

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATEMENT ON AGENDA ITEM 6C

ELIMINATION OF THE SYRIAN CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMME

The findings of the OPCW tell an unmistakable story: after acceding to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Syria never fully disclosed or destroyed its chemical weapons stockpile. While some may claim this is a political issue, the truth is that this is a legal issue about upholding the commitments Syria made when it acceded to the Convention. The facts speak for themselves. Based on the information provided by the United Nations and the OPCW, it is clear Syria's 2013 declaration did not come close to sharing the true extent of its chemical weapons program.

In addition to the gaps and discrepancies that the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) needs answers about from Syria, the United Nations and the OPCW verified Syria's use of sarin and chlorine barrel bombs after 2013. Under the Convention and UNSCR 2118, Syria is obligated to respond to straightforward questions from the Technical Secretariat aimed at determining which chemical weapons Syria has, and what happened to them -- and it should not take over a decade to do so.

In ten years, Syria has only managed to resolve seven of the twenty-six questions posed by the DAT regarding unexplained chemical weapon agents, precursors, munitions, and possible undeclared production and weaponization activities. These questions stem from concrete data, including the compelling findings of the DAT's September 2020, April 2023, and May 2024 reports.

While Syria has finally resumed meeting with the DAT, just as the shell of a house is not a real house, a facade of cooperation is not the same thing as real cooperation. We as an Executive Council need to decide what it says about the credibility of this institution if we are willing to settle for a facsimile of engagement rather than the real thing. If Syria takes responsibility for its actions and declares and destroys its remaining chemical weapons program, we can all move on. I hope we can come together for renewed discussions about what more we can do, so that Syria upholds its treaty obligations. Not doing so has real consequences, as Syria's actions erode longstanding international norms against chemical weapons usage, creating a risk of proliferation.

I would like to underscore our thanks to the Technical Secretariat for its professional and impartial work, and close by saying we hope it will not

take ten more years for us to receive answers to questions that have gone unresolved for far too long.