



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations**

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Statement

By

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Counsellor

Syria (Chemical Weapons)

United Nations Security Council

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Thank you, Mr. President and I also thank High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Ms. Nakamitsu, for her briefing.

The weaponizing of toxic chemicals remains one of the great threats to international peace and security. The use of chemical weapons anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstances constitutes a reprehensible violation of international law and necessitates condemnation by the international community. Chemical weapons do not discriminate between combatants and civilians and their effects are horrifying. Perpetrators must not be allowed to operate with impunity. They must be held accountable.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) remains a critical component in our quest to ensure that applied science and technology is only utilized for the peace, progress and prosperity of all humanity. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines therefore reaffirms our support for the mandate of the OPCW. We further support all efforts aimed at strengthening the Organization's capacity to make certain that the quality of its work remains of the highest standard. It must always be characterized by impartiality, independence and non-politicization and be capable of withstanding rigorous scrutiny. Anything less serves to erode trust in the Organization and thereby precludes it from being a well-functioning and effective multilateral body.

We continue to stress the importance of resolving all the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies contained in the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic. We recognize the continued engagement between the OPCW Technical Secretariat and Syria in this regard, despite the impediments created by the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to encourage dialogue and constructive engagement between the parties to make tangible progress on this particularly important matter.

As we continue our deliberations on this file, the collective goal of achieving a world free of chemical weapons ought to remain at the forefront. As such, the Security Council and the OPCW Technical Secretariat ought not to overlook the notifications by the Syrian government concerning the preparations by armed groups to use and/or fabricate incidents of the use of chemical weapons. This matter requires urgent attention, and we have an obligation to make an objective assessment.

Undoubtedly, there are many diverging views on this file. However, we must seek to foster and preserve cooperation to ensure the full implementation of Resolution 2118 and the Chemical Weapons Convention, thereby safeguarding the norm against chemical warfare. In this context, we ought to consider the perspectives of the Syrian government, in respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Further, OPCW Member States should prioritize the pursuit of consensus-based decisions to thwart polarization and divisiveness.

In closing, we commend the OPCW for ensuring that the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties (CSP-25) continues, notwithstanding the global pandemic. We look forward to a productive part two, which is scheduled to begin on 20 April.

I thank you.