



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
STATEMENT ON AGENDA ITEM 6(c)
ELIMINATION OF THE SYRIAN CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMME**

Colleagues, as we have heard many times today, we have a historic opportunity to end, once and for all, the Assad regime's chemical weapons program.

As we all know, more than ten years ago, there was *also* a historic opportunity to end the Assad regime's chemical weapons program. Yet, representatives of the Assad regime lied repeatedly to us about its program in this very room. Rather than press Syria to uphold its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, certain states indulged Syria as it used chemical weapons and stymied the OPCW's efforts to produce an accurate and honest declaration.

Together, as States Parties to the Convention, we now have a historic opportunity to turn the page on this dark chapter.

The interim authorities in Damascus have stated that they are committed to ridding Syria of all remnants of Assad's chemical weapons program. For this effort to succeed, all States Parties must support the OPCW as it embarks on one of the most significant and challenging tasks in the organization's history.

Unsecured elements of a chemical weapons program pose a serious proliferation risk. So, we will *all* be safer if we understand where the remains of Assad's chemical weapons program are and what happened to those involved in developing it.

Colleagues, the OPCW has a tremendously important mission before it, one that contributes directly to global safety and security, and one that requires support from all of us. This mission is in the very name of the organization: prohibiting chemical weapons. This is why we are here. We have a historic opportunity to rid Syria of all vestiges of its chemical weapons program and make the world a safer place in doing so.

When the OPCW was established, we all, as States Parties, expected the end of the destruction of declared stockpiles to be the end of the threat posed by chemical weapons. As the Director General has warned us repeatedly, however, we now face the threat of the reemergence of chemical weapons. No matter which region we live in, we have a shared interest in countering this trend -- in, as the Dutch proverb says, "putting our finger in the dike" to protect the world against the threat of countries and non-state actors using chemical weapons.

We are fortunate to have in the OPCW an organization tasked with and capable of helping to protect us from this threat. It is now up to us to get behind the organization for it to accomplish its mission.

Thank you.