



Security Council

Sixty-eighth year

*Provisional***7038**th meeting

Friday, 27 September 2013, 8 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. Quinlan (Australia)

Members:

Argentina	Mr. Timerman
Azerbaijan	Mr. Mammadyarov
China	Mr. Wang Yi
France	Mr. Fabius
Guatemala	Mr. Carrera
Luxembourg	Mr. Asselborn
Morocco	Mr. El Othmani
Pakistan	Mr. Aziz
Republic of Korea	Mr. Yun Byung-se
Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
Togo	Mr. Menan
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hague
United States of America	Mr. Kerry

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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13-48852 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 8.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President: I warmly welcome the Secretary-General, the Deputy Prime Minister of Luxembourg, ministers of members of the Security Council and other representatives present in the Security Council Chamber tonight.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on the agenda. Members have before them document S/2013/575, which contains the text of a draft resolution prepared in the course of the Council's prior consultations. I note that this document contains an Annex I, which is the text of a decision taken by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons on 27 September, entitled "Decision on destruction of syrian chemical weapons."

It is my understanding that the Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I should like to thank all Council members for sponsoring the draft resolution, which is now a presidential text. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, China, France, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Morocco, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Togo, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2118 (2013).

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: Today's historic resolution is the first hopeful news on Syria in a long time. For many months, I have said that the confirmed use of chemical weapons in Syria would require a firm, united response. Tonight, the international community has delivered. I commend the members of the Council. I am especially grateful for the efforts of Russian Federation Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and United States Secretary of State John Kerry.

As the Mission sent to investigate the allegations confirmed, chemical weapons were used in Syria. The perpetrators of that crime must be brought to justice. This week, the mission under Professor Åke Sellström returned to Syria to complete its investigations, including of the incident at Khan al-Asal. I expect that the team will complete its fact-finding activities by next week. I will promptly transmit its final report to the Security Council and all Member States. At the same time, the international community has a responsibility to ensure that these weapons of mass destruction never re-emerge of as an instrument of war or terror.

As the United Nations is a depository of the Chemical Weapons Convention, I welcome Syria's accession and its declaration to implement it on a provisional basis. Today's vital decision by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) establishes ambitious but realistic deadlines for the verified elimination of the Syrian programme. Given the scope of the task and the continuing conflict in Syria, the United Nations and the OPCW have a preliminary agreement that will be fully developed based on the resolution and will form the basis for my proposal to the Council. I thank OPCW Director-General Mr. Ahmet Üzümcü for his collaborative spirit. We will be dispatching an initial team to Damascus on Tuesday. The inspection teams will have the full support of all relevant United Nations departments and offices.

Resolution 2118 (2013) will ensure that the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme happens as soon as possible and with the utmost transparency and accountability. Ensuring the verified destruction of chemical weapons is a difficult task in any circumstance. In Syria, the inspectors, who are scientists and technical experts, will have to contend with the realities of the continuing conflict. The success of the Mission will depend on the Syrian Government implementing its obligations faithfully and without delay. That includes ensuring the safety and security of OPCW and United Nations personnel.

The cooperation of opposition forces will also be important. All sides share a common interest in the permanent destruction of these weapons. The process will also require the active engagement of the international community. I am grateful for the pledges of support for United Nations and OPCW activities received today. In the days ahead, the two organizations will further explore how to facilitate the elimination of

Syria's chemical weapons programme. I will provide my recommendations to the Security Council in due course.

As we mark this important step, we must never forget that the catalogue of horrors in Syria continues with bombs and tanks, grenades and guns. A red light for one form of weapons does not mean a green light for others; it is not a licence to kill with conventional weapons. All the violence must end. All the guns must fall silent. We must capitalize on the newfound unity of the Council by focusing on two other equally crucial dimensions of the conflict — the dire humanitarian situation and the political crisis.

We expect Council members to firmly demand that the Syrian Government and the opposition uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the lifting of all obstacles to all humanitarian access. Some besieged communities have received no assistance in more than 10 months. The Council has agreed that the only way to bring peace to Syria is an inclusive and Syrian-led political process based on the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex). Today's resolution calls for convening an international conference on Syria to implement the Geneva communiqué as soon as possible.

It is time to make that happen as soon as possible. The United Nations has completed all the preparatory work. President Al-Assad has stated that he is prepared to send a delegation to Geneva and the Syrian National Coalition has expressed its willingness to engage.

Our conversations of the past week have focused on launching "Geneva II". On Wednesday, at my working lunch with the Foreign Ministers of the five permanent members of the Council, we agreed to make sure that the Syrian participants come to the conference to negotiate in good faith. Today, the Joint Special Representative of the League of Arab States and the United Nations, Mr. Brahimi, and I continued these discussions with Member States. We are aiming for a conference in mid-November. In the meantime, Mr. Brahimi will launch all the necessary preparations to ensure success.

No one is naive to the challenges of ending the conflict peacefully. The Syrian side must engage constructively towards the creation of a democratic State that guarantees the human rights of all in Syria. The regional actors have a responsibility to challenge those who would actively undermine the process and those who do not fully respect Syria's sovereignty,

unity and territorial integrity. The Security Council members, individually and collectively, have a key role to play in ushering the Geneva process forward towards a lasting peaceful solution.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Resolution 2118 (2013), just adopted, is fully in keeping with the Russian-American agreements achieved in Geneva on 14 September. That was the result of coordinated efforts by the Russian Federation and the United States of America, backed by all the members of the Security Council and the majority of other States.

Pursuant to the resolution, the leading role in the upcoming work will be played by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), and the United Nations will provide it with assistance. We believe that the OPCW and United Nations experts will act in a professional and impartial way in Syria, with full respect for the sovereignty of that country.

Everything possible must be done to ensure that the Syrian chemical arsenals are taken under control, pursuant to the decision of the Executive Council of the OPCW, in a timely and effective way that respects all safety norms. We expect that the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the OPCW will cooperate closely and ensure due coordination pursuant to resolution 2118 (2013), just adopted. We look forward to the recommendations of the Secretary-General regarding the organization of this work, including issues related to ensuring the safety of international personnel. Russia stands ready to participate in the forthcoming operation in Syria in all its aspects.

