



Security Council

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Letter dated 31 August 2020 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the eighty-third monthly report of the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) (see annex). The report covers the period from 24 July to 23 August 2020.

The report covers the activities of OPCW in implementing Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) and the relevant provisions of the OPCW Executive Council decisions in relation to the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. The report provides a summary of the status of the work of OPCW on the issue, with the priority areas for further OPCW activities outlined therein.

The Declaration Assessment Team continues its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues related to the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic, and the fact-finding mission continues to study all available information related to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Investigation and Identification Team continues its investigations into incidents in which the fact-finding mission determined that chemical weapons were used or likely used in the Syrian Arab Republic and will issue further reports in due course.

The OPCW Technical Secretariat is engaging with the Syrian Arab Republic for the implementation of Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2, which I shared with the Security Council and the General Assembly in document [A/74/959-S/2020/724](#).

As I have stated previously, the use of chemical weapons anywhere by anyone and under any circumstances is intolerable, and impunity for their use is equally unacceptable. It is imperative to identify and hold accountable all those who have used chemical weapons. Unity in the Security Council is essential to achieve this urgent obligation.

(Signed) António Guterres



Annex

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English,
French, Russian and Spanish]

I have the honour to transmit to you my report entitled “Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme”, prepared in accordance with the relevant provisions of OPCW Executive Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 and Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#), both dated 27 September 2013, for transmission to the Security Council (see enclosure). My report covers the period from 24 July to 23 August 2020 and also covers the reporting requirements of Executive Council decision EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013.

(Signed) Fernando **Arias**

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English,
French, Russian and Spanish]

**Report by the Director General of the Organisation for the
Prohibition of Chemical Weapons****Progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme**

1. In accordance with subparagraph 2(f) of the decision by the Executive Council (hereinafter “the Council”) at its Thirty-Third Meeting (EC-M-33/DEC.1, dated 27 September 2013), the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) is to report to the Council on a monthly basis regarding the implementation of that decision. In accordance with paragraph 12 of United Nations Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#), the report by the Secretariat is also to be submitted to the Security Council through the Secretary-General.
2. The Council, at its Thirty-Fourth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Detailed Requirements for the Destruction of Syrian Chemical Weapons and Syrian Chemical Weapons Production Facilities” (EC-M-34/DEC.1, dated 15 November 2013). In paragraph 22 of that decision, the Council decided that the Secretariat should report on its implementation “in conjunction with its reporting required by subparagraph 2(f) of Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
3. The Council, at its Forty-Eighth Meeting, adopted a decision entitled “Reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria” (EC-M-48/DEC.1, dated 4 February 2015), noting the Director-General’s intent to include reports of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM), along with information on the Council’s discussion thereof, as part of the monthly reporting pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#). Similarly, the Council, at its Eighty-First Session, adopted a decision entitled “Report by the Director-General Regarding the Declaration and Related Submissions by the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-81/DEC.4, dated 23 March 2016), noting the Director-General’s intent to provide information on the implementation of that decision.
4. The Council, at its Eighty-Third Session, adopted a decision entitled “OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism Reports on Chemical Weapons Use in the Syrian Arab Republic” (EC-83/DEC.5, dated 11 November 2016). In subparagraph 12(a) of that decision, the Council decided that the Director-General shall “regularly inform the Council on the implementation of this decision and incorporate information regarding the implementation of this decision into his monthly reporting to the United Nations Security Council, through the United Nations Secretary-General, regarding EC-M-33/DEC.1”.
5. This, the eighty-third monthly report, is therefore submitted in accordance with the aforementioned Council decisions and includes information relevant to the period from 24 July to 23 August 2020.

Impact of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

6. On 13 March 2020, the Secretariat informed the Syrian Arab Republic through a note verbale that, in view of the recent events related to the COVID-19 outbreak, and in line with measures announced by the Dutch authorities, inter alia, the Director-General had taken the decision to postpone all scheduled deployments and missions of the Secretariat until further notice. This includes missions to take place in the Syrian Arab Republic.

