

Security Council must not be distracted by tactics designed to protect the Syrian regime from accountability

Thank you, Mr. President.

I'd like to thank the High Representative for her very clear briefing once again and all the efforts of the UN team.

Month after month, we hear the same story.

Syria is refusing to make any progress on its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and under Resolution 2118.

This is a crystal clear reminder of Assad's disregard of international norms and of the threat his regime poses. This is not a dormant issue. This is an active refusal to implement this Council's resolutions.

We've heard countless excuses for Syria's noncompliance. None stand up to scrutiny. We must all be clear that given Syria's behaviour and the many inconsistencies in its declarations to the OPCW, there is a real and ongoing risk from its chemical weapons programme to international peace and security.

We also all know that Syria's failings are only part of the story. The actions of Russia in continuing to protect the Assad regime in its use and stockpile of chemical weapons show that they have no genuine interest in implementing the Chemical Weapons Convention or protecting international security.

We've just sat through another assault on the integrity of the OPCW. But this is not just about disinformation and distraction in the Security Council. Russia has also systematically blocked or attempted to block mechanisms related to the investigation of chemical weapons use in Syria over many years.

- They blocked the Joint Investigative Mechanism from operating 2017 and 2018.
- They tried to block the creation of the IIT in 2018.
- They tried to block the OPCW budget that funded the IIT.
- And in 2018, they blocked the adoption of the outcome document at the

OPCW RevCon over references to the Joint Investigative Mechanism and the IIT.

- They tried to block the OPCW budget again in 2019.
- They voted against an Executive Council decision on Syria in 2020.
- They tried to block the OPCW budget again in 2020.
- They voted against the Conference of States Parties decision on Syria in 2021.
- They tried to block the OPCW annual report that mentioned the IIT in 2021.

This Council must not be distracted by tactics designed to undermine the international system and to protect the Syrian regime from accountability for their crimes. We must not accept any erosion of the rules. We have all agreed. We must continue to work together to push Syria to meet its obligations in full.

Thank you.