convening only so that some Western capitals can tick a box and report that we are maintaining the same frequency of meetings on the Syrian chemical weapons issue as before. Such an approach devalues the discussion on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) and undermines the authority of the Council, which could have discussed far more urgent and fast-moving situations instead of wasting time.

But since we are all gathered today anyway, I will touch on a topic that is becoming increasingly outrageous. We are grateful to the Ghanaian presidency for inviting OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias to brief the Security Council. His latest refusal was predictable. It has already become clear that he is terrified of publicly holding the OPCW Technical Secretariat, headed by him, accountable for flagrant violations in its work. That is very unfortunate because, without the requisite work on mistakes, the decline in the OPCW’s international credibility will be irreversible.

On the two occasions that Mr. Arias finally dared to address the Security Council in person, we asked him a number of specific questions about the irregularities in the work of the Technical Secretariat (see S/2020/1202 and S/PV.8785). In December 2020, they were transmitted to the Director-General in writing, as well as being distributed among the members of the Council. For the past almost two years, we have not received any

substantive response. Neither have we received any response from the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the presence of whose representative, according to Mr. Arias's strange logic, allegedly relieves him of the need to address the Security Council in person. Let me recall the main points that remain unclear.

First, of course, is the infamous report of the Fact-Finding Mission related to the incident in Douma in April 2018. As confirmed by various sources, including former inspectors of the OPCW itself who were directly involved in the investigation of that case, its final version was radically edited as compared to the original one under pressure from some delegations. In fact, that was a forgery. Attempts by the inspectors to get the OPCW leadership to investigate what had happened came to nothing. Moreover, they were harassed for their pursuit of the truth. The Director-General and his representatives never provided us with a reasonable explanation for that unacceptable and outrageous situation.

Secondly, there is Syria's initial declaration under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). We asked for an explanation of the differences in approach on that issue between Damascus and, for example, Libya and other countries that experienced similar problems but were not subjected to the same barrage of criticism as Syria. Why are the reports of the Technical Secretariat on the issue invariably one-sided and do not take into account any positive developments? In addition, it was not limited to criticism, and unprecedented restrictive measures were imposed on Syria for no reason.

Thirdly, we remain thoroughly dissatisfied with the working methods of the OPCW Technical Secretariat, which in its investigations relies on information from biased sources opposed to the Syrian Government, collects their statements remotely and draws "highly likely" conclusions based on them, claiming all that fiction as irrefutable evidence. In addition to being unconvincing, such methods are in direct violation of the CWC, which has a chain-of-custody requirement to ensure that evidence is preserved. At the very least, all that is a dramatic, inexplicable and unjustified change in the basis of the organization's work. Moreover, a former OPCW spokesman, Mr. Luhan, said in 2013 that the organization would never examine samples that had not been collected by its inspectors in the field. What factors have contributed to the fact that the Technical Secretariat now allows itself to openly violate its own declared principles and does not hesitate to admit it in

its reports? Who, if not the Director-General, should deal with this unacceptable situation?

Another related issue is the double standards of the Technical Secretariat in selecting sources of evidence. We see how the OPCW inspection teams readily seize on any, even the weakest and most inconclusive, material from the infamous White Helmets, while evidence of the involvement of the opposition in the organization of provocations using chemical weapons provided by professionals — the Syrian authorities and the Russian military — is blatantly ignored, as well as the numerous confirmations of local eyewitnesses, that is, living eyewitnesses, of the staged nature of those incidents.

The Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), so cherished by our former Western partners, is, as they say, as crooked as a corkscrew. Given the fact that it itself is illegitimate, that is, its establishment was pushed through by Western countries in violation of the CWC, it is not surprising that all its products are an example of the lowest grade of politically ordered pseudoanalysis. Let us take last year's report on the incident in Saraqib in February 2018. It shows that the IIT never went to the scene of the incident. All the physical evidence was collected by representatives of the infamous White Helmets non-governmental organization. At the same time, half of the witnesses interviewed were White Helmets themselves, and their testimony was examined by anonymous so-called authoritative experts and scientific institutions. The report is full of fantastic details, such as helicopters flying at low altitude at night with their lights on, which, in principle, is unacceptable when carrying out combat missions, and a cylinder that somehow became corroded in less than 12 hours after hitting the ground. No national court in the world would accept such crude disinformation as evidence. But the OPCW Technical Secretariat does not hesitate to bring it to the attention of States Members of the United Nations and the OPCW, and it even announces new IIT products.