7. The travel restrictions notwithstanding, the Secretariat is continuing its mandated activities related to the Syrian chemical weapons programme and its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in this regard. The Secretariat is monitoring the situation closely and will keep the States Parties duly informed of the next developments.

Progress achieved by the Syrian Arab Republic in meeting the requirements of Executive Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 and EC-M-34/DEC.1

8. Progress by the Syrian Arab Republic is as follows:

(a) As stated in previous reports, the Secretariat has verified the destruction of all 27 chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) declared by the Syrian Arab Republic.

(b) On 18 August 2020, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted to the Council its eighty-first monthly report (EC-95/P/NAT.2, dated 18 August 2020) regarding activities on its territory related to the destruction of its chemical weapons and CWPFs, as required by paragraph 19 of EC-M-34/DEC.1.

Progress in the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons by States Parties hosting destruction activities

9. As stated in previous reports, all of the chemicals declared by the Syrian Arab Republic that were removed from its territory in 2014 have been destroyed.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decisions EC-81/DEC.4 and EC-83/DEC.5

10. The Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) continues its efforts to clarify all outstanding issues regarding the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with paragraph 3 of Council decision EC-81/DEC.4, paragraph 6 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, and paragraph 5 of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2 entitled “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (dated 9 July 2020).

11. As previously reported, the Director-General sent a letter dated 21 April 2020 to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, H.E. Dr. Faisal Mekdad, with a document containing an updated status of outstanding issues and the proposed plan of action for their resolution, as discussed in October 2019 during the latest round of consultations. In the letter, the Director-General requested the Syrian National Authority to submit further information in accordance with this plan at the earliest opportunity. The Director-General and Deputy Minister Mekdad have since exchanged further letters regarding this request.¹ As at the date of this report, the Secretariat was awaiting the requested information, which will allow it to prepare the next round of consultations as soon as conditions permit.

12. In addition to the above, engagement continued at the technical level between the Secretariat and the Syrian National Authority. In this regard, a secure videoconference was held on 20 July 2020, which was followed by a note verbale dated 27 July 2020 from the Syrian Arab Republic. The Secretariat will continue to report on this engagement.

13. In accordance with paragraph 10 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat is continuing to assess conditions for the conduct of inspections at the sites

¹ Letter from Deputy Minister Mekdad to the Director-General dated 16 June 2020 and letter from the Director-General to Deputy Minister Mekdad dated 26 June 2020.

identified by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in its third and fourth reports. The Secretariat will do so while also taking into account the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on OPCW activities.

14. Pursuant to paragraph 11 of Council decision EC-83/DEC.5, the Secretariat is planning to conduct two rounds of inspections of the Barzah and Jamrayah facilities of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) in 2020. The conduct of further inspections of these facilities will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on OPCW activities.

15. With regard to the finding of a Schedule 2.B.04 chemical that was detected during the third round of inspections at the Barzah facilities of the SSRC, exchanges of correspondence between the Secretariat and the Syrian authorities to resolve this issue have continued. The Syrian Arab Republic has yet to provide sufficient technical information or explanations that would enable the Secretariat to close this issue.² The Secretariat will continue its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic in this regard and will inform the Council in due course.

Other activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to the Syrian Arab Republic

16. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) continues to provide support to the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement concluded between the OPCW, UNOPS, and the Syrian Arab Republic. This agreement facilitates the Secretariat's mandated activities in the Syrian Arab Republic pertaining to the full elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and to any subsequent decision or resolution of the relevant organs of the OPCW or the United Nations, as well as any bilateral agreements concluded between the OPCW and the Syrian Arab Republic. The current extension of the Tripartite Agreement is valid through 30 September 2020. A meeting of the OPCW, UNOPS, and the Syrian Arab Republic is planned to take place remotely on 26 and 27 August 2020 to discuss the extension of the Tripartite Agreement.