An important precondition for the success of the upcoming work is the readiness for real cooperation Damascus has shown by joining the Chemical Weapons Convention. Syria has already begun implementation of its commitments by providing the OPCW with a detailed list of its chemical-arsenal holdings. We believe that Damascus will continue to cooperate constructively and in good faith with the international inspectors.

The responsibility for the implementation of that resolution does not lie only with the Government of Syria. Pursuant to the demands of the Security Council, the international experts will also require cooperation

on the part of the Syrian opposition. In that respect, the reports to be submitted for consideration by the Security Council regarding the implementation of the OPCW decision and resolution 2118 (2013) will have to be objective and address the situation with respect to all parties to the Syrian conflict. The resolution does not fall under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and does not allow for any automatic use of coercive measures of enforcement.

It reaffirms the agreement that was reached at the Russian-American meeting held in Geneva to the effect that any violations of those requirements as well as the use of chemical weapons by any party will be carefully investigated by the Security Council, which will stand ready to take action under Chapter VII of the Charter. The actions taken will be commensurate with any violations, which will have to be 100 per cent proved.

Particular responsibility lies with those who back and sponsor the opposition; they have to ensure that chemical weapons do not fall into the hands of extremists. We draw attention to the fact that the resolution contains requirements set by the Security Council that apply to all countries, especially Syria's neighbours. They must report to the Council any attempts by non-State actors to obtain chemical weapons. It would be even more unacceptable for them to support such attempts. All similar cases will be immediately considered by the Security Council with the objective of taking the necessary measures.

We believe that the resolution will not only make it possible to solve the problem of Syrian chemical weapons but also will give us impetus in connection with a decision on the creation in the Middle East of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, in accordance with the decisions taken by the international community.

What is of particular importance here is the fact that the resolution sets out a framework for a political and diplomatic settlement of the Syrian crisis. It adopts, without any reservations, the Geneva communiqué dated 30 June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex) as a platform for a settlement. It also backs the rapid convening on this basis of an international conference.

In our assessment, one that is shared by the other permanent members of the Security Council as well as by the Secretary-General, that could take place as early as the middle of November. We expect that the increasingly diverse Syrian opposition forces will in

the end be able to state their readiness to participate in the conference without any preconditions, as the Government of Syria has done. We call upon the sponsors of the opposition to bring the necessary pressure to bear on them to do so. The Russian Federation will actively and directly participate in the implementation of the chemical-weapons disarmament process and in preparations for Geneva II.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. John Kerry, Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Mr. Kerry (United States of America): Five weeks ago, the world saw rows upon rows of murdered children lying on a hospital floor alone or beside their slain parents, all wrapped in unbloodied burial shrouds, and the world's conscience was shocked. But our collective resolve hardened. Tonight, with a strong and forcible precedent-setting resolution requiring Syria to give up its chemical weapons, the Security Council has demonstrated that diplomacy can be so powerful that it can peacefully defuse the worst weapons of war.

So tonight we are declaring together, for the first time, that the use of chemical weapons, which the world long ago determined to be beyond the bounds of acceptable human behaviour, is also a threat to international peace and security, anywhere they might be used, any time they might be used, under any circumstances.

As a community of nations, we reaffirm our responsibility to defend the defenceless, those whose lives remain at risk every day that anyone believes that they can use weapons of mass destruction with impunity. Together the world, with a single voice, is imposing for the first time binding obligations on the Al-Assad regime requiring it to get rid of weapons that have been used to devastating effect as tools of terror. This important resolution reflects what President Obama and President Putin and colleagues around the world set out to do.

I want to thank Foreign Minister Lavrov for his personal efforts and cooperation beginning before Geneva and continuing through this week so that we could find common ground. I also want to thank my good friends and counterparts, Foreign Secretary Hague and Foreign Minister Fabius, who have been partners every step of the way.

Our original objective was to degrade and deter Syria's chemical-weapons capability. The option of

military force that President Obama has kept on the table could have achieved that, but tonight's resolution in fact accomplishes even more. Through peaceful means, it will for the first time seek to eliminate entirely the nation's chemical-weapons capability and, in this case, specifically Syria's. On-site inspections of the places where those weapons are stored will begin by November, and under the terms of this agreement those weapons will be removed and destroyed by the middle of next year.

Our aim was also to hold the Al-Assad regime publicly accountable for its horrific use of chemical weapons against its own people on 21 August, and this resolution makes clear that those responsible for that heinous act must be held accountable. In the resolution just adopted, the Council has, importantly, endorsed the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex), which calls for a transfer of power to a transitional governing body, paving the way for democratic elections and a Government that can be chosen by the people of Syria to represent the people of Syria.

We sought a legally binding resolution, and that is what the Security Council has adopted. For the first time since Syria's civil war began, the Security Council is spelling out in detail what Syria must do to comply with its legal obligations. Syria cannot select or reject the inspectors. Syria must give those inspectors unfettered access to any and all sites and to any and all people. We also wanted a resolution that would be enforced, and, again, that is what the Security Council has adopted.

We are here because actions have consequences, and now, should the regime fail to act, there will be consequences. Progress will be reported back to the Security Council frequently, and, in the event of non-compliance, the Council will impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Just two weeks ago, when the Syrian regime would not even acknowledge the vast supply of chemical weapons and say that they existed, this outcome, frankly, would have been utterly unimaginable. But thanks to the cooperation within the five permanent members of the Security Council, and thanks to our friends and partners around the world, many of whom are here in this Chamber, the Council has shown that when we put aside politics for the common good, we are still capable of doing big things. Provided the resolution is fully implemented, we will have eliminated one of

the largest chemical weapons programmes on Earth from one of the most volatile places on Earth.

The Al-Assad regime carries the burden of meeting the terms of this agreement, and when it comes to those who murder their own citizens, the world's patience needs to be short. But make no mistake — the rest of the world still carries the burden of doing what we must do to end mass killing by other means. We must work together with the same determination and the same cooperation that have brought us here tonight in order to end the conflict that continues to tear Syria apart, even this very day.