In principle, we are very concerned about the Technical Secretariat's practice of retrospective investigations. What eyewitness accounts can be found five years after the incident, particularly given the military and political instability in the country? What material evidence? It is clear that, in principle, there can be no question of any objective investigation in such a case.

But the leadership of the OPCW's Technical Secretariat does not seem to need that. Speaking to the Council in June last year, Mr. Arias did not answer any of the questions that we raised about irregularities in the work of the Technical Secretariat, and, in fact, he refused to take any action to rectify them. Moreover, he openly bragged that he had violated the methodology required by the CWC for preserving evidence, which was allegedly obsolete. I would like to hear how he is able to support that position, which is diametrically opposed to his mandate.

It is also telling that Mr. Arias has never visited Syria or seen with his own eyes the sites about whose inspections he reports on to the Security Council every month. That approach is in stark contrast to the policy of Rafael Grossi, the Director-General of another specialized international organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency. Mr. Grossi has made shuttle diplomacy a hallmark of his work as Director-General. However busy his schedule is, he always finds time to brief the Council. Once he even did so when he was on an aeroplane. What is stopping Mr. Arias from doing the same? Is it because he is indifferent to his responsibilities, or because he is afraid of displeasing the Western delegations that are attempting to monopolize the platform at The Hague and bend the OPCW leadership entirely to their will? Does he understand the potential consequences for the organization he heads? It is clear that with such an approach there is no point in hoping for a meaningful discussion in the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I want to thank the High Representative for her briefing. The United States greatly values the work of the Office for Disarmament Affairs on this file, in coordination with the commendable efforts of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), to provide independent, thoroughly researched and detailed information about Syria's progress, or lack thereof, towards the complete and verifiable elimination of its chemical-weapon programme. Let me be clear in the light of what we just heard. The international community must continue to work to hold the Al-Assad regime accountable for its use of chemical weapons against its own people through the efforts of the Security Council and in other international forums.

As long as the discrepancies in Syria's chemical-weapon statement remain, this monthly

meeting remains necessary and fully appropriate. The United States welcomed the adoption in the First Committee of draft resolution A/C.1/77/L.55, on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), put forward by our Polish colleagues. The resolution categorically condemns the use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances, including the independently verified, repeated use of those horrific weapons by the Al-Assad regime. The international community's overwhelming support for the resolution, which received 156 votes in favour and just six against, makes it clear that there can be no impunity for those who choose to use chemical weapons. Those who voted against it choose to turn a blind eye to recent uses of chemical weapons, including the numerous instances of their use by the Al-Assad regime against innocent Syrian civilians.

The United States continues to promote accountability for the use of chemical weapons. Last month, the United States imposed visa restrictions on three Syrian military officials for their involvement in gross violations of human rights, owing to their role in the deadly August 2013 chemical-weapon attack on Ghouta. As a result of our action, the three officials, as well as their immediate family members, are ineligible for entry into the United States. As Council members will recall, the 2013 attack, using the nerve agent sarin, was on civilians in Ghouta and killed at least 1,400 people, many of them children.

Collectively and separately, the OPCW and the United Nations have independently confirmed the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons on eight occasions, and we anticipate future OPCW reporting in that regard. The United States assesses that the Al-Assad regime has used chemical weapons at least 50 times since acceding to the Chemical Weapons Convention in 2013. We will continue to promote accountability for the attacks on Ghouta and elsewhere. Despite our collective demands, the Al-Assad regime, backed by Russia, continues to obfuscate and delay and has failed to completely declare and destroy its chemical-weapon stockpiles, in violation of its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013) and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Al-Assad regime continues to prevent the deployment of the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team to Syria, in a clear violation of its obligations under resolution 2118 (2013), which requires Syria to accept OPCW personnel and provide them with immediate and unfettered access to any and all sites. The United

States once again calls on Syria to immediately and without preconditions allow the OPCW team back into Syria so that it can resume its important work of verifying the complete declaration and destruction of Syria's chemical-weapon programme. These failures by the Al-Assad regime, which continues to enjoy the full support of Russia, a permanent member of the Council, are an affront to the OPCW, the Council and the international community. Its failure to declare and destroy its chemical-weapon stores meanwhile is a threat to the Syrian people and the wider region. Taken together, those behaviours undermine our collective security and make the world less safe. We call on the regime to end its intransigence and simply meet its obligations under both resolution 2118 (2013) and the CWC as quickly as possible. Doing so would be a positive step towards enhancing our collective security and would help to ensure that we never again witness the horrific scenes that we have seen in Syria over the past nine years.

Mrs. Kamboj (India): I too would like to thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her update.

