

Syria and Russia have long used disinformation to deflect attention from appalling war crimes committed by the Assad regime

Thank you President, and thank you to the High Representative.

There may be one thing that I can agree with my Russian colleague on; that sadly, we heard today no significant new developments in the briefing from the UN. We again heard instead a long list of areas where the Syrian regime continues to refuse to provide adequate information to the OPCW or to complete basic actions in accordance with its international obligations.

But this does not mean we should simply turn a blind eye and give the Syrian regime a free pass.

Syria's refusal to cooperate with the OPCW, to address the outstanding issues with its Chemical Weapons Convention declaration, is inexcusable.

As we have said many times, the 20 outstanding issues are not academic – they include the whereabouts of several hundred tonnes of chemical warfare agents, whose destruction still cannot be verified.

And the history is not in doubt, with at least 8 chemical weapon attacks already independently attributed to the Assad regime against its own people.

Syria and Russia have long used deceit and disinformation in an attempt to deflect attention from appalling war crimes committed by the Assad regime.

Despite all this two things are clear. First, Syria's non-compliance with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention poses a genuine and ongoing threat to international peace and security.

And second, there must be accountability for the Assad regime's historic use of chemical weapons.

This Council must continue to address these issues despite Syrian and Russian efforts to obstruct progress.

We cannot send the signal that we tolerate the use of Chemical weapons, and we cannot allow impunity.

Thank you.