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REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL**PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION C-SS-4/DEC.3 ON
ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE**

1. The Conference of the States Parties (the Conference), at its Fourth Special Session, adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” (C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018). In paragraph 24 of the decision, the Conference decided that “the Director-General shall provide a copy of this decision and a report on its initial implementation to all States Parties and to the United Nations Secretary-General within 30 days of this decision and thereafter provide a report on progress to each regular session of the Council”, in reference to the Executive Council (the Council).
2. In furtherance of paragraph 7 of the decision, the Technical Secretariat (the Secretariat) continued its engagement with the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify all gaps, discrepancies, and inconsistencies noted in its initial declaration and subsequent submissions. This was the situation up until 8 December 2024 when, before the collapse of his regime, the former President’s Prime Minister transferred power to new authorities.
3. As a result, the Organisation has taken the following actions in response to the new political situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, with a view to obtaining clarifications on the full extent and scope of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and ensuring that the Syrian Arab Republic fulfils its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention (the Convention) now and into the future:
 - (a) The Secretariat, through Note Verbale No. NV/ODG-636/24 (dated 9 December 2024), reminded the Syrian Arab Republic of its continued obligations under the Convention and requested that it fulfil these obligations.
 - (b) An extraordinary meeting of the Council, the Sixty-Sixth Meeting, was convened on 12 December 2024 upon the Director-General’s request, in accordance with Rule 12(b) of the Rules of Procedure of the Council, to address the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic in relation to the Syrian chemical weapons programme.
 - (c) On 26 December 2024, the Director-General held telephone consultations with H.E. Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani, new caretaker Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, which were aimed at facilitating a deployment of OPCW experts to the Syrian Arab Republic.



- (d) In a note verbale to the Secretariat (Ref. SQH.3.25.1, dated 7 January 2025), the Permanent Representation of Qatar to the OPCW informed the Secretariat and all OPCW States Parties that Qatar had agreed to represent the interests of the Syrian Arab Republic before the OPCW until further notice.
 - (e) The Director-General's proposal to deploy a team of experts from the Secretariat to the Syrian Arab Republic to engage with Syrian experts on the Syrian chemical weapons dossier was conveyed through a letter from the Director-General dated 14 January 2025, addressed to the caretaker Foreign Minister of the Syrian Arab Republic.
 - (f) Note Verbale No. NV/ODG-651/24 (dated 22 January 2025) addressed to the Permanent Representation of Qatar to the OPCW, in its capacity to act on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic, recalled both the Director-General's above deployment proposal and the acceptance of the Director-General of the informal offer made by the Syrian caretaker Foreign Minister to visit Damascus; it also contained the "OPCW Secretariat's 9-point Action Plan for Syria".
 - (g) The "OPCW Secretariat's 9-point Action Plan for Syria", referenced above, provided an initial deployment plan aimed at drawing up a detailed inventory of what remains to be declared, destroyed, and subsequently verified as such, as well as a long-term compliance plan to ensure that the Syrian Arab Republic is equipped to address proliferation and re-emergence risks, and to assist the relevant Syrian actors in capacity-building activities.
 - (h) Note Verbale No. NV/ODG 652/25 (dated 22 January 2025) addressed to the Permanent Representation of Qatar to the OPCW, in its capacity to act on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic, re-emphasised the importance of securing the chemical weapons-related locations and materials therein, and access to individuals with knowledge, with the aim of ensuring the implementation of the Secretariat's mandate under the Convention and assisting the new Syrian caretaker authorities in managing the risks and hazards posed by chemical weapons.
4. At the invitation of the Syrian caretaker Foreign Minister, the Director-General, accompanied by a delegation from the OPCW, visited Damascus for the first time on 8 February 2025, to meet with the Syrian Arab Republic's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and caretaker Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani. The interim President and the caretaker Foreign Affairs Minister each expressed their intention to cooperate with the OPCW to address all outstanding issues relating to the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons dossier.
5. During the two separate meetings, the new Syrian authorities declared their intention to:
- (a) appoint a National Authority, which will include a Point of Contact and relevant experts and will cooperate with the Secretariat to ensure that all requirements and obligations are being met, in addition to facilitating capacity-building assistance for the implementation of the Convention;
 - (b) provide full support and unfettered access for the investigations conducted by the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT);
 - (c) facilitate the presence of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic;