The Security Council held a meeting on this topic just a few days ago (see S/PV.9164). Going forward, we believe that discussions on Syria and chemical weapons should reflect progress on the ground, which has unfortunately remained at a standstill for several months. As a result, we often repeat well-known stated positions.

That being said, throughout our current term on the Council, we have encouraged sustained engagement between Syria and the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to resolve all outstanding issues. We therefore appreciate the recent communication between the focal points of Syria and the Technical Secretariat concerning a possible future meeting.

I also want to add that 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 in any circumstances. We have consistently maintained that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, credible and objective. We have repeatedly cautioned against the possibility of terrorist entities and individuals gaining access to chemical weapons, including in the region under discussion.

Any allegations of the use of chemical weapons should therefore be addressed with thorough attention.

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

Mr. Xing Jisheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing and deeply regret the fact that Mr. Arias has once again declined the Security Council's invitation to address it.

China firmly opposes the use of chemical weapons by any country, organization or individual in any circumstances and for any purpose, and sincerely hopes that the world will be free of all threats posed by chemical weapons as soon as possible. China notes that the Council's two latest discussions of the Syrian chemical-weapon issue have taken place within 10 working days of each other (see S/PV.9164). There has been no new report by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and no new developments on the ground. China strongly appeals to the Council to reduce the frequency of deliberations on the Syrian issue or consider combining Syria-related issues in our discussions in order to economize on meeting resources and improve the Council's efficiency.

China's position on the Syrian chemical-weapon issue remains unchanged, which is that the only way to address it is through dialogue and consultations. We welcome the consultations between the Syrian Government and the OPCW Technical Secretariat through correspondence on the declaration assessment, and we encourage the Syrian Government and the Technical Secretariat to continue their communications on scheduling a meeting between the OPCW Director-General and Syria's Foreign Minister, based on mutual respect and equal-footed cooperation. We also call on the Technical Secretariat to take effective measures to respond to the concerns of the relevant countries about the visa issue and remove obstacles to holding the twenty-fifth round of technical consultations.

The OPCW investigation into, and attribution of, the alleged use of chemical weapons should be strictly limited to the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention and should be based on compliance with procedures, reliable evidence and credible conclusions. We hope that the Director-General and the Technical

Secretariat will take practical measures to maintain the technical standards of the OPCW.

Mr. Eckersley (United Kingdom): I thank the High Representative for her very helpful briefing.

Syria has had nine years to come into compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. But since its accession, it has repeatedly and categorically failed to provide the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) with a complete account of its chemical weapons programme. And as we know, the Syrian regime has been independently found responsible for at least eight chemical-weapon attacks by United Nations and OPCW independent investigations — attacks on its own people.

Syria has failed to assure the OPCW or the Security Council that it abides today by its commitments under resolution 2118 (2013) and as a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention

There is understandable frustration in the Security Council about the lack of progress, but we must see that for what it is. The problem is not how many meetings the Council holds; the problem is the behaviour of the Syrian regime in breach of core international norms, including resolutions of the Security Council. And the problem is systematic disinformation from Syria and Russia in an effort to obscure that behaviour and to avoid accountability, including deeply irresponsible attempts to attack the OPCW.

We heard from the High Representative today the risks of the erosion of the taboo against using chemical weapons. The OPCW is responsible for preventing the spread of chemical weapons. It is an expert and highly professional organization, and it is in all our interests to prevent it from being degraded by disinformation.

Until Syria gives proper assurances to the international community, we must assume that Syria continues to hold chemical weapons. And given its track record, we must assume that the regime remains willing to use them. Therefore, it is up to the members of the Council to maintain the pressure to resolve that ongoing threat to international peace and security.

Ms. Mohammad (United Arab Emirate) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank you, Mr. President, and I also thank Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing.

We meet today only 13 days after our most recent meeting (see S/PV.9164) on the Syrian chemical

weapons dossier, in the absence of any developments on that important track. The October report, like those before it, did not include any new developments that warrant the holding of today's meeting. Yet these meetings are unfortunately still scheduled on the Security Council agenda every month, without regard for their usefulness.

Therefore, I would like to stress the importance of using the time and resources of the Security Council wisely, especially at a time when the Council and its subsidiary bodies seek to discuss urgent matters in the light of current global developments. To ensure their efficiency, we have a shared responsibility to reconsider the meetings that the Council holds on the chemical weapons in Syria dossier. My country will support the convening of a meeting on that dossier following the occurrence of any relevant developments.

With that in mind, I would like to reiterate the unwavering position of the United Arab Emirates on that dossier.

