



OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria



Statement from OPCW-UN Joint Mission

Latakia, Syrian Arab Republic, 28 December 2013

STATEMENT FROM THE JOINT MISSION OF THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROGRAMME OF THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

The Joint Mission of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations for the Elimination of Chemical Weapons Programme of the Syrian Arab Republic [OPCW-UN Joint Mission] continues to verify the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic while advancing preparations and activities related to the removal of precursor, binary and end-state chemical weapon material from the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Since the Syrian Arab Republic disclosed its chemical weapons programme three months ago, important progress has been made. The Syrian Arab Republic has commenced the destruction of equipment and special features of declared structures at chemical weapons production facilities. The OPCW-UN Joint Mission has also confirmed that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic had completed the destruction of all unfilled chemical munitions well ahead of the timeline set by the OPCW Executive Council.

Recognizing the extraordinary character of the situation, the United Nations Security Council and OPCW Executive Council established ambitious benchmarks and timelines for the removal and elimination of Syrian chemical weapons programme by the end of June 2014. The first intermediate milestone established under the Executive Council decision (EC-M-34/DEC.1) relates to the 31 December 2013 date for the removal of the most critical chemical weapons material from the country for destruction. The OPCW-UN Joint Mission's efforts have focused on mobilizing action to allow the Syrian Arab Republic to meet these timelines.

Preparations continue in readiness for the transport of most of the critical chemical material from the Syrian Arab Republic for outside destruction. However, at this stage, transportation of the most critical chemical material before 31 December is unlikely.

A number of external factors have impacted upon timelines, not least the continuing volatility in overall security conditions, which have constrained planned movements. The Syrian Arab Republic has also indicated its specific requirements, which it deems critical to the package and transport of chemical weapons material. A wide-scale procurement effort by individual Member States has been facilitated by the OPCW-UN Joint Mission to source, collect and deliver various

packaging and transport materials requested by the Syrian Arab Republic. Logistical challenges coupled with inclement weather have contributed to this delay.

Preparations are well advanced in regards to the supply of materials and transport equipment, as well as the provision for the maritime transport and destruction capabilities, in order to commence removal and transport of most the critical chemical material from Syrian territory as soon as possible.

A number of Member States have contributed positively to the Syrian Arab Republic's request for assistance. It remains the ultimate responsibility of the Syrian Arab Republic to ensure the safe packaging, transport, and removal of chemical weapons material and to facilitate the procedures for the expeditious and verifiable destruction of its remaining chemical weapons.

The OPCW-UN Joint Mission welcomes the important milestones which have been achieved towards the elimination of the Syrian Arab Republic's chemical weapons programme. The OPCW-UN Joint Mission further notes the importance of maintaining positive momentum. The Syrian Arab Republic needs to intensify its efforts to ensure that its international obligations and commitment are met, including under the Chemical Weapons Convention and in fulfilment of UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and the relevant decisions of the OPCW Executive Council.

The OPCW Executive Council will meet on 8 January. The OPCW-UN Special Coordinator Sigrid Kaag will report to the United Nations Security Council on the same day.

In spite of the volatile situation in Syria and the significant challenges ahead, the OPCW-UN Special Coordinator calls upon all parties to ensure the timely removal and continued destruction of Syrian declared chemical weapon programme.

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The OPCW-UN Joint Mission, established by the United Nations Secretary-General, is supporting, monitoring and verifying the transportation and destruction of the Syrian Arab Republic's declared Chemical Weapons programme.