



Ninety-Eighth Session
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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

PROGRESS IN THE ELIMINATION OF THE SYRIAN CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMME

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.
2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities” (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation “in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria” (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015), noting the Director-General’s intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM), along with information on the Council’s discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled “Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director-General’s intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.
4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled “OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall “regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1”.



5. The Council, at its Ninety-Fourth Session, adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-94/DEC.2, dated 9 July 2020). In paragraph 12 of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall “regularly report to the Council on the implementation of this decision and decide[d] also that the Director-General shall provide a copy of this decision and its associated reports by the Secretariat to all States Parties and to the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly through the United Nations Secretary-General”.
6. The Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) at its Twenty-Fifth Session adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC.9, dated 21 April 2021). In paragraph 8 of this decision, the Conference decided that the Director-General shall regularly report to the Council and States Parties on whether the Syrian Arab Republic has completed all of the measures contained in paragraph 5 of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2.
7. This, the ninety-sixth monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council and Conference decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 24 August to 23 September 2021.

Impact of COVID-19

8. As previously reported, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the Secretariat’s ability to deploy to the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretariat is maintaining its readiness for deployments, which are being conducted subject to the evolution of the pandemic. The travel restrictions notwithstanding, the Secretariat is continuing its mandated activities related to the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in this regard.

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

9. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:
 - (a) As stated in previous reports, the Secretariat has verified the destruction of all 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic.
 - (b) On 16 September 2021, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its ninety-fourth monthly report (EC-98/P/NAT.3, dated 16 September 2021) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

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

10. As stated in previous reports, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have been destroyed.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5

11. The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continues its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with paragraph 3 of Council decision EC-81/DEC.4, paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, and paragraph 5 of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2.
12. As reported previously, regarding the issue of a former CWPF that was declared as never having been used to produce and/or weaponise chemical weapons, and in keeping with the remarks made by the Director-General to the Council at its Ninety-Sixth Session, the Secretariat continues to maintain that the Syrian Arab Republic must declare all chemical warfare agents produced and/or weaponised at this site.
13. As also reported previously, the Syrian National Authority sent the Secretariat a note verbale dated 9 July 2021 in which it reported an attack that took place on 8 June 2021 and targeted a military facility that housed a declared former CWPF. The Secretariat responded on 15 July 2021 through a note verbale in which it requested further information and documentation regarding the damage caused to the declared site, given that it is related to one outstanding issue recently opened by the DAT. The Secretariat subsequently reiterated its request in notes verbales dated 25 August and 13 September 2021. As at the date of this report, the Secretariat had not received any reply to these requests.
14. Since 30 April 2021, the Secretariat has been reaching out to the Syrian Arab Republic to schedule the twenty-fifth round of consultations in Damascus, which the Secretariat had initially proposed to conduct from 18 May to 1 June 2021. The Syrian Arab Republic provided its first response to these communications on 16 August 2021, when it confirmed its readiness to hold the consultations from 11 to 27 October 2021.
15. In its response dated 25 August 2021, the Secretariat informed the Syrian National Authority that the DAT was prepared to deploy in October 2021. The Secretariat further noted with concern that delays in the conduct of the consultations impact both the compliance of the Syrian Arab Republic with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”), and the implementation of the Secretariat’s mandate as established by the OPCW’s policy-making organs.
16. On 3 September 2021, the Syrian Arab Republic informed the Secretariat in a note verbale that it had not approved entry visas for all members of the DAT for the upcoming deployment. Through a subsequent exchange of correspondence, the Syrian Arab Republic confirmed its refusal to issue an entry visa for one member of the DAT. On 20 September 2021, the Secretariat sent a note verbale in which it requested the Syrian Arab Republic to reconsider this decision, as the Secretariat will not be in a position to deploy until all requested visas have been issued.
17. On 23 September 2021, the Syrian Arab Republic re-confirmed to the Secretariat its refusal to issue the entry visa for one DAT member. On the same day, in its response, the Secretariat recalled that the DAT expert had deployed to the Syrian Arab Republic on multiple occasions over the past seven years. The Secretariat further referred to the applicable legal framework which does not entitle the Syrian Arab Republic to select experts on behalf of the Secretariat, and confirmed that, in light of the above, it would not deploy the DAT to the Syrian Arab Republic. To advance in the implementation of

the Syrian Arab Republic's obligations and the Secretariat's mandate, the Secretariat invited the Syrian Arab Republic to send a delegation for a limited three- to four-day meeting with the DAT in the second half of October 2021, at the OPCW Headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands. The Secretariat emphasised that such a meeting cannot replace full-fledged deployments in the Syrian Arab Republic.

18. Moreover, through the aforementioned correspondence, the Secretariat reiterated its request to the Syrian National Authority to submit, ahead of the upcoming deployment, information relevant to a number of outstanding issues that had been requested on multiple previous occasions.
19. At this stage, considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the Secretariat assesses that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention, Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1, EC-94/DEC.2, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). The Secretariat will continue to engage with the Syrian National Authority regarding the remaining outstanding issues in its initial declaration and subsequent submissions, and will continue to keep the Council updated regarding progress made in these activities.
20. In accordance with paragraph 10 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat is continuing to assess conditions for the conduct of inspections at the sites identified by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in its third and fourth reports. In doing so, the Secretariat is taking into account the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.
21. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat is planning to conduct two rounds of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in 2021. The conduct of further inspections of these facilities remains subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.
22. With regard to the detection of a Schedule 2.B.04 chemical during the third round of inspections at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC in November 2018, the Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the Secretariat to close this issue.

