

Urging Syria's cooperation with the UN and OPCW

- UK underlines that unresolved issues in Syria's declaration of its chemical weapons programme are "of a serious and substantive nature"
- UK urges ongoing coordination between the UN and OPCW to collectively resolve the issue of Syria's chemical weapons programme

Transcript of statement by Ambassador Barbara Woodward at the Security Council briefing on Syria chemical weapons, 3 February 2021

We extend our thanks to High Representative Nakamitsu for her briefing today and I welcome the contributions from other members of the Council. As recognised by the Security Council in resolution 2118, ongoing coordination between the UN and the OPCW is vital if we are to collectively resolve this issue.

Despite decisions by this Council and that of the OPCW Executive Council of 27 September 2013, Syria's declaration of its chemical weapons programme can still not be considered accurate and complete. The unresolved issues are of a serious and substantive nature.

As the OPCW DG noted in his 25 January report, one of the 19 outstanding issues pertains to a chemical weapons production facility declared by the Syrian National Authority as never having been used for the production of chemical weapons. The review of all the information and other materials gathered by the Declaration Assessment Team since 2014, including samples, indicates that production and/or weaponisation of chemical warfare nerve agents did take place there.

The fact that four of the unresolved issues have been closed, shows that, contrary to the assertions of some that they are artificial, they can be resolved if Syria chooses to engage genuinely and constructively. Syria needs to provide complete access to documents and witnesses. The cat and mouse game of non-credible explanations and excuses cannot continue. The Technical Secretariat has repeatedly made clear that it stands ready to assist Syria in this regard. I note the DAT's intention to deploy for consultations again early this month. We expect Syria to provide a full response to all the queries during those meetings.

The ongoing threat posed to international peace and security by these unresolved issues is not hypothetical, especially to the thousands of Syrians who have suffered the horrifying effects on the body of nerve agents and chlorine since 2014.