First, my country reiterates that the development, transfer and use of chemical weapons by anyone and under any circumstances are strictly prohibited under international law, whether in Syria or elsewhere. That would constitute a serious threat to regional and international security and stability. In particular, we stress the need to ensure that such weapons do not fall into the hands of terrorist groups, which would not hesitate to use them for their own dangerous purposes.

Secondly, my country stresses the importance of maintaining a constructive and continuous dialogue between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Syrian Arab Republic in order to address all outstanding issues. Consultations cannot be replaced by written correspondence, which will not lead to the achievement of the desired outcomes.

Mr. González Jiménez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing.

As we mentioned just two weeks ago (see S/PV.9164), the lack of progress on this dossier is regrettable. It goes without saying that the outstanding issues have not yet been resolved for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Technical Secretariat to consider the initial Syrian declaration that was concluded. Unfortunately, it is also not possible to establish that Syria has complied with its obligations

under the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which it acceded in September 2013. Therefore, we reiterate the call, in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013), for the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully and in good faith with both the OPCW and its investigative teams.

In addition, we note that the tripartite agreement signed by the United Nations Office for Project Services, the OPCW and Syria expires on 31 December. We call for the renewal of that agreement on an annual basis in order to facilitate the planning and budgetary programming necessary for the Technical Secretariat's fulfilment of its mandate in Syria.

My delegation also continues to follow the developments concerning the organization of a preliminary meeting to be held in Beirut and the progress towards confirming the date and agenda of the meeting to be held between Director-General Arias and Foreign Minister Mekdad. As Council members will recall, the Technical Secretariat sent an invitation to hold that meeting as early as June 2021.

The International Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare is held annually on 30 November. That occasion is an opportunity to honour the victims of such atrocities and at the same time to reaffirm the commitment to the total elimination of chemical weapons.

In that regard, despite initial progress in the 2016 elimination of Syria's declared chemical weapons stockpile, it is alarming that evidence gathered by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic shows that of a total of 38 confirmed attacks, 25 were in fact perpetrated after 2016. Moreover, they resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians and in thousands of casualties, as well as the displacement of entire communities.

Although resolution 2118 (2013) expresses the need to bring those responsible for the use of chemical weapons to justice, progress on that matter still leaves much to be desired.

In the absence of consensus in the Security Council to refer the case of Syria to the International Criminal Court, we encourage Member States to continue to support and finance the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism; the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic; the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission; and the Investigation and Identification Team. Maintaining and strengthening

those avenues for accountability is the minimum that the victims of the chemical weapons attacks and their families deserve.

My delegation once again expresses its support for the OPCW Technical Secretariat and its technical teams, which, despite countless obstacles, carry out their work in a professional, independent and impartial manner, while adhering to international standards.

In conclusion, I stress once again Mexico's unequivocal condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any actor and under any circumstances.

Ms. Syed (Norway): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing on the progress on the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons programme.

Norway reaffirms its full confidence in the work of Director-General Arias and the Technical Secretariat of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

It is regrettable that the Council is meeting again with no new positive developments in the Syrian dossier. Let me be clear in saying that this trend is simply unsustainable.

The international prohibition against the use of chemical weapons must remain a top priority. The lack of accountability and the deterioration of trust reminds us of the urgency of this issue. The Council cannot be silent in such a prolonged stasis. We call on Syria to fulfil its obligations in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). We reiterate our strong condemnation of any use of chemical weapons, anytime, by anyone. Syria must give immediate attention to full cooperation with the OPCW and the resolution of the 20 outstanding issues. We urge Syria to provide sufficient technical information or explanations to reconcile the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies. Similarly, it is critical that Syria 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 reiterating our full support for all necessary preparations to be made for a meeting between Director-General Arias and Minister Mekdad at the earliest convenience. Cooperation and dialogue are key to invigorating the process.

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

In August 2013, the Syrian regime murdered more than a thousand civilians in the outskirts of Damascus, using weapons banned under international law. No one has questioned the reality of the attack. In the wake of that massacre, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2118 (2013). Month after month, we can only lament the lack of progress on that matter. After six refusals by the regime, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Technical Secretariat had to give up on deploying the Declaration Assessment Team on the ground to assess Syria's initial declaration.

Syria must come clean on its entire stockpile. It must comply with its international obligations if it wants its rights and privileges restored. We urge Syria to respond in writing to the questions that the Technical Secretariat had regarding its initial declaration and to take the necessary steps to ensure that the meeting in Beirut between the two parties can take place. France will pay very close attention to the conclusions of the forthcoming reports of the Investigation and Identification Team on the Douma and Marea attacks.

