



NV/ODG-651/24

The Technical Secretariat (the “Secretariat”) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (“OPCW”) presents its compliments to the Permanent Representation of the State of Qatar to the OPCW as acting on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic and hereby wishes to refer to the telephone conversation held on 26 December 2024 between the Director-General of the OPCW, H.E. Ambassador Fernando Arias, and the Foreign Minister of the Government, H.E. Assad Hassan al-Shaibani, as well as to the Director-General’s letter dated 14 January 2025 addressed to the Foreign Minister, relating to the Syrian Chemical Weapons dossier following the fall of the previous government.

Syria and Qatar agreed that, until Syria appoints a new Syrian representative to the OPCW, Qatar would represent Syria at the OPCW and, consequently, serve as the sole channel of communication between Syria and the OPCW. To that effect, an exchange of letters between the Foreign Minister of Syria, H.E. Assad Hassan al-Shaibani and the Prime Minister of Qatar, H.E. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, respectively dated 28 December 2024 and 5 January 2025, was concluded, and subsequently shared with the OPCW, designating the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the OPCW to represent Syria’s interests at the OPCW. The copies of this exchange of letters were shared with all 193 Member States of the OPCW.

The Secretariat also wishes to recall that, during the telephone conversation and through the Director-General’s 14 January 2025 letter, the Director-General informed the Minister that a team of experts from the Secretariat stood ready to deploy to engage with experts from the Syrian side. The Director-General therefore requested the Syrian transitional Government (“Government”) to appoint officials and experts in charge of engaging with the Secretariat at working level for the Secretariat’s visit to be effective. As Syria has so far not been able to appoint such officials and experts, the Director-General of the OPCW decided to accept the informal offer made by the Minister during their telephone conversation to visit Damascus.

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Permanent Representation of the State of Qatar
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The Director-General requested to receive an invitation with possible dates so that preparations could be initiated. The Secretariat has started preparing it although the invitation has still not been received.

A visit will allow the Director-General to brief inter alia high-ranking members of the Syrian Government and Syrian experts as needed and available.

More specifically, the visit of the Director-General to Syria will, inter alia:

- allow the Director-General to provide a comprehensive overview of the means at the disposal of the OPCW to assist the Government in meeting its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention;
- provide an opportunity to touch upon the 19 outstanding issues left unaddressed by the former government and the possible paths to move them forward;
- help initiate, as well, discussions on other tasks and activities ahead required for the implementations of the Secretariat's mandate in the Syrian Arab Republic, including the mapping, visiting and assessing potentially additional chemical weapons locations and destruction of the residual elements of the chemical weapons programme;
- allow both sides to review the existing legal and logistical arrangements in place, including the necessity to expand the presence of the OPCW in Syria on a more permanent basis.

The Director-General and his team are ready to deploy to Damascus and, as there are many issues to be addressed, the Secretariat wishes to reiterate the importance for both sides to designate competent and trusted interlocutors. The Secretariat has already engaged with multiple relevant regional and international stakeholders to facilitate the future work to be carried out together with Syria.

The Secretariat acknowledges the many difficulties associated with the situation left behind by the former government and stands ready to fully assist the new Syrian authorities in this endeavour. To that effect, it hereby wishes to share with the Syrian side a roadmap to work together.

The visit will allow for the sharing of other relevant documentation to support the Syrian transitional Government to abide by its obligations under the Convention.

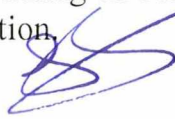
All of the aforementioned will be undertaken with the aim of guiding and supporting Syrian authorities but also with a view to creating awareness, sharing information and, most importantly, building trust between both sides.



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Further details in terms of the composition of the OPCW delegation, including on the associated logistical and security support needed for the visit, will be provided in due course. For that purpose, the Director-General has appointed Mr Mitsuhiro Imamura (mitsuhiro.imamura@opcw.org), Deputy Chief of Cabinet, as its contact point for further exchanges in relation to the preparation of the visit and would welcome the designation of a Syrian contact point for the same purpose.

The Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons avails itself of this opportunity to renew to Permanent Representation of the State of Qatar to the OPCW as acting on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic the assurances of its highest consideration.



The Hague, 22 January 2025

Attachment 1: OPCW Secretariat's 9-point Action Plan for Syria



OPCW Secretariat's 9-point Action Plan for Syria

1. Establish first contacts with the new Syrian Arab Republic (SAR) authorities (VTC, phone calls).
2. Continue contacts with the SAR to request precise info to prepare the first deployment under the new circumstances.
3. Based on the information received from the SAR (if sufficient), the Secretariat, after thorough examination, will start preparations for the deployment of a large and comprehensive team of experts.
4. The Secretariat will assist the SAR in drawing up an inventory, which should encompass: CW sites, equipment, munitions and other chemicals under the CWC as well as supporting documents and all other evidence, including witnesses related to the CW programme run by the previous regime.
5. Based on the above inventory, the SAR should provide OPCW with a new declaration in line with CWC provisions and relevant PMO decisions.
6. Once the declaration is assessed and evaluated, the verification process starts:
 - a) The Secretariat prepares the plan of destruction to be approved by the EC.
 - b) Destruction activities are conducted, supported by States Parties, under the Secretariat's verification.
7. After the destruction phase, the Secretariat will engage with the SAR to address CW proliferation and prevent re-emergence of CW and assist the SAR in building capacity for a long-term compliance with the CWC.
8. Throughout the whole process, the DAT, FFM and IIT will continue its work and investigations, which most likely will require additional humans and financial resources.
9. Having the whole process completed, OPCW should draw lessons learned in order to retain knowledge, expertise, and capabilities for possible future scenarios.