



**Remarks by Mr. Thomas Markram, Director and Deputy to the
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, to the Security
Council on the agenda item “The Situation in the Middle East”**

(Delivered on behalf of Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for
Disarmament Affairs Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu)



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Mr. President, distinguished Members of the Security Council,

1. Thank you for the opportunity to brief you on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2118 (2013) on the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu, is away on official travel. I am honoured to be able to address the Council in her stead.

2. Before providing you with the latest information on the status of the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), I would first like to recall the tragic anniversary today of the use of chemical weapons – specifically the nerve agent sarin – in Khan Shaykhun. The OPCW Director-General referred to this attack as “an atrocity.” The Secretary-General, in speaking of the same, stated that “there can be no impunity for such abhorrent acts.” Today seems an especially fitting date to reiterate and underscore those views, as well as to remember the victims of this attack.

Mr. President,

3. As per established practice, I met with representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic in advance of these consultations. The Office for Disarmament Affairs has also continued its regular contact with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

4. In view of the fact that, just over two weeks ago, the Director-General briefed you on developments related to the OPCW’s work on the elimination of Syria’s chemical weapons programme, my own intervention today will be brief.

5. Efforts have continued toward the destruction of the two remaining chemical weapons production facilities, by the Syrian Arab Republic. Destruction of these facilities, which will be verified by the OPCW, is expected to be completed within two to three months from the start of destruction. The long-awaited and verified destruction of these two facilities is an essential step towards the full implementation of resolution 2118 (2013).

6. On the outstanding issues related to Syria's declaration, discussions between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic are continuing. However, these discussions have not permitted the resolution of any of those remaining issues. The OPCW Technical Secretariat continues to be unable to confirm the completeness and accuracy of Syria's declaration. The Secretary-General has repeatedly urged cooperation by the Government of Syria, with the OPCW. Resolving these outstanding issues will permit shared confidence in Syria's declaration, within the international community.

Mr. President,

7. The OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) is continuing its work. An FFM team is currently in Damascus, looking into allegations of the use of chemical weapons that were brought to the attention of the Director-General by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. I understand that the next report of the FFM will be submitted when it considers that it has sufficient information and is in a position to draw a conclusion.

8. However, and as we are all aware, conclusions of the Fact-Finding Mission do not entail attribution of responsibility in those cases where the use of chemical weapons is determined. The OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) was created for this purpose, but regrettably, its mandate has not been renewed. While allegations of the use of chemical weapons have not stopped, consideration of a mechanism for accountability has apparently slowed, if not come to a standstill.

Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Council,

9. The persistent allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria underscore the need to identify solutions and reach agreement on an appropriate accountability mechanism. The Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs have repeatedly underlined the need to avoid impunity and to ensure that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons are identified and held responsible. Let me take the opportunity to reiterate that conviction once again. Unity in the Security Council – unity of the kind that gave rise to resolution 2118 (2013), to the OPCW-UN

Joint Mission and to the JIM itself – provides the best foundation for success. The Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to assist.

10. I thank you for your attention.