We must continue to provide desperately needed humanitarian aid, and neither Al-Assad nor anyone else should stand between that aid and the people who need it. Only when we do those things will we have fulfilled our responsibility to the Syrian people and to ourselves. Only then will we have advanced our own interests and our own security and that of our allies in the region. Only then will we have shown that the Security Council is meeting its responsibility to enforce international peace and security.

So we are here united tonight in support of our belief that international institutions do matter; that international norms matter. We say with one voice that atrocities carried out with the world's most heinous weapons will not be tolerated. And when institutions like the Security Council stand up to defend the principles and values that we all share, and when when we put violent regimes on notice that the world will unite against them, it will lead not only to a safer Syria, but to a safer world.

Mr. Hague (United Kingdom): The chemical weapons attack of 21 August in Syria was horrific in its nature and its scale, and the Secretary-General has rightly described it as a war crime. So it is welcome that the Security Council has recognized the appalling nature of that act and has come together to agree a serious and far-reaching response. We have done so today in adopting the first Security Council resolution (resolution 2118 (2013)) on Syria in 17 months, and I pay particular tribute to my colleagues Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov for all the work they have done to make that possible.

This is a groundbreaking resolution. First, it recognizes that any use of chemical weapons is a threat to international peace and security. This establishes an important international norm that is essential in the wake

of the Syrian regime's appalling actions on 21 August. It upholds the principle of accountability for that proven use of chemical weapons. It imposes legally binding and enforceable obligations on the Syrian regime to comply with the decision adopted earlier this evening by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). It makes clear that the Council shall impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations if there is non-compliance, and it endorses the Geneva communiqué of June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex).

We should be in no doubt about the challenges ahead in implementing the resolution, but, if properly implemented — and the Council must ensure that it is — it will prevent a repeat of the atrocities committed on 21 August or any other use of chemical weapons in Syria. The United Kingdom will play its full part in this. I can announce that the United Kingdom is making an initial contribution of \$3 million to the OPCW Syria Trust Fund. I echo the OPCW Executive Council's call today that all States in a position to do so should provide voluntary contributions and expertise to achieve what will be a challenging but vital task.

Let us not forget that Council action today has come only after two and a half years of unchecked brutality and well over 100,000 dead and millions displaced. The failure of the Council to tackle the crimes committed on a daily basis has resulted in a culture of impunity in which a brutal regime believed it could get away with murdering its own men, women and children.

So it is vital that the Council now build on the consensus we have reached today to make progress towards a sustainable resolution of the crisis. With renewed purpose and resolve, we need to achieve a political transition, and that is why I welcome the fact that, as the Secretary-General said earlier, we have agreed among the permanent members of the Security Council to aim for a mid-November date for the start of "Geneva II". That will be a difficult process involving tough choices and compromises but, crucially, we are all committed to making our best collective effort to make it work. The goal is something on which we all agree — a negotiated transition in Syria, starting with the formation of a transitional governing body with full executive powers formed on the basis of mutual consent.

But no political process can deliver results immediately. Until it does, we must also make a greater effort on the humanitarian crisis. The scale of suffering is truly horrific, with 100,000 dead and millions

displaced. The United Kingdom has provided a total of \$800 million to the humanitarian response so far, but we are yet to reach those inside Syria. For that, we need genuine progress on humanitarian access, so we believe that in the next few days the Council must agree to apply its weight and authority to securing unfettered and immediate access to those in need in Syria.

Today's resolution is about ensuring that the horrors of 21 August cannot happen again. The immediate need now is to focus on the everyday horrors of the dire humanitarian situation and we need to redouble our determination to work through the Geneva II process to end the conflict and secure a better future for Syria.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Resolution 2118 (2013), which we have just adopted, is a historic milestone. It contains strong, specific elements to constrain Syria to respect its obligations and to prevent chemical weapons from being used once again in Syria. The Security Council has thus put in place a robust mechanism that creates legally binding obligations through rigorous verification measures. The objective is clear and cannot be misinterpreted. Syria must fully cooperate with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations with a view to dismantling its chemical arms programme as quickly as possible.

If the Syrian authorities fully respect their obligations, the resolution will make it possible to eliminate one of the most significant chemical weapons programmes in the world through non-military means. We all bore witness a month ago to the terrible massacre in the suburbs of Damascus using chemical weapons. Each of us saw with our own eyes, on dozens of videos, the events of 21 August — unbearable images of victims in agony, and dozens of children's corpses in rows. It is important that such events never recur.

Today's resolution also represents a breakthrough on the normative level. For the first time, the Security Council has determined that the use of chemical weapons, wherever it occurs, is a threat to peace and international security. That authorizes the Council to be seized automatically of the issue in future. That is significant progress. The resolution is also innovative in another critical area. For the first time, the Security Council was able to agree to endorse the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex), which called for the creation of a transitional Government body with full executive powers in Syria.

The adoption of the resolution, as important as it is, will not put an end to the war or end the enormous suffering of the Syrian people. In the long run, the humanitarian and security challenges cannot be resolved other than through a negotiated political solution to the crisis. Syria must engage in a political transition process that responds to the aspirations of all Syrians. Consequently, we encourage all concerned parties to take advantage of the positive dynamic that has been created in this case of chemical weapons to progress towards a cessation of hostilities, towards the holding of “Geneva II”, and towards the necessary political transition in Syria. Any delay will lead only to more death and more suffering.

While our attention is focused on the most recent chapters in recent days concerning chemical weapons, we cannot and must not forget the humanitarian catastrophe that continues to unfold in Syria and neighbouring countries, especially Lebanon and Jordan, but also in Iraq and Turkey. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. António Guterres, has said that

“Syria has become the great tragedy of this century — a disgraceful humanitarian calamity with suffering and displacement unparalleled in recent history”.