17. As at the cut-off date of this report, one OPCW staff member was deployed as part of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Activities carried out with respect to the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria

18. Guided by Council decisions EC-M-48/DEC.1 and EC-M-50/DEC.1 (dated 4 February 2015 and 23 November 2015, respectively), as well as by United Nations Security Council resolution [2209 \(2015\)](#), the FFM continues to study all available information relating to allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

19. Accordingly, the FFM is continuing its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic and other States Parties with regard to a variety of incidents, as reported by the Secretariat in a presentation provided to States Parties on 2 July 2020. Additionally, the FFM is continuing to analyse information collected from its most recent deployments. The conduct of further FFM deployments will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on OPCW activities. The FFM will report to the Council on the results of its work in due course.

² Note verbale dated 7 November 2019 sent by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Secretariat; note verbale dated 20 February 2020 sent by the Secretariat to the Syrian Arab Republic; note verbale dated 12 March 2020 sent by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Secretariat; note verbale dated 21 April 2020 sent by the Secretariat to the Syrian Arab Republic; note verbale dated 12 May 2020 sent by the Syrian Arab Republic to the Secretariat; and note verbale dated 19 June 2020 sent by the Secretariat to the Syrian Arab Republic.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 of the Conference of the States Parties at its Fourth Special Session related to the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic

20. Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018), adopted by the Conference of the States Parties (hereinafter “the Conference”) at its Fourth Special Session, addresses, inter alia, the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

21. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat established the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic by identifying and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those chemical weapons in those instances in which the FFM determines or has determined that use or likely use occurred, and cases for which the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism did not issue a report.

22. Following its first report issued on 8 April 2020,³ the IIT is continuing its investigations and will issue further reports in due course.

Activities carried out by the Technical Secretariat with respect to Executive Council decision EC-94/DEC.2

23. Pursuant to paragraph 5 of decision EC-94/DEC.2, and as previously reported, the Director-General sent a letter to Deputy Minister Mekdad on 20 July 2020 to outline the obligations of the Syrian Arab Republic under the decision, and to indicate the readiness of the Secretariat to assist the Syrian Arab Republic in the fulfilment of these obligations within the required period of 90 days. As at the date of this report, the Secretariat has not received a reply from the Syrian Arab Republic.

24. Pursuant to paragraph 6 of EC-94/DEC.2, the Director-General will report to the Council and all States Parties, within 100 days of this decision, on whether the Syrian Arab Republic has completed all of the measures contained in paragraph 5 of the decision.

25. With regard to the inspections mandated by paragraph 8 of the decision, the Director-General in his letter informed Deputy Minister Mekdad that the Secretariat is monitoring the current situation and will inform the Syrian Arab Republic when it is prepared to deploy for this purpose. The conduct of these inspections will be subject to the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on OPCW activities.

26. In accordance with paragraph 12 of EC-94/DEC.2, the Secretariat will transmit reports on the implementation of this decision to the United Nations Security Council and United Nations General Assembly through the United Nations Secretary-General.

Supplementary resources

27. The Trust Fund for Syria Missions was established in November 2015 to support the FFM and other remaining activities, which presently include the work of the DAT and IIT, as well as the biannual inspections of the SSRC and the two sites identified in paragraph 8 of EC-94/DEC.2. As at the cut-off date of this report, total contributions to this fund stood at EUR 32.9 million. Contribution agreements had been concluded with Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic

³ “First Report by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team Pursuant to Paragraph 10 of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, ‘Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use’, Ltamenah (Syrian Arab Republic) 24, 25, and 30 March 2017” (S/1867/2020, dated 8 April 2020).

of Korea, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, and the European Union.

Conclusion

28. The future activities of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic will focus on the work of the FFM; the implementation of Council decisions EC-83/DEC.5 and EC-81/DEC.4, including declaration-related issues; inspections at the Barzah and Jamrayah sites of the SSRC; the implementation of Conference decision C-SS-4/DEC.3; and the implementation of Council decision EC-94/DEC.2.