- (d) cooperate to implement the “OPCW Secretariat’s 9-point Action Plan for Syria” presented in Note Verbale No. NV/ODG-651/24; and
 - (e) participate in ensuring that the Syrian Arab Republic becomes, in time, an example of good practices and policies in the implementation of the Convention and the fight against impunity for perpetrators of chemical weapons use.
6. On 21 February 2025, the Permanent Representation of Qatar to the OPCW, in its capacity to act on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic, delivered to the Secretariat a letter by the Syrian caretaker Foreign Affairs Minister, dated that same day and addressed to the Secretariat, stating that the new Syrian caretaker authorities had appointed a Point of Contact. Communication was established with the Point of Contact and arrangements were made to hold the first in-person discussions in The Hague the following week. Through a letter to all Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of Member States of the Council, also dated that same day, the Director-General informed the Council of, inter alia, this latest development.
7. On 26 February 2025, the Secretariat issued a Note on “The Situation in the Syrian Arab Republic in Relation to the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme and the Way Forward” (S/2376/2025, dated 26 February 2025), which included, inter alia, details on the elements to be included in drawing up an inventory, activities that the Secretariat will engage in to draw up the inventory, activities and elements necessary to prepare a full and complete declaration and destruction plan, as well as the anticipated resources the OPCW will need to set up the requisite in-country components of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. As detailed in the Note, the Secretariat will depend on significant financial and in-kind support from States Parties and the international community at large for its future activities in the Syrian Arab Republic.
8. Prior to the change of government in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) raised and reported a total of 26 outstanding issues. Of these, seven issues had been resolved while 19 remained unresolved. The substance of the 19 outstanding issues remained a serious concern to the Secretariat, as it involved large quantities of potentially undeclared or unverified chemical warfare agents and chemical munitions. In addition, the Syrian Arab Republic had yet to complete all of the measures specified in paragraph 5 of the Council decision adopted on 9 July 2020 (EC-94/DEC.2).
9. Since its last report, the DAT has received additional information regarding potentially undeclared elements of the Syrian Arab Republic’s chemical weapons programme. Moreover, the Secretariat has also gathered information from open and other sources related to locations where declarable chemical weapons-related activities may have been conducted. The Director-General’s latest “Report of the Work of the Declaration Assessment Team” was issued in advance of the 108th Session of the Council (EC-108/DG.13, dated 28 February 2025).
10. The above issues, inter alia, were addressed during the Director-General’s visit to the Syrian Arab Republic on 8 February 2025. The Director-General shared and discussed with the new Syrian authorities a package of documents, including the “OPCW Secretariat’s 9-point Action Plan for Syria”, to help Syrian authorities in these transitional steps towards establishing the National Authority and reaching the point of readiness to work together at a technical level.

11. The Secretariat has been working with the Point of Contact of the Syrian Arab Republic on the establishment of the OPCW Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, including the necessary administrative, logistical and, in particular, security arrangements. As mentioned above, detailed upcoming activities were outlined in the Note on “The Situation in the Syrian Arab Republic in Relation to the Chemical Weapons Programme and the Way Forward” (S/2376/2025). The Note includes a description of deployments of a team consisting of a reinforced DAT and other relevant experts, with the aim of determining the full extent of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, including an inventory of all chemical weapons, chemical weapons sites, equipment, munitions, and other components of the programme.
12. Following the above activities, the status of the Syrian initial declaration, together with all outstanding issues, will be reassessed by the Secretariat to determine whether and when the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic can be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention, Council decisions EC-M-33/DEC.1 (dated 27 September 2013) and EC-94/DEC.2, and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013).
13. Consistent with paragraph 8 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, and following current practice, the Secretariat continues to update States Parties on the operations of the FFM through, inter alia, the monthly progress report entitled “Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme”, and through reports detailing the FFM’s activities and findings regarding specific incidents of alleged use of chemicals as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic.
14. The FFM is continuing its work and will issue further reports in due course. It is also engaging with knowledge and skills transfer to relevant units of the Secretariat.
15. Pursuant to paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat established the 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 has not issued a report.
16. The IIT is continuing its investigations and will issue further reports in due course. The IIT has been closely monitoring the ongoing developments in the Syrian Arab Republic, and stands ready to deploy there as, for the first time since the establishment of the IIT, a member of the team was granted access to the Syrian Arab Republic as part of the OPCW delegation that accompanied the Director-General during his visit to Damascus on 8 February 2025.
17. Pursuant to paragraph 12 of the Conference’s decision, the IIT also continues to preserve and review information and evidence collected during its investigations for the purposes of transferring it to the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (IIIM). In this process, paramount importance is accorded to the applicable rules and procedures of the OPCW governing the protection, control, and release of confidential information and evidence, including measures to protect the witnesses’

identifying information in line with their informed consent. All transfers of information to the IIIM are being implemented in a manner consistent with the OPCW's rules and policies on confidentiality.

