

**Statement of  
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**Before the  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

*“Efforts of the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to Accomplish the Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons”*

**October 31, 2013**

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to talk to you today about the efforts by the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to complete and verify the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons program. We have made significant progress in the month and a half that has passed since the negotiation of the U.S.-Russia Framework in Geneva (Framework). Considerable work remains to ensure the Syrian regime can never again use these weapons against its own people.

Two months ago, the Asad regime did not even publicly acknowledge that it possessed chemical weapons, despite having just perpetrated the worst chemical weapons attack in this century. As of today, OPCW inspectors on the ground in Syria, with UN support, have conducted inspections of 21 chemical weapons-related sites and verified the destruction of the production, mixing, and filling

equipment at those sites. The OPCW has indicated that the Syrian government is on target to complete the destruction of its chemical weapons production, and mixing/filling capabilities by November 1. The international community has come together to establish a firm legal framework, through UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2118 and a related decision by the OPCW Executive Council, to ensure that this immense undertaking is fulfilled in a transparent, expeditious, and verifiable manner—and within the ambitious but realistic timeline envisioned in the Framework. On September 14, the Syrian government formally acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and, in accordance with the CWC, UNSCR 2118, and an OPCW Executive Council decision, submitted a declaration of its CW materials and facilities to the OCPW on October 24, 2013.

The implementation of the Framework could not have been achieved absent the serious consideration of the use of force by the United States. It remains critically important, as this process continues, that members of the international community continue to monitor closely the Syrian regime's compliance with its CW-related obligations. Syria's