The Syrians need assistance, and they need it now. They enjoy the right to such assistance under the most elementary criteria of humanity enshrined in humanitarian international law. It is urgent that Syria respond to the demands of humanitarian actors and that it facilitate immediate, unimpeded and free access to the affected populations. It is urgent that bureaucratic obstacles be lifted in order to ensure supplies of medical equipment, to establish humanitarian relief, and to open humanitarian routes, and to facilitate access to the affected populations across borders and the front lines.

With Australia, Luxembourg wishes to echo the demands of the humanitarian actors to the parties in conflict in Syria through a message sent by the entire Council. We hope that those efforts will lead very soon to the adoption of a strong humanitarian text. The Security Council must also shoulder its responsibility on that point as well. I listened with interest carefully to the words of the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr. William Hague, in that regard.

In conclusion, I reiterate our conviction that the perpetrators of the crimes committed on 21 August, as well as those behind all other atrocities committed in Syria since the onset of hostilities, must be held accountable for their acts. The time has come to finally refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Mr. Fabius (France) (*spoke in French*): Tonight, in the midst of the Syrian crisis, the Security Council has finally proven itself worthy of its name. On 21 August, the regime of Bashar al-Assad committed the unacceptable. It killed nearly 1,400 civilians, including hundreds of children, with gas. The use of chemical weapons, so abominable that has been banned for over 100 years, is clear in this instance. All evidence points to the regime. No one can contest it in good faith.

As a result of the threat of strikes, which was not a mere stratagem, we have finally moved forward. We put pressure on the regime and its allies. I recall that although until recently the regime denied the very existence of chemical weapons, in just a few days it has had to radically change its stance. It acknowledged the existence of chemical weapons and accepted their destruction. France, like other States, especially the United States of America, has assumed its responsibilities. We believe that our resolve has paid off.

Resolution 2118 (2013), which we have just adopted, meets the three requirements that President Hollande and I put forward early this week, which may go down in history, be it with respect to Syria or Iran, as the international week beginning the end of chemical weapons. The resolution identifies the use of chemical weapons as a threat to international peace and security. The Security Council can therefore act on this issue at any time in the future and will be the guarantor of chemical disarmament. The resolution clearly states that those responsible for such crimes must be held accountable for their actions and brought to justice. It also provides — as our Russian and American colleagues agreed in Geneva and worked a great deal to achieve — that in case of the non-compliance of the Syrian regime in Damascus, measures will be taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

The resolution is not our final goal, but only the first stage. Unfortunately, one cannot simply believe the statements of a regime that even until recently denied even possessing such weapons. The United Nations

and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons should immediately deploy their joint mission. The timetable set out in the decision adopted today in The Hague must be enforced. Syria's cooperation must be unconditional and fully transparent. The Security Council, which will be informed regularly, will be the judge of Syria's commitment. It will, if necessary, impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter to ensure that the objective is achieved. In short, it is not enough that we adopted the resolution; we must now implement it. France, like all other Council members, will see to that.

Regardless of the positive aspects of the resolution, the humanitarian catastrophe and repression tragically continue in Syria. Our responsibility commands us to act to end them. France wishes to take advantage of the long-sought unity of the Council to advance the political process, which is the only way to put an end to the fighting and restore peace in Syria. We need to prepare the "Geneva II" conference, within the framework defined by the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex), which, as others have noted provides for the transfer of all executive powers to a transitional body. Along with the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, whom I congratulate and thank for their work, the five permanent members of the Security Council bear a particular responsibility to that end, as they have demonstrated on the chemical weapons issue.

Yesterday, I chaired a meeting, attended by the representatives of a great many States, with the President of the Syrian National Coalition, Mr. Al-Jarba. He confirmed that he is ready to send a delegation to negotiate in the Geneva II process. The supporters of the Syrian regime in Damascus must, in turn, assure us that they will make a similar commitment. I know that the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy will do their all to move quickly in that direction, as I indicated at the recent meeting of the five permanent members, which yielded positive results and a date for Geneva II. France will assuredly support these efforts.

We know that no one resolution, useful as it may be, will save Syria. That is why the Security Council must shoulder its responsibilities to the end. Over the next few weeks, we must focus on the Syrian people and their martyrdom, which must come to an end as soon as possible. That will be France's firm and consistent position in full support for peace.

Mr. Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan): Azerbaijan welcomes the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013) and

expresses its hope that the unanimous and strong position demonstrated today by the Security Council will contribute to finding a political solution to the conflict in Syria, bringing an end to the suffering inflicted on the Syrian people and ensuring compliance by the parties concerned with their obligations and commitments under international law.

We are grateful to the head and members of the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic for the work they have done in extremely difficult and challenging security and political conditions. It is essential that the Mission complete its investigation into all allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and submit its final report. The continued support of that process by all concerned is critical to that end.

Azerbaijan strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria, particularly the killing of civilians that resulted from it. Resolution 2118 (2013), which was just adopted, affirms that the use of chemical weapons constitutes a serious violation of international law and also qualifies that act as a threat to international peace and security. It is important that the Security Council has expressed its strong conviction that the individuals responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria should be held accountable.

Azerbaijan welcomes the understanding reached earlier between the Russian Federation and the United States regarding the safeguarding and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles, as well as the decision adopted today to that end by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). The key objective is obviously to ensure compliance with all aspects of the OPCW decision and full and faithful implementation of the Council resolution.

It is critical that, while establishing concrete legally binding obligations, the resolution provides for review on a regular basis of implementation efforts in Syria and that, in the event of non-compliance, it envisages imposing measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. By endorsing the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex) and calling for the convening of an international conference on Syria, the Security Council has paved the way for achieving peaceful transition, stability and reconciliation.

It is imperative that all parties cease armed violence, engage constructively in the political process and commit to the implementation of the Geneva communiqué. It is important that the resolution just adopted once again reaffirms the strong commitment of the Council to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. Proceeding from that aforementioned understanding, Azerbaijan decided to support and co-sponsor resolution 2118 (2013).