18. In addition, the IIT engages in transfer of knowledge and skills to relevant units of the Secretariat, while developing strategies to document all technical and scientific findings and processes underpinning its investigations. These include investigative methodologies for the identification of perpetrators; selection and recruitment of, and engagement with, independent experts; combined use of different scientific and technical domains to support the identification of perpetrators; and techniques for the holistic assessment of different sources of information, evidence, and technical expertise.
19. The voluntary funding requirements for the IIT for 2024–2025, as specified in the Programme and Budget of the OPCW for 2024–2025 (C-28/DEC.9, dated 29 November 2023), have been set at EUR 1,320,877 for 2024 and EUR 1,322,831 for 2025. Contributions and pledges have been received from Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the European Union.
20. The Secretariat will continue to keep States Parties informed of activities and progress with regard to the Syrian chemical weapons programme through existing reporting modalities, as mandated, and through briefings, as deemed appropriate.
21. In accordance with paragraph 18 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat continues to develop options for further assistance to States Parties to help prevent the chemical weapons threat posed by non-State actors, and to aid States Parties' contingency planning in the event of a chemical weapons attack. Taking into consideration, inter alia, the decision of the Council entitled "Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors" (EC-86/DEC.9, dated 13 October 2017), the Secretariat has continued to build on existing activities related to preparedness, prevention, and response.
22. Pursuant to paragraph 20 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Director-General, if requested by a State Party investigating possible chemical weapons use on its territory, can provide technical expertise to identify those who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons. Accordingly, the Secretariat continues to work to ensure that it has the necessary capabilities to respond to such State Party requests, including through assessing relevant forensic tools and capabilities that may be useful in fulfilling them.
23. As reported previously, the Secretariat is implementing a series of capacity-building measures to expand the existing skills of relevant Secretariat staff. These measures include, inter alia:
 - (a) training to further build investigative capabilities in areas such as crime scene management, witness interviews, evidence collection, and forensics;
 - (b) the revision of job descriptions to recruit applicants with the skills and knowledge to match the evolving needs of the Secretariat;

- (c) through internal and external consultations, the assessment of potential additional investigative tools and capabilities that could be useful for the Secretariat if called upon to assist a State Party in identifying perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise, of chemical weapons use on its territory; and
 - (d) support for the procurement of software and equipment through the creation of a test and evaluation programme.
- 24. The Secretariat will continue to expand these activities in order to scale up knowledge and expertise within the Secretariat. The capabilities provided by the OPCW Centre for Chemistry and Technology continue to further reinforce these efforts, including in the adaptation and transition of the Inspectorate Division to facilitate the readiness and flexibility of staff resources to support all types of missions and training. The Secretariat has developed specific projects, which are listed in the Note entitled “Anticipated New Programmes and Activities at the Centre for Chemistry and Technology” (S/2102/2022, dated 30 September 2022) and expanded upon in the Note entitled “Update on Programmes and Activities at the Centre for Chemistry and Technology” (S/2304/2024, dated 8 July 2024). States Parties are invited to consider providing voluntary contributions to support these priority projects.
- 25. In furtherance of paragraph 23 of C-SS-4/DEC.3, the Secretariat will continue to prioritise the realisation of the universality of the Convention, on the understanding that this goal is essential to achieving its object and purpose, to enhancing the security of States Parties, and to international peace and security. The Director-General continues to call upon all States Parties to support the Secretariat’s efforts in this regard.
- 26. At its Twenty-Eighth Session, the Conference adopted a decision entitled “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use and the Threat of Future Use” (C-28/DEC.12, dated 30 November 2023). The Secretariat has been integrating reporting requirements on the elements in the decision concerning the Syrian chemical weapons dossier into its existing reporting.

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