



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Sixth Session
29 November – 3 December 2021

C-26/NAT.51
29 November 2021
ARABIC and ENGLISH only

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR MILAD ATIEH
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
TO THE OPCW AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION
OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Mr Chairperson,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate the representative of Norway, Ambassador Bård Ivar Svendsen, on his election as Chairperson of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my profuse thanks to His Excellency Ambassador José Trejo of Mexico for his professional and competent steering of the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference.

My delegation also aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan in this meeting on behalf of the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement that are States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and China.

Achieving the universality of the Chemical Weapons Convention is a very important step towards ensuring an effective global regime against chemical weapons. However, this will not be achieved without compelling Israel to join the Convention and the rest of the international conventions related to the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, the Syrian Arab Republic regrets that, in order to protect Israel and keep it beyond the reach of any international control over its nuclear, chemical, and biological facilities, the States sponsoring the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons are themselves obstructing any endeavour to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The Syrian Arab Republic warns against the widening reach of chemical terrorist threats and calls upon all Member States of the OPCW to strengthen international efforts to confront this real threat to States Parties' security and stability. In this context, the Syrian Arab Republic affirms that some States Parties' behaviour in covering up the crimes and practices of terrorist groups in Syria has emboldened those terrorists to commit more heinous crimes against Syrian citizens and prepare for new crimes, using toxic substances, in order to accuse the Syrian Government of those crimes. Syria has been informing you about the continued preparations by terrorist groups, including the "White Helmets" terrorist group, to stage false-flag chemical attacks, particularly in the countryside of the Governorates of Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, and Latakia.



In 2013, Syria acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention voluntarily and in good faith, as it believes in the rejection of the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances. Syria has faithfully and credibly implemented its sovereign decision to end the Syrian chemical dossier, which was achieved in record time. Despite the very difficult and complex circumstances it has been going through, Syria has accomplished what some other States which had acceded to the Convention many years before did not accomplish. Unfortunately, what Syria has been subjected to within the OPCW over the past years has made us raise a serious question about the Organisation's ability to carry out its mandate under the Convention and to withstand the pressure it is facing from the United States of America and its Western allies. This serious challenge is not specific to Syria but is rather part of a broader global problem of a systemic nature. This is because the OPCW has turned into an instrument of political manipulation, which has alienated it from its professionalism and thus its credibility. In light of this, we are extremely concerned about the current state of affairs. It has become necessary to halt this continuous deterioration in the Organisation's course of action and to begin seriously and urgently to correct this course and take the Organisation back to implementing its mandate, as the principal and neutral pillar of the chemical weapons non-proliferation regime. Despite all of this, Syria reiterates its extreme keenness on pursuing positive and constructive cooperation with the Technical Secretariat. As a token of its sincerity, Syria welcomed the convening of a meeting between Dr Faisal Mekdad, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, and the Director-General of the OPCW, as soon as possible in order to discuss the latest developments in relation to the Syrian chemical dossier. Preparations are underway to hold this meeting.

Despite the difficult circumstances that the Syrian Arab Republic is going through, as a result of the economic war waged on it by the United States of America and some Western States, namely the illegal unilateral coercive measures imposed on it, which have had a significant negative impact on the socio-economic conditions of Syrian citizens, in addition to the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, Syria has never ceased to cooperate fully with the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat and teams in the framework of the implementation of its obligations.

The Syrian Arab Republic has faced an unprecedented campaign of scepticism and false accusations of not cooperating with the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat, with some States pre-empting the results of the technical consultations that are still ongoing between the Syrian National Authority and the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) and taking advantage of the content of some reports related to the Syrian declaration and other OPCW reports on the matter. This is despite Syria's assertion that some of the technical issues under discussion between the Syrian National Authority and the DAT relate to different scientific interpretations, and that the process cannot be resolved in a distorted and selective manner. Therefore, no one has the right to jump directly to accusations regarding issues that are still under discussion and examination. The behaviour of those States is in blatant contradiction with the provisions of the Convention, the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations and is nothing more than an attempt to use the OPCW and the remaining technical aspects of the Syrian chemical dossier to serve their political purposes, in order to exert pressure on Syria. Yet, Syria continued its full and positive cooperation with the OPCW and committed itself to a structured dialogue with the DAT through rounds of consultations, of which twenty-four have been held so far, with the aim of closing the remaining outstanding technical issues.

Recently, some Western States have built their positions and false accusations on erroneous information contained in some fabricated reports suggesting that the Syrian Arab Republic does not want to hold the twenty-fifth round of consultations between the experts of the Syrian National Authority and the DAT. The truth, however, is that Syria welcomed the holding of this

round and informed the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW of its readiness to receive the DAT, as Syria is very keen to end the dossier of outstanding issues and has welcomed the round of consultations and expressed its serious desire to close this dossier once and for all.

