



Security Council briefing on the situation in the Middle East: Syria (Chemical Weapons), 6 March 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Her Excellency Ambassador Vanessa Frazier
Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

Thank you President and I thank the High Representative Nakamitsu, for her insightful briefing once again.

Last month, the OPCW Director General and the Chief of the IIT briefed us on the third report of the Investigation and Identification Team. This report concludes, in disturbing detail, that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Forces were the perpetrators of the chemical weapons attack in Douma that killed 43 people and injured dozens more.

This represents the 9th occasion so far that the OPCW and joint UN-OPCW investigations have concluded that Syria has used chemical weapons against its own people. Such acts are a violation of international law and are completely unacceptable.

President,

Malta has full confidence that the report was drafted adhering to best practices of international fact-finding bodies and commissions of investigation, as well as to applicable OPCW procedures.

We fully support the independent, unbiased, and expert work of the OPCW and its Technical Secretariat, which play a vital role as the in the global



prohibition of chemical weapons and in ensuring the complete elimination of all chemical weapons in Syria. Any unfounded claims aimed at undermining its credibility or questioning its findings must not go unchallenged.

President,

Malta regrets that the Syrian authorities failed to grant access to the sites of the Douma incident, despite Syria's obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and resolution 2118. This follows an unfortunate pattern of behaviour by Syria on this file. Resolution 2118 is clear in its decision that Syria shall fully cooperate with the UN and the OPCW.

It is regrettable that pending declarations and other documents requested by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) since 2019 have not yet been provided by the Syrian Arab Republic, and that the Declaration submitted is still considered inaccurate and incomplete. Malta looks forward to the publication of the DAT report in the coming weeks, following The Technical Secretariat's initiative to send a reduced DAT team to Syria to conduct limited in-country activities.

Malta hopes for progress between focal points so that the proposed meeting between the Director General and Foreign Minister Mekdad can finally take place. We strongly encourage the renewed extension of the Tripartite Agreement between the OPCW, UNOPS and Syria, which is due to expire on 30 June this year.



President,

Malta underlines our full support for the universalisation of the global norm on the prohibition of chemical weapons, underpinned by the Chemical Weapons Convention. There can be no justification for the use of these abhorrent weapons.

In 2013, the Council unanimously decided that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria must be held accountable. The use of chemical weapons must not go unpunished.

The only way to assure the world that Syria's chemical weapons programme has been completely and verifiably eliminated is through Syria's meaningful cooperation with OPCW and to provide the necessary assurances on its chemical weapons programme in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

This Council must uphold its own decisions, uphold the norm against chemical weapons, and hold Syria to its obligations under Resolution 2118 and the CWC.

I thank you.