

TÜRKİYE: STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR SELÇUK ÜNAL, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE TO THE OPCW AT THE 108th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(c) – ELIMINATION OF THE SYRIAN CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMME

(The Hague, 4-7 March 2025)

Mr. Chair,
Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

We sincerely welcome the address of H.E. Mr. Asaad al-Shaibani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Syria, to the Council. We believe his presence is a historic day for the OPCW.

Türkiye, since the beginning, has stood on the right side of history and opened its doors to millions of Syrians. We also provided all kinds of humanitarian assistance to several millions of Syrians in Syria in their exodus from a certain death by chemical weapons.

The Assad regime's chemical attacks will always be remembered. We remember Syrian brothers and sisters murdered by the regime with those weapons where those attacks caused millions of refugees in the region and to Europe.

The fall of the Assad regime in Syria presents an opportunity to Syria and the OPCW for full compliance with the CWC.

From the beginning, Türkiye voiced the concern of the international community to the new Syrian administration regarding the Assad regime's chemical weapons programme. We welcome remarks by the transitional government on the chemical weapons file. We just heard that the Syrian authorities understand the importance of this file.

We commend Director-General Arias for his visit to Damascus on 8 February 2025 to start dialogue and share the roadmap for the declaration, verification and destruction of Syria's remaining chemical weapons stocks. Türkiye, like Qatar and the Netherlands, also made efforts to make this visit to happen. We also commend the State of Qatar for temporarily assuming the role to represent Syria's interests at the OPCW.

We would like to underline the importance of engagement with and providing support to the Syrian transitional authorities for the success of their cooperation. As we heard from the Minister, Syria should be supported, particularly in terms of capacity-building and resources. Likewise, our organisation should have the financial and human resources as well as the logistical and technical capacity to carry out its mission in Syria.

Türkiye has always expressed its strong support for the territorial integrity of Syria. It is more important than ever. We would like to underline that Türkiye is totally against Israel's air strikes targeting Syria's infrastructure and its occupation. This is dangerous at this critical juncture. The attacks should stop.

We welcome the decision of the EU to suspend sanctions targeting banking, energy and transport sectors in Syria. Further and immediate lifting of other sanctions is essential since they were subjected to the previous regime which have done terrible things to their people with chemical weapons. This will also support Syria to effectively cooperate with the Secretariat.

Victims should be remembered. We shall support efforts towards accountability.

Türkiye will continue to support the OPCW in its work in Syria.

Thank you.