Despite the obstacles, the OPCW Technical Secretariat has continued its investigative work with tenacity, independence and professionalism, and I want to commend them once again. The smear campaigns against them are unacceptable.

The fight against impunity continues to be our priority and is the foundation of the effectiveness and credibility of the prohibition regime. That is why we continue to stand up in support of the international partnership against impunity for the use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Leite Novaes (Brazil): I thank High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu for her briefing. I would also like to welcome the representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic, Türkiye and the Islamic Republic of Iran to today's meeting.

Less than two weeks ago, we met in this Chamber to discuss the same issues (see S/PV.9164). The latest report of the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (S/2022/828, annex) had just been published on that very same day. We therefore do not even have a new report to discuss today.

Brazil follows closely the progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, but

we do not believe that holding successive Security Council meetings when there are little or no relevant developments on the ground is efficient in terms of time or resources, as noted today by the representatives of the Russian Federation, India, China and the United Arab Emirates.

Owing to the absence of new developments in the Syrian chemical weapons file, allow me to once again 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 a serious threat to international peace and security. Such incidents must be addressed with transparency and be subject to thorough and impartial investigations, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Mr. Stastoli (Albania): I would like to extend our appreciation and gratitude to Mrs. Izumi Nakamitsu for her patience and periodic briefings to the Security Council.

Two weeks after the previous meeting of the Security Council on this issue (see S/PV.9164), we are faced with a situation of perfect stagnation. In meeting after meeting of the Council, we raise with concern the issue of this absurd stagnation, which speaks louder than our statements on the refusal of the Syrian regime to cooperate with the international community to verify the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons, as claimed by the regime and its allies. No report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) corroborates what the Syrian regime claims. Only a handful of Al-Assad allies do so, and they constantly try to turn this lack of progress into an argument for less monitoring, fewer meetings and fewer possibilities for accountability for the Al-Assad regime.

If Syria and its allies are asking for fewer meetings on Syria's chemical weapons programme, they could start by answering the list of 20 questions put forward by the report of the Declaration Assessment Team, which remain unanswered by Syria. We deeply regret Syria's deliberate lack of cooperation. That refusal is unacceptable.

Again and again, the OPCW monthly report has clearly stated that, given the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified that remain unresolved, the Technical Secretariat considers that the statement submitted by Syria cannot be considered accurate and

complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118 (2013). This is a mockery of the international community and international law, which we have built global institutions to safeguard. Albania reiterates its full support for the objective, impartial and professional work of the teams of the OPCW Technical Secretariat.

The Al-Assad regime has repeatedly used chemical weapons against its own people, in flagrant violation of international obligations and international humanitarian law. Those are facts that have been confirmed by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team, which has attributed at least four separate chemical weapons attacks to the Al-Assad regime. Impunity for those committing such crimes is not an option. We owe it to the victims and their families to ensure justice, accountability and reparation. We owe it to the Syrian people, but we also owe it to all of humankind.

In that context, we commend the Fact-Finding Mission and the Investigation and Identification Team for their ongoing activities in identifying all the perpetrators and the chain of command for the use of chemicals as weapons against civilians in Syria. We look forward to the publication of attribution reports regarding the chemical weapons attacks against the citizens of Douma in April 2018 and Marea in September 2015. 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.

It is regrettable that some States in the Council try to minimize the consequences of the use of chemical weapons, or even worse, claim that they were never used, with the aim of whitewashing those responsible in order to serve their own narrow political interests. By doing so, they are only normalizing the use of chemical weapons and severely undermining international law and the credibility of international institutions, including the Council.

Despite all of those attempts, Albania will never tire of condemning in the strongest terms any use of chemical weapons by State or non-State actors. We will never tire of calling for accountability and justice for the victims. This is the minimum we can do in support of the Syrian people, who continue to suffer after all these years.

Ms. Moran (Ireland): I thank High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing this morning.

In 2013, the Security Council adopted resolution 2118 (2013). It did so in the wake of the chemical-weapon attack in Ghouta that killed and injured more than a thousand Syrian civilians in the most horrific of circumstances. I want to highlight two key decisions reflected in resolution 2118 (2013): first, that Syria shall not use, develop, produce, acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons; and secondly, that Syria shall cooperate fully with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations by accepting personnel designated by the OPCW or the United Nations, by providing these personnel with immediate and unfettered access to any and all sites, and, in discharging their functions, the right to inspect these sites. The resolution also expresses the Council's strong conviction that those individuals responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria should be held accountable.