Mr. Yun Byung-se (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea welcomes the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013). The resolution marks a historic moment, when the Security Council has finally come to a unified position on the crisis in Syria. It is my sincere hope that the consensus will propel us towards fulfilling the long-overdue responsibility owed by the Council to the Syrian people. In that regard, the Republic of Korea commends the intensive efforts made by the United States, Russia and other stakeholders, as well as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, over the past several weeks.

The Republic of Korea condemns the use of chemical weapons in the strongest possible terms and reiterates its view that all chemical weapons — not just in Syria, but in all other States — should be permanently eliminated. The use of chemical weapons is a grave war crime and a serious violation of international law. More significantly, today's resolution articulates that the use of chemical weapons anywhere constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

While adopting the resolution was an important step, only its full implementation will determine the true value of our collective enterprise. The robust language and binding nature of the resolution reflect the Council's strong commitment to completely eliminating chemical weapons in Syria. It is also significant that the resolution reserves measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in a case of non-compliance. We believe that it is indeed the task of the entire international community to encourage thorough and prompt implementation of the resolution.

Although resolution 2118 (2013) is focused on the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria, the international community cannot afford to allow acts of impunity. As stipulated in the resolution, the Council must see to it that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons are held accountable.

The Security Council should remain focused on the broader goal of resolving the Syrian crisis, which has continued for more than two and a half years. We would like to underline the importance of the provisions of today's resolution calling for the convening of an international conference on Syria to implement the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). The Republic of Korea sincerely hopes that the conference will be convened as soon as possible with a view to putting an end to the tragic suffering of the Syrian people and the regional instability caused by the Syrian situation.

Mr. Wang Yi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Syrian issue is a priority concern of the international community. In the more than two years, more than 7 million Syrians have been displaced from their homes, with tremendous losses in lives and property. In this Chamber, on many occasions the Council has discussed major issues involving war and peace. Neither Syria nor the Middle East region can afford another war.

In dealing with the Syrian issue, the Council must bear in mind the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It must maintain a sense of responsibility towards the Syrian people and to world history and ensure that any decision it takes is able to pass the test of history.

Several weeks ago, dark clouds of war overshadowed the Syrian issue. Many countries were gravely concerned. China opposes the use of force in international relations. We believe that military means cannot solve the Syrian issue; rather, they would lead to greater turmoil and disaster.

We are heartened by the Council's unanimous adoption today of resolution 2118 (2013), drawing the Syrian situation back on track towards peace and away from the threat of war, and presenting a new opportunity to find a political settlement to the issue. This is the first time that the Council has taken joint major action on the Syrian issue in more than a year. The resolution is in keeping with the general direction of the political settlement of the Syrian issue and reflects the Council's role and its solidarity. China welcomes the adoption of the resolution.

China suffered deeply from the use of chemical weapons by Japanese invaders during the Second World War. We are firmly opposed to the use of chemical weapons by any country, group or individual. Whoever uses chemical weapons should be condemned

by all. China welcomes Syria's recent accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Resolution 2118 (2013) sets out the overall objective of the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria and the road map for the follow-up work. China is ready to send experts to participate in relevant work and provide financial support in that regard. We hope that the parties concerned will maintain their close cooperation, fulfil their respective responsibilities, and comprehensively and accurately implement the decision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Council resolution, with the ultimate aim of achieving a satisfactory settlement of the chemical weapons issue in Syria.

The humanitarian situation in Syria is deteriorating. China is deeply concerned. The Chinese Government has provided more than \$11 million in humanitarian assistance to Syrian civilians in and outside of Syria. China is now providing ¥15 million of emergency humanitarian aid to Jordan and will provide more than ¥24 million in cash remittances for emergency humanitarian aid to the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization. Our assistance will be used to assist displaced persons inside Syria and Syrian refugees in Lebanon. We will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to Syria and its neighbours to the best of our capabilities.

Political settlement is the only way out for Syria. That process should take place in parallel with the process of destroying Syria's chemical weapons. Resolution 2118 (2013) clearly requests the implementation of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex) and calls for the convening of the "Geneva II" conference. The relevant parties in Syria should keep in mind the interests of Syria and its people, achieve a ceasefire and the cessation of violence as soon as possible, put an end to the crisis through dialogue, and rebuild the homes of the Syrian people. China hopes that the international community will build consensus and promote the early convening of the Geneva II conference. China will maintain its support for the mediation efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Representative Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

The Syrian issue is highly complex. Neither the destruction of chemical weapons nor the process of a political settlement will be smooth sailing. Going forward, various problems are likely to arise. We hope that all parties will maintain their patience and composure, uphold the principle of the peaceful

settlement of disputes, and stick to the path of a political settlement. As a permanent member of the Security Council, China stands ready to work with all the parties and to make unremitting efforts to achieve a comprehensive, proper and long-term settlement of the Syrian issue.

Mr. Carrera (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): For the past 18 months, our delegation has lamented the fact that the Security Council has been incapable of stepping up to one of the bloodiest and most painful internal conflicts of our times. I am referring, of course, to the situation in Syria, and its impact on its neighbours and painful humanitarian cost.

Despite the fact that we came together on two occasions to produce resolutions 2042 (2012) and 2043 (2012), internal divisions of which we all are aware subsequently prevented further progress. As a result, the emergence of a point of convergence between the Russian Federation and the United States of America over one issue — the rejection of the use of chemical weapons — should be welcomed. We congratulate Minister Sergey Lavrov and Secretary of State Kerry for their initiative that gave rise to the Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons of 14 September.

We also appreciate their efforts in codifying that agreement so that both the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Security Council could act today. We believe that this step is highly significant for its intrinsic value and because it breathes new life into efforts to resolve the underlying issues, end the violence, resolve the humanitarian situation and meet the demands of the Syrian population. That is why we have consistently supported the Final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (S/2012/523, annex) of 30 June 2012 and the need to convene an international conference with a view to its implementation.

That also explains why my delegation co-sponsored resolution 2118 (2013), which was just adopted and which establishes a mechanism for the verification and destruction of chemical weapons, upholds the principle of accountability, stresses the urgency of a political transition process, and emphasizes the need for Syria's due compliance with the conditions set forth in that agreement.