Other activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

23. As previously reported, following an invitation by the Director-General to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr Faisal Mekdad, to an in-person meeting, both parties have appointed officials in charge of the preparations. The Secretariat will keep the Council informed of further developments on this matter.
24. In its aforementioned note verbale to the Secretariat dated 9 July 2021, the Syrian National Authority also reported the destruction, in the attack on the CWPF, of, inter alia, two chlorine cylinders related to the chemical weapons incident that took place in Douma, the Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 April 2018. In its aforementioned reply dated 15 July 2021, the Secretariat additionally requested the Syrian Arab Republic to, inter alia, provide all relevant information regarding the unauthorised movement of the two cylinders and any remains of their destruction. As at the date of this report, the Secretariat had not received a response to this request. The Secretariat will keep the Council informed of further developments in this matter.

25. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) continues to provide support to the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement concluded between the OPCW, UNOPS, and the Syrian Arab Republic. This agreement facilitates the Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and to any subsequent decision or resolution of the relevant organs of the OPCW or the United Nations, as well as any bilateral agreements concluded between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic.
26. The current extension of the Tripartite Agreement is valid through 30 September 2021. On 7 September 2021, the three parties finalised a three-month extension to the Tripartite Agreement that will cover the period from 1 October 2021 up to and including 31 December 2021. The Secretariat recalls that extensions of such limited duration significantly impact its ability to plan and conduct the activities mandated by the OPCW's policy-making organs on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.
27. As at the cut-off date of this report, one OPCW staff member was deployed as part of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. As previously reported, on 19 July 2021, 4 August 2021, and 10 August 2021, the Secretariat sent notes verbales requesting the Syrian Arab Republic to issue a visa for the incoming command post officer to deploy to the OPCW's command post in Damascus. The Secretariat initially requested a visa that would be valid as of 4 August 2021, to align with the departure of the deployed command post officer, which was planned for 11 August 2021. As was already the case in the period between 17 April 2021 and 5 July 2021, the Secretariat did not receive any response to its requests. The Director-General therefore authorised the departure of the deployed command post officer from Damascus as scheduled on 11 August 2021. This left the command post with only support staff from UNOPS for the second time this year, until 1 September 2021 when the OPCW's presence was resumed following the issuance of a visa for the incoming command post officer.
28. Delays in the issuance of visas by the Syrian Arab Republic for the Secretariat's command post officers has affected the planning, inter alia, of DAT, FFM, and SSRC deployments to the Syrian Arab Republic.

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

29. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 4 February 2015 and 23 November 2015, respectively), as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015), the FFM continues to study all available information relating to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.
30. The FFM is continuing its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic and other States Parties with regard to a variety of incidents and is planning upcoming deployments. The conduct of deployments is subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 of the Conference of the States Parties at its Fourth Special Session related to the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic

31. Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018), adopted by the Conference at its Fourth Special Session, addresses, inter alia, the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.
32. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat established the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic by identifying and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those chemical weapons in those instances in which the FFM determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, and cases for which the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism did not issue a report.
33. The IIT is continuing its investigations in accordance with the Note entitled “Work of the Investigation and Identification Team Established by Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (Dated 27 June 2018)” (EC-91/S/3, dated 28 June 2019) and will issue further reports in due course, subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2

34. In paragraph 5 of decision EC-94/DEC.2, the Council decided:

to request, pursuant to paragraph 36 of Article VIII of the Convention, that the Syrian Arab Republic complete all of the following measures within 90 days of this decision in order to redress the situation:

 - (a) declare to the Secretariat the facilities where the chemical weapons, including precursors, munitions, and devices, used in the 24, 25, and 30 March 2017 attacks were developed, produced, stockpiled, and operationally stored for delivery;
 - (b) declare to the Secretariat all of the chemical weapons it currently possesses, including sarin, sarin precursors, and chlorine that is not intended for purposes not prohibited under the Convention, as well as chemical weapons production facilities and other related facilities; and
 - (c) resolve all of the outstanding issues regarding its initial declaration of its chemical weapons stockpile and programme.
35. At the end of the 90 days, the Syrian Arab Republic had not completed any of these measures.
36. With regard to the inspections mandated by paragraph 8 of EC-94/DEC.2, the Secretariat is monitoring the current security situation and will inform the Syrian Arab Republic when it is prepared to deploy for this purpose. The conduct of these inspections will also be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Conference decision C-25/DEC.9

37. In paragraph 7 of decision C-25/DEC.9, the Conference decided, after careful review, and without prejudice to the Syrian Arab Republic's obligations under the Convention, pursuant to subparagraph 21(k) of Article VIII and paragraph 2 of Article XII of the Convention, to suspend several rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic under the Convention.
38. In paragraph 8 of the decision, the Conference decided, inter alia, that the rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic suspended in accordance with paragraph 7 of decision C-25/DEC.9 are reinstated by the Conference once the Director-General has reported to the Council that the Syrian Arab Republic has completed all of the measures stipulated in paragraph 5 of EC-94/DEC.2. As at the date of this report, the Syrian Arab Republic had not completed any of these measures.
39. The Secretariat will continue to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic with regard to their completion and will continue to report to the Council as mandated.

Supplementary resources

40. The Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the FFM and other remaining activities, which presently include the work of the DAT and the IIT, as well as the biannual inspections of the SSRC and the two sites identified in paragraph 8 of EC-94/DEC.2. As at the cut-off date of this report, total contributions and pledges to this fund stood at EUR 35.7 million. Contribution agreements had been concluded with Australia, Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

Conclusion

41. The future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will focus on the work of the FFM; the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration-related issues; inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah sites of the SSRC; the implementation of Conference decision C-SS-4/DEC.3; the implementation of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2; and the implementation of Conference decision C-25/DEC.9.