Despite the OPCW's work with Syria to destroy all declared chemical-weapon stocks, we have, since 2013, seen eight chemical weapon attacks attributed by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism and the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team to the Syrian authorities. Further attacks remain under investigation by the OPCW, and many more have been reported.

Over the same period, we have seen the issues with Syria's declarations to the OPCW increase from 5 to 20. These are not mere technical issues, as Syria has argued. They are issues of real concern, from undeclared or erroneously declared chemical-weapon production facilities to chemical munitions and chemical warfare agents that are unaccounted for. These issues go to the heart of the question the Council needs to face, namely, whether Syria continues to use, produce or retain chemical weapons.

Regrettably, Syria's response has been to reduce its cooperation with the OPCW until it now stands at almost nothing. Syria makes its cooperation with the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) conditional, dictating the composition of the DAT team, in defiance of resolution 2118 (2013). It is deeply worrying that the last round of consultations with the DAT was as far back as February 2021, despite the Secretariat's best efforts to push this agenda item forward. We see Syria continue a similar pattern of non-cooperation in relation to the proposed meeting between Director-General Arias and Foreign Minister Mekdad. At the same time, Syria,

with Russia, actively seeks to undermine the OPCW's authority and independence, to mask Syria's culpability.

Let us therefore be clear: the Council must uphold its decisions embodied in resolution 2118 (2013) by holding Syria to its obligations under that resolution and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Syria must engage urgently in a serious and meaningful way with the Technical Secretariat to resolve the 20 outstanding issues with its initial declaration. The Council must uphold the international norm against chemical weapons, including through clear and unequivocal backing for the OPCW in fulfilling its mandated task.

It is Syria's actions, not its words, that are important to closing this file. It is only through Syria's genuine engagement that the OPCW will be able to provide the necessary assurance that Syria's chemical-weapons programme is verifiably and definitively a thing of the past. Until then, the Security Council cannot simply shrug its shoulders; regular discussion by the Council is needed to show Syria that its lack of cooperation will not go unanswered, and that there can be no impunity for those who would use these illegal and abhorrent weapons.

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

I have the honour to deliver this joint statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Gabon, Kenya and my own country, Ghana.

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 welcome the 109th report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the submission of the 107th monthly report by the Syrian national authorities on the country's chemical-weapons programme. However, we remain concerned that the stakeholders have not made tangible progress in their attempts to fully address the issue in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. This calls into question the propriety of the frequency with which the Council meets on the Syria chemical-weapons file, when little to no updated progress is reported on the issue. We join other members of the Council in calling for a review of the status quo to enable us focus

attention and resources on the other existing challenges facing the Syrian people.

As we reiterate our support for Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), we note with regret that there continue to be significant divergences between the positions of the OPCW and the Syrian authorities regarding the outstanding gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies related to the destruction of the country's chemical weapons. It bears repeating that aside being a clear and egregious violation of international law, the use of chemical weapons poses serious danger to the health of civilians and a grave threat to international peace and security. In this regard, failure by the international community to fully and verifiably destroy all chemical weapons of the Syrian Arab Republic will be setting a bad precedent as far as the production and use of chemical weapons are concerned. Furthermore, the international community must assume responsibility for a definite closure of the matter to help curtail the likelihood of the production and possible use of chemical weapons anywhere by anyone, under any circumstances, including by rogue elements.

On a positive note, we welcome the re-initiation of communication between the focal points of the Syrian Arab Republic and the OPCW as a step in the right direction. It is our considered view that such cooperation between the Syrian national authority and the Secretariat of the OPCW will facilitate and conclusively resolve the outstanding issues, including, the organization of the twenty-fifth round of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team. We therefore call on the two sides to expedite action on the modalities for convening the high-level in-person meeting between the Syrian Foreign Minister and the Director-General of the OPCW, to help give the needed impetus to the efforts towards satisfactory resolution of all outstanding issues.

In concluding, we call for increased cooperation between the OPCW Secretariat and the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic in order to make tangible progress on the issue.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of Brazil has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Leite Novaes (Brazil): I will be very brief. I am sorry to take the floor again. I would just like

to ask the representative of Albania to refrain from assuming who is and who is not Brazil's ally. Our position on readdressing the frequency of meetings on this agenda item has nothing to do with alliances, but with the efficiency of the Security Council's work, as recognized by the majority of Council members today, namely, the Russian Federation, India, China, the United Arab Emirates and the three African members, Gabon, Ghana and Kenya, as just stated by the President of the Council.