The adoption of the resolution is of vital importance, considering that the Council had adopted its most

recent resolution on the situation in Syria (resolution 2043 (2012)) in April 2012. I would also emphasize that this decision was taken unanimously by the Council, and that is why it does not represent a victory for any single country in particular. It is great victory for the United Nations and, through the United Nations, a great victory for all of humankind.

Given those factors, we would like to stress the following points. First, although we understand the sensitivity and sense of urgency surrounding this particular situation, we would have preferred to have a greater opportunity to participate in the development of the resolution. We could have contributed positively to it.

Secondly, it is necessary to prepare for and commit to ensuring strict implementation of the resolution just adopted. We recognize, therefore, the importance of cooperation between the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations, especially in terms of the access and safety of personnel, operational support, privileges and immunities, and sufficient financial resources to properly carry out their duties.

Thirdly, and as a result of the aforementioned points, we hope that, in the short term, the intention to convene the international "Geneva II" conference in November can be fulfilled, that a transitional Government with full executive powers can be established with the mutual consent of all parties, and that all parties shall engage constructively in the search for stability and reconciliation. We believe that it essential that any Government established by inclusive and that it take advantage of the positive aspects of the institutions developed over decades by the Syrian State.

In conclusion, we can only reaffirm our commitment to the objectives contained in the Charter of the United Nations and the Final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (S/2012/523, annex) of 30 June 2012, and express our hope that a ceasefire will soon finally be reached.

Mr. Aziz (Pakistan): Resolution 2118 (2013), adopted this evening, is a landmark in the Syrian conflict. By re-uniting behind the common cause of international peace and security, the Security Council has demonstrated once again that it is effective and responsive.

We thank Secretary of State John Kerry and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov for taking a personal interest

and for persisting in efforts aimed at forging consensus on a difficult issue. Sponsorship of the resolution by all 15 member States is a clear manifestation that the Security Council has assumed ownership of the implementation of the decision taken by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague earlier today.

The issue of chemical weapons has long enjoyed virtual consensus in the international community. Its use has been universally condemned. The Chemical Weapons Convention retains the primary responsibility for the elimination of those dangerous weapons. The Security Council decision today is meant to augment and implement the OPCW decision. Non-implementation could lead to serious consequences.

It is our earnest hope that the spirit of cooperation and the newfound unity of the Council will be maintained. This is just the first step. The Council has to navigate difficult waters. Our focus should be on the people of Syria; their suffering must end. Any action that we take in this forum should keep the people of Syria at the centre.

The elimination of chemical weapons in the country is important, but it is not the remedy for all the other problems plaguing that unfortunate country. The killings have to stop; more than 100,000 people have already lost their lives. A political solution remains the only viable option. It is time to go back to Geneva.

Adopted in June 2012, the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex) clearly delineates the process for a transition acceptable to the Syrian people. It calls for the establishment of a transitional authority with full executive powers. The resolution adopted today also outlines a similar process. All the ingredients for a resolution of the conflict are already contained in the Geneva communiqué. It is therefore imperative that it be implemented in letter and spirit.

The announcement regarding the convening of the "Geneva II" conference by mid-November is another manifestation of the sense of urgency to initiate a political process aimed at ending the conflict, achieving national reconciliation and fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. The road is not going to be easy. There is no military solution to the situation in Syria; arms only aggravate violence and suffering.

We have to move beyond differences on the interpretation of the Geneva communiqué and pursue

the political process with unity of purpose. We urge all sides in the Syrian conflict to fully utilize this opportunity and work towards dialogue and diplomacy. Although it is indeed already too late for over 100,000 Syrians, there is still time for millions whose safety and security are at risk. That should remain foremost in our minds.

Mr. El Othmani (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): At last, the Security Council has been able to agree on resolution 2118 (2013), a very important resolution on the situation in Syria that reflects determination and a genuine willingness to bring an end to the Syrian conflict and paves the way for a political settlement of the crisis. We are very appreciative of the efforts of the five permanent members of the Council to arrive at a solution whereby Syria's chemical weapons can be located and destroyed and thus can ensure that they are never used again. We also appreciate the intense efforts of Secretary Kerry and Foreign Minister Lavrov that led to the agreement signed in Geneva on 14 September on Syria's chemical weapons. And we pay tribute to the United Nations, led by the Secretary-General, for responding promptly to the use of chemical weapons in Syria by establishing an investigative mission led by Mr. Åke Sellström, who, with his team, undertook a major effort in a very short space of time, despite having to deal with security problems. In that context, I should add that the League of Arab States also played a leadership role and has been at the forefront of initiatives on the situation in Syria and the use of chemical weapons, which it condemned roundly in its 1 September decision.

By any measure, the resolution just adopted is truly historic. In addition to outlining steps for dealing with Syria's chemical weapons based on the framework agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation, it endorses the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex) as a path to convening a "Geneva II" conference, which it also stresses should be held. The resolution is also a legal precedent, because for the first time it recognizes in general terms that chemical weapons are a threat to international peace and security, which will make it easier for the Security Council to deal with such weapons in future. It will also prevent a repetition of the terrible massacres we have seen in the recent past and eliminate one of the largest chemical-weapons arsenals in the Middle East by peaceful means. And it can be seen as a precursor to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Based on those facts, the Kingdom of Morocco fully supports the resolution, of which we are a sponsor, and we hope that the momentum will continue with the setting of a date as soon as possible for holding a Geneva II conference in order to work for a settlement that will satisfy the Syrian people's desire for a democratic State that preserves Syria's sovereignty and integrity.

In conclusion, I would like to recall, as some of my colleagues in the Council have already done, the importance of following up on the humanitarian situation on the ground. It is a catastrophe that is being inflicted on the Syrian people — refugees, the injured and internally displaced persons — in the hundreds of thousands. Every effort must be made to support the United Nations agencies in their work in that regard. They deserve our appreciation for what they have done and continue to do to succour the civilians in need. We should also give attention to Syria's neighbours, which are suffering along with the Syrian refugees in their lands. They too have been buffeted by the humanitarian, political and security repercussions of the Syrian crisis, particularly through the flood of Syrian refugees across their borders. Once again, we value the resolution and truly hope that it is a first step towards a final settlement of the Syrian crisis.