Once again, the Syrian Arab Republic expresses its utter astonishment at the continued attempts by some States to level false accusations against Syria, regarding the two cylinders that were destroyed as a result of the brutal Israeli aggression of 8 June 2021 on a declared site, which also caused heavy material losses, both in buildings and equipment. Also, Syria is surprised at the failure of the OPCW and some States to condemn this aggression, or even to mention its perpetrators in anyway whatsoever. In this regard, we would like to point out that the Syrian National Authority provided the Technical Secretariat with the information available to it on the damage and losses caused to the site as a result of the brutal Israeli aggression against it. Those who make prejudgments and false accusations should have waited for the discussions and deliberations that the DAT will have with the Syrian National Authority, during the twenty-fifth round of consultations about the incident, and any detailed information which the team could obtain on the circumstances surrounding the incident.

The question which we had previously asked on several occasions remains unanswered: Who benefits from the elimination of such important evidence in the alleged Douma incident? As time goes by, and through the reports published in the international media, we have become certain of the extent of the falsification of facts surrounding this incident. The failure to mention the aggressor is nothing more than a barefaced attempt to cover up the aggressive Israeli practices against the sovereignty of a Member State of the United Nations and the OPCW. More still, this silence is a message of encouragement for Israel to continue its aggression against Syria, in addition to its unlimited support for terrorist groups that have used chemical weapons against the Syrian people and committed the most heinous crimes against innocent Syrian civilians.

On more than one occasion, the Syrian Arab Republic, along with many States, has made objective observations regarding the work of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM). Yet, Syria cooperated with FFM teams and has provided them with all the facilitations required for the success of its missions. In this context, the Syrian Arab Republic affirms that the test of the work and credibility of the FFM does not come from politically motivated speeches and expressions of praise, but rather from the reports issued or to be issued by the FFM regarding the numerous incidents that it has investigated. This Mission has failed more than one test, and the evidence is clear to all States Parties. It has proved to be biased and unprofessional in more than one of the reports that it has issued. Examples include the reports on the Khan Sheikhoun incident (2017), the Aleppo incident (2018), the Saraqib incident (2018), and the Douma incident (2018). The scandals and falsification surrounding the report on the latter incident is apparent to all. Such an approach will not lead to fair and objective conclusions and findings. In this context, we stress the need for the FFM to correct the flaws marring its approach and working methods, comply with the provisions of the Convention, and abide by its professional standards and its Terms of Reference that were agreed upon with Syria. My country's Government is of the view that, after all these professional scandals, it has become unacceptable to remain silent on the FFM's continued operation according to those wrong methods. It stresses that what stands in the way of correcting them is the American-Western pressure aimed at using these non-objective FFM reports to accuse the Syrian Government of using chemical weapons and to cover up the crimes of terrorists and their arm, "the White Helmets" group.

The Syrian Arab Republic continues to consider that the decision to establish the “Investigation and Identification Team” (IIT) is lacking legitimacy. This is because the decision did not enjoy consensus but was rather supported by less than half of the States Parties of the OPCW and was not based on the provisions of the Convention. The decision has set a dangerous precedent by mandating a technical organisation with matters that fall within the powers and jurisdiction of the Security Council. Therefore, Syria, together with other States, does not recognise the legitimacy of this team and its work, and refuses its funding and access to confidential information provided by the Syrian authorities to the OPCW and to the Security Council. Accordingly, Syria rejects any outputs that have been issued and that will be issued by the team in the future. It is really absurd that sanctions are issued against a State Party that cooperates with the Technical Secretariat and implements the provisions of the Convention.

The United States of America and some Western States are again seeking to politicise the work of the Organisation and deepen the divisions amongst its members, through attempts to pass the draft decision entitled: “Understanding Regarding the Use of Aerosolised Central Nervous System-Acting Chemicals for Law Enforcement Purposes”. Despite the differences in opinion among many States on this draft decision, the sponsor States have expressed no willingness to engage in objective and professional dialogue on this issue, and to seek solutions acceptable to all parties. This draft decision violates the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In this regard, Syria reiterates its position expressed alongside both the People’s Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran, through the working paper that contained a clear and express position rejecting the aforementioned draft decision. At the same time, Syria calls upon all States Parties to reject it as well.

With regard to the draft decision on the OPCW Programme and Budget for 2022–2023, we note that this draft raises many concerns for a large number of delegations, due to the presence of issues of interest to many States Parties, in addition to controversial issues related to the financing of teams that lack legitimacy, which should have been taken into account and adopted by consensus. Syria calls upon all Member States to be attentive to these serious concerns and to work towards restoring the spirit of consensus regarding the adoption of the OPCW Programme and Budget for 2022–2023.

In conclusion, Syria calls for international cooperation to confront the illegitimate restrictions imposed by some known States on the transfer to developing States of scientific technology for peaceful purposes, and the imposition of illegitimate unilateral and coercive measures on some other States, in order to prevent them from achieving economic and scientific development for their people and from using chemistry for peaceful purposes, in clear violation of the provisions of the Convention and international law.

I thank you, and I ask that this statement be considered an official document of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties and posted on both the OPCW public website and Catalyst.