The President: The representative of Albania has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Stastoli (Albania): I am sorry that the representative of Brazil appears to have not very well understood what I said. I can repeat it, but I have also said it in my e-statement, where we make it very clear that we see a total lack of progress on implementing the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons, and the support for this lack of progress often takes the form of the call for fewer meetings on the topic in the Security Council. It has nothing to do with what my colleague from Brazil has just said.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the Security Council this month. I would also like to thank your predecessor, His Excellency the Ambassador of Gabon, for his efforts during Gabon's presidency of the Security Council last month.

My delegation joins the members who expressed surprise that the Council is discussing this issue twice in the space of less than two weeks in the absence of any developments that require it, which is a waste of the Organization's time and resources. Why do a few countries insist on ignoring the calls of a majority of Council members to rationalize the Council's time and resources? Would it not have been more useful to hold a meeting on the negative effects of the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States and the European Union on the Syrian people? That would highlight the inhumane consequences of such measures, which have disastrous effects on the daily lives of Syrians and their basic needs. Should we not hold those countries accountable for the crimes they have been committing against the Syrian people ever since 2011?

Western countries continue to insist on the Council holding these debates only to repeat the same accusatory narratives against Syria, which is irresponsible, unacceptable and incompatible with their obligation under the Charter of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. Their false accusations against Syria have no legal or professional basis. They should be entirely rejected and considered merely part of the hostile political campaign that these countries have been waging against my country since 2011, as I said. Their goal is to undermine security and stability in Syria and destroy its capabilities.

My delegation also deplores the pervasive politicization of the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which has reached a point that allows the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to be fundamentally distorted. In that context, we reiterate the Syrian Arab Republic's position on the illegality of the establishment of the OPCW's so-called Investigation and Identification Team, and our total refusal to recognize it and its erroneous and unprofessional methods of work, which will ultimately lead to invalid conclusions. Ever since it acceded voluntarily to the CWC, the Syrian Arab Republic has implemented its obligations, starting even before the Convention's entry into force, and has cooperated in full transparency and openness with the OPCW in destroying all of its stockpiles of chemical weapons and their production facilities. In that context, I would like to point to some aspects of the cooperation between the Syrian National Authority and the OPCW's Technical Secretariat.

First, the Syrian National Authority has continued to submit its monthly reports to the Technical Secretariat on time on activities related to the destruction of chemical weapons and their production facilities, with the 107th monthly report being the most recent.

Secondly, the Syrian National Authority has agreed to continue to extend the tripartite agreement between the Authority, the United Nations Office for Project Services and the OPCW to ensure the facilitation of the organization's work in Syria. The last extension of that agreement was for a period of six months, and it expires at the end of this year.

Thirdly, the Syrian National Authority facilitated nine rounds of inspection at Syria's Scientific Studies and Research Centre. The most recent report on the eighth round confirmed that no activity prohibited

under the Convention took place. It also praised the significant cooperation and facilitation provided by Syria to the Inspection Team during that round.

Fourthly, over the past nine years, the Syrian National Authority has granted more than 500 entry visas to employees of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW, including all of its teams working in Syria. It has also facilitated 24 rounds of consultations with the Declaration Assessment Team and welcomed the holding of the twenty-fifth round of consultations. It also agreed to all the options proposed by the Technical Secretariat for facilitating the holding of those rounds, while maintaining its principled position on the reservations we have about the participation of one expert who, based on experience, has proved to be unprofessional. The Syrian National Authority has repeatedly called on the Technical Secretariat not to disrupt the important work of the Declaration Assessment Team or hold it hostage because of the non-issuance of an entry visa to one expert whose behaviour we have reservations about. The OPCW has many more experts that it can deploy.

Fifthly, the head of the Syrian National Authority held two rounds of high-level consultations with the Director-General of the OPCW and coordination is now under way to hold another high-level meeting, according to an agenda that will be agreed on by the two parties. We look forward to those high-level consultations as soon as possible.

Sixthly, the Syrian National Authority has spent a lot of time and effort with the Technical Secretariat to jointly review and discuss certain issues. Regrettably, however, the Technical Secretariat continues to insist that those issues are still outstanding. Discussions on them are ongoing and there is no final agreement on the outcome. It is therefore reprehensible that some continue to level accusations against Syria. Every aspect of the cooperation between Syria and the OPCW's Technical Secretariat that I have referred to must be acknowledged. That ongoing good-faith cooperation is a demonstration of Syria's responsible behaviour, as a country that fulfils its obligations and with nothing to hide. As for the ingratitude, scepticism and denial of certain countries for well-known political purposes, they deserve nothing but denunciation and condemnation.

