



OPCW

Executive Council

Thirty-Fourth Meeting
5 and 15 November 2013

EC-M-34/DG.16
15 November 2013
Original: ENGLISH

**STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AT ITS THIRTY-FOURTH MEETING
ON 15 NOVEMBER 2013**

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome you all to the Thirty-Fourth Meeting of the Executive Council.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Ms Sigrid Kaag, the Special Coordinator of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria (JMIS), who is attending this meeting at my invitation. Her presence is important, as the Joint Mission has a challenging task ahead of it.

Seven weeks ago, the Executive Council adopted its historic decision on the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons, establishing an ambitious and challenging programme. As reported to you in my statement at the meeting of the Council on 5 November, the crucial initial tasks assigned to the team in Damascus to verify Syria's disclosure and functional destruction of the capacity to produce chemical weapons were accomplished within the target dates.

Since that time, the Joint Mission has continued the verification of the destruction of Syria's Category 3 weapons. Syria has reported the destruction of 774 such weapons, of which 462 have already been verified. This work will continue in the coming weeks.

The decision of the Executive Council of 27 September requires a decision today setting out the intermediate destruction milestones to complete the elimination of all chemical weapons material and equipment in the first half of 2014. The draft decision that the Council has before it creates benchmarks for the next and all important phases of our work.

Following the submission of its initial declaration, in which Syria suggested the removal of chemical weapons to a location outside its territory for the purpose of destruction, I expressed my support for this option as the most feasible course of action to accomplish the objectives set by the Executive Council and the United Nations Security Council in its resolution 2118 (2013). This includes all of Syria's Category 1 and Category 2 chemical weapons.

I also informed the Council that the operational planning group, with the participation of a delegation from Syria, will undertake the task of translating this proposal into a workable plan.



The report of the Group, which met from 6 to 9 November, was made available to delegations on 12 November. A presentation was also made last Wednesday during the weekly briefing for delegations. The Group, comprising 30 experts with various backgrounds, developed an outline of a “Plan for the Removal of Chemical Weapons in Syria for Destruction Outside its Territory”.

The operational planning group has presented a scenario which can lead to the rapid, sequenced packaging and transport of chemical agents from Syria for destruction. Conditions of safety and security are absolute prerequisites for the success of such a plan. Due regard must also be paid to the protection of people and the environment at every stage of the process of transportation and destruction. International norms and standards applicable to the transportation of hazardous material will have to be fully upheld.

The removal plan is the outcome of intensive discussions. It is a valuable reference document and offers a way forward in this complex endeavour.

Syrian personnel will be offered training in the packaging and handling of dangerous goods and in the necessary certification procedures prior to shipments.

I have already requested the Special Coordinator of the Joint Mission to undertake efforts to seek the necessary assistance and support of the international community to ensure the success of the plan to transport and destroy Syrian chemical weapons. This includes assistance identified by Syria, which is annexed to the report of the operational planning group.

The successful implementation of the various target dates in the draft decision that is before you will require significant material and financial resources. I urge States Parties to consider contributing generously towards the success of this unprecedented undertaking.

There are other factors that we must remain mindful of. First and foremost, safety and security will continue to be accorded highest priority throughout the entire operation.

The Technical Secretariat has initiated work on a verification plan to provide assurances regarding the integrity of the shipments against the declaration.

In conclusion, I would like once again to express my sincere appreciation to all those States that have already provided voluntary contributions and pledges, and extended in-kind assistance for the mission in Syria. Total contributions to the trust fund as at 14 November 2013 were EUR 10.4 million from Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. In addition, the Czech Republic, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea have made commitments to the trust fund. I also want to thank Cyprus and Lebanon for the assistance and support they have provided to the Joint Mission, as well as Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the European External Action Service for their in-kind contributions.

Thank you.