Mr. Timerman (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The horrific spectacle that moved the world on 21 August was neither an isolated nor an unpredictable event. Week after week for more than two years, and especially after we joined the Security Council in January, we heard nothing but reports detailing more deaths, more refugees, more displaced persons, more violence, more arms supplied to all parties, more scepticism about the appropriateness or the need for a political solution, and a growing and dangerous inclination to military action as the most effective strategy.

That is why we in particular cannot suggest that the tragedy in Syria exists because the attack on 21 August took place. But we can affirm that the horror has opened the doors to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Much depends on the Syrians themselves, as well as those seated here under the mandate of the United Nations. Perhaps what happened on 21 August is that, along with the more than 1,000 victims of that day, the whole world heard the voices of all those victims and saw with perfect clarity how petty geopolitical interests were at play in Syria and the region, and how they were more interested in aggravating the conflict than in resolving it. It witnessed the profound impotence of the Security

Council to put an end to the daily massacres that were accumulating in an ethical outrage and a clear threat to international peace and security.

As a country firmly committed to non-proliferation and the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, and as a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons, Argentina was a resolute supporter of resolution 2118 (2013) and the detailed and specific programme of supervision and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons approved by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. There is no room for double standards or euphemisms. The use of chemical weapons is a war crime and a crime against humanity, and those who perpetrate such crimes cannot go unpunished. With today's resolution, the Council is finally assuming its responsibility for stabilizing the situation in Syria and contributing to achieving a lasting peace, reaffirming the strength of multilateralism as a cornerstone of the collective security system established by the Charter of the United Nations as the world's only guarantee against the hegemony of might-is-right.

We also agree with those who believe that the resolution can lay the foundations for progress towards a negotiated political solution to the Syrian crisis that reflects the legitimate aspirations and demands of its people and establishes the basis for a lasting peace, while respecting Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty. That is why we applaud the fact that the Security Council has taken ownership of the Geneva Communiqué of June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex), calling for the speedy holding of "Geneva II" so that it can be implemented.

The resolution establishes a specific mechanism for the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons, based on the framework agreement reached in Geneva on 14 September between the United States and the Russian Federation (S/2013/565, annex). Yet it is fair to point out that it also reflects concerns and proposals put forward by various members of the Council over the past few months of consultations. That aspect was a decisive factor in my country's sponsorship of the resolution.

In keeping with Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council's decisions are binding on all members. While we trust that the various actors involved in the Syrian conflict will act in good faith and cooperate for the effective implementation

of the resolution, it is also clear that should there be non-compliance, it is within the exclusive power of the Council to convene in order to assess and take measures that it deems appropriate under Chapter VII of the Charter.

To conclude, my country wishes to reiterate that the horror of chemical weapons, whose use is a war crime and a crime against humanity, should not overshadow the fact that 99 per cent of the casualties in the conflict have been from conventional weapons. It is absolutely necessary for the Security Council to prohibit the supply of conventional weapons to the parties to the conflict. That suggestion, put forward by Argentina, accords with the views expressed by the Secretary-General and Special Envoy Brahimi and with the desire of millions of men and women who want and work for peace. Nor can we ignore the serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law throughout Syria. The humanitarian disaster affecting millions of Syrians has had a deep impact on institutional stability and the living conditions of people in neighbouring countries and exacerbates sectarian tensions across the region.

The step that was taken today was necessary and essential, but there are other steps that must be taken by the Council. In that regard, Argentina will continue to advocate for effective accountability, referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, unrestricted access for humanitarian aid, measures to stem the transfer of weapons to all parties to the conflict, the rejection of the use of force, the option for dialogue and a peaceful political solution as a legitimate and realistic path to peace, and the prevention of further violence.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): As the world is preparing to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda, which would also be a reminder of the memorable failure of the Security Council to save a million citizens of this world, the conscience of the international community has once again been stained by the ongoing conflict in Syria, which is in its thirtieth month.

We said "Never again" after what happened in Rwanda, but since 1994 the community of nations has stood by powerless and witnessed horrendous massacres and ethnic cleansings in many corners of the world. As in 1994, when the Security Council was prevented from intervening in Rwanda because of an unwarranted realpolitik prevailing in the Council, mostly among permanent members, the Council was

once again unable to save more than 100,000 people in Syria because of ever-present divisions among veto-wielding members.

The horror of the Syrian crisis culminated with the 21 August chemical attack in Ghouta, where 1,500 innocent lives were taken by poisonous weapons banned a century ago. I believe that the whole world was shocked, likely by the painful images of children gasping for their last breath. There is a saying in French that says that some good can always be found in a misfortune. The images of the suffering of those children seemed to have opened our eyes. I am therefore grateful to the United States of America and the Russian Federation for the framework (S/2013/565, annex) they have agreed on related to the destruction of the chemical weapons stockpile in Syria that was translated into resolution 2118 (2013), which we have just adopted unanimously. We were encouraged that the resolution contains provisions for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons by endorsing the decision of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). We particularly welcome the decision of the Security Council to impose coercive measures under Chapter VII should the Syrian parties not comply with the resolution.

Furthermore, Rwanda was pleased that the Security Council agreed on the need for accountability and for the revival of the Geneva process. Indeed, while 1,500 Syrians were gassed to death a month ago, we cannot lose sight of the fact that more than 100,000 men, women and children were massacred over the last 30 months with conventional weapons. We know for a fact that a military solution has so far failed in Syria and cannot be a viable answer for the country and the region. That is why Rwanda welcomes the revival of the Final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria (S/2012/523, annex) and the political transition in Syria.