Before concluding my statement, I would like to note the following. The United States of America and its Western allies believe that, by repeating the same

accusations and lies against Syria, they will convince people to believe them. I would like to say to them that the truth will not be obscured by their misleading statements and overt policies of exerting pressure and extortion on the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW and Member States.

For example, I would like to note that the United States, France and Britain obstructed the deployment of the Fact-Finding Mission in Douma in 2018 so that those three countries could wage joint and unjust aggression against Syria. They come to the Council and make statements to convince us that they are not interfering in the work of the OPCW. There are many other examples of such behaviour.

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

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

I would also like to note that, as a country neighbouring Syria, Türkiye believes in the importance and need for these monthly meetings. Every month, the Security Council dedicates days to open debates on topics on which the mandate of the Council is questionable. As a country neighbouring Syria, Türkiye therefore believes that the Council can spare approximately 80 minutes every month to discuss a topic that is directly related to the maintenance of international peace and security. It has been said that there has been no progress on this file. Perhaps the lack of any progress calls for more, and not fewer, regular meetings.

The previous report of the OPCW Director-General (see S/2022/727, annex) demonstrates that the outstanding issues related to the Syrian regime's initial and subsequent declarations persist. The gaps, discrepancies and inconsistencies in the chemical weapons declaration of the Al-Assad regime continue. Therefore, the OPCW cannot consider the declaration as accurate or complete. The regime is obstructing the work of the Investigation and Identification Team (ITT) by not issuing visas.

Furthermore, the OPCW Technical Secretariat still awaits a response to its inquiries on the regime's chemical weapons production facilities and the chlorine cylinders used in the attack in Douma in

2018. We call on the Syrian regime to fully cooperate with the OPCW Technical Secretariat and provide the necessary information, as required under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The current investigations by the Fact-Finding Mission and the IIT are important to establish the truth about the use of chemical weapons in Syria. We look forward to the completion of ongoing investigations, in particular the next IIT report on the 2018 attack in Douma.

It is our collective responsibility to ensure accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Ending impunity is also imperative to honouring the hundreds of innocent lives lost as a result of the chemical-weapon attacks perpetrated during the conflict in Syria. Genuine political reconciliation in the country will be possible only through justice and accountability. We cannot change the past, but we have the power to change the course of the future for the people of Syria. We cannot look away now — and we must continue to hold monthly meetings on this file.

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

Mr. Jalil Irvani (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to congratulate Ghana on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for November. I also congratulate Gabon for successfully completing its presidency for the month of October.

Iran once again strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons, by anyone, anywhere and under any circumstances, as a flagrant violation of international law. We underscore once again that any investigation into the use of chemical weapons must be impartial, professional, credible and objective, and must fully comply with the requirements and procedures of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Equally crucial, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) must be able to perform its duties in an impartial, professional and objective manner in order to establish the facts and develop evidence-based conclusions. We reiterate our call for the Chemical Weapons Convention to be implemented fully, effectively and without discrimination. We believe

that politicizing the Convention's implementation and exploiting the OPCW for political reasons endangers both the organization and the Convention's credibility.

Syria voluntarily joined the Convention in 2013 and dismantled its weapons arsenal, as well as the facilities used to manufacture such weapons. While encouraging dialogue and consultations between the parties, we believe that the collaboration of the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW should be recognized. We further commend the Syrian Arab Republic for providing monthly reports to the OPCW Director-General, detailing activities on its territory related to the destruction of chemical weapons and their production facilities.

A high-level meeting between Syria's Foreign Minister and the Director-General of the OPCW, which we hope will be held, has the potential to pave the way for the parties to resolve the outstanding issues. The Syrian National Authority requested the Technical Secretariat to convene a coordination meeting of the two parties in Beirut to agree on the agenda for the high-level meeting, which the Technical Secretariat responded to on 3 October.

The previous Council meeting on the Syrian chemical file was held on 25 October (see S/PV.9164) and today we meet on the same topic for the second time in less than two weeks, during which time there have been no new developments. Therefore, it is clear that there is no point for today's discussion other than to repeat claims against the Syrian Arab Republic. We agree with the view that convening monthly meetings on this subject is costly, not only in terms of United Nations resources but also in terms of the Security Council's time.

Moreover, while the Syrian Arab Republic has met the requirements of the Convention and continues to cooperate constructively with the OPCW, handling this file in a political and double-standards manner will only divert discussion away from its technical substance. We support the discussion of this matter on its own technical track within the OPCW in order to foster positive dialogue between Syria and the OPCW and resolve the outstanding issues.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.