I take this opportunity to urge the Security Council, particularly those permanent members that have influence on the Syrian parties, to ensure that the international conference on Syria to implement the Geneva communiqué is convened as soon as possible and that parties negotiate in good faith and with a sense of responsibility, with a view to finding a lasting solution and ending calvary of the Syrian people. I am encouraged by the information provided tonight that an agreement may have been reached on starting a “Geneva II” conference in mid-November.

Nonetheless, given the horrendous crimes committed in Syria, Rwanda is of the strong belief that any political solution should ensure that all those who committed crimes in Syria are held accountable before a court of law. We therefore welcome the accountability provisions contained in the adopted resolution. Rwanda will play its part to ensure that they are implemented.

Let me conclude with a message that the President of Rwanda wished me to convey to the Council:

“I reiterate my conviction that the primary responsibility of this global body is the responsibility to protect. The agreed objective of maintaining international peace and security would be pointless if geostrategic interests prevailed over the lives of innocent men, women and children. I therefore commend the Security Council for slowly evolving on this issue, and Rwanda, informed by our experience both in 1994 and in the Security Council, is ready to continue working with other Member States to ensure that protection of human lives and the integrity of women and children are always at the centre of our decisions.”

Mr. Menan (Togo) (*spoke in French*): Togo welcomes the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013) with its many eminently innovative provisions. We welcome the spirit of compromise that prevailed between the negotiators of the text, namely, the permanent members, in particular, the United States and the Russian Federation.

There is no doubt that the framework for elimination of Syrian chemical weapons (S/2013/565, annex) between the Russian Federation and the United States of America, dated 14 September 2013, paved the way for that compromise, and I would like to reiterate our gratitude to the United States Secretary of State and the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs who have laboured to achieve the agreement. By co-sponsoring and voting in favour of the text, Togo wishes to underscore the need not only for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons but especially to rid our world of that type of weapons and other types of weapons of mass destruction.

This evening, the Council was able to speak in a unified voice on Syria. This sends a strong message to all parties to the conflict in Syria. The adoption of resolution 2118 (2013) therefore marks a decisive step in the process of resolving the Syrian crisis. As a result, the Security Council must step up its work to bring about a better future for Syria by sparing no effort to convene as soon as possible the “Geneva II” conference.

We welcome the announcement made in that regard by the Secretary-General that the conference could take place in mid-November.

The sacred union between the permanent members of the Council that led to the adoption of the resolution must be sustained in order to bring all parties in Syria — the Government and the opposition — to engage in constructive dialogue aimed at launching a political transition in that country. The road map that a transitional Government could adopt must set out the urgent tasks to be undertaken, in particular securing the safety of the population, launching a reconciliation process and rebuilding Syria on new foundations.

The Council should also continue to pay attention to the terrorist currents threatening Syria. As the terrorists grow in resolve and creativity, seizing new areas and sowing terror among the population, building a secular, multi-faith Syria would contribute to rebuilding the social fabric so sorely tested by the current conflict.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to express once again country's concern over the growing humanitarian situation and the ongoing human rights violations in Syria. In that regard, Togo aligns itself with the initiatives seeking to have the Council adopt a resolution with a view to mobilizing donors to help refugees and internally displaced persons within the country.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Australia.

The adoption of resolution 2118 (2013) this evening was obviously an historic moment for the Council and, we hope, will mark a turning point in the Council's approach to the Syrian conflict. It shows that the Council can take decisive and united action and can use its authority to help shape a stable and secure future for all Syrian. We thank Foreign Minister Lavrov and Secretary of State Kerry and their teams for their perseverance. We thank the Secretary-General and Mr. Sellström and their teams for the effective work they have done, often in very difficult circumstances, to present an unequivocal conclusion to the Council that chemical weapons were used on 21 August in Damascus.

As we know, the resolution does a number of important things. For the first time, it makes clear that the use of chemical weapons anywhere constitutes a threat to international peace and security. Such a

statement from the Council strengthens a fundamental norm of international relations that we have had for 90 years — that the use of chemical weapons by anyone in whatever circumstances is abhorrent and constitutes a very serious breach of international law. The statement should act as a strong deterrent to anyone who might contemplate using chemical weapons in the future.

The resolution imposes legally-binding obligations on Syria to secure and destroy its chemical weapons. The Syrian authorities must now cooperate unconditionally with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations, put all of Syria's chemical weapons and related materials and equipment fully under international supervision and control, and ensure their complete, final, verifiable and enforceable destruction. The Council has decided that there will be consequences under Chapter VII if Syria does not comply. It is our collective responsibility to remain vigilant in assessing Syria's compliance with the resolution.

Importantly, the resolution also reaffirms that those who perpetrated this mass atrocity crime against their own citizens must be held accountable for their actions. Australia's assessment is that the evidence available shows that it was the Syrian authorities who were responsible for this crime, and this incident has confirmed what Australia has said for a long time — that the Council should refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

The historic significance of tonight's resolution goes well beyond chemical weapons, of course. It has been 15 months since the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex) on Syria's political transition was agreed. Now, for the first time, it has been endorsed, at last, by the Security Council. We must build on this as a matter of urgency. We need to bring the Syrian parties together so they can agree on a ceasefire and a credible political transition.

Whatever the importance of tonight's decision, however, the terrible fact is that Syrians themselves, their neighbours and the global community face an ever-accelerating humanitarian catastrophe — what the Secretary-General tonight called “this catalogue of horrors”. There are now over 2 million Syrian refugees, 5 million internally displaced persons, and 8 million in need of assistance, and more than one-third of Syria's housing has been destroyed. The Council must address this humanitarian crisis more decisively and do so now.

As Foreign Minister Asselborn mentioned, it is the intention of Australia and Luxembourg to circulate a text shortly that will give strong support to the work of humanitarian agencies and sets out clearly the concrete steps that all parties in Syria must take to address the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people. I ask all of my Council colleagues to consider that draft favourably once it is circulated, with a view to the Council's taking a decision early next week. Each day we delay creates another 6,000 Syrian refugees.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more speakers inscribed on my list. Tonight's decision was a momentous one, and I hope that we shall continue the legacy in the days ahead.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 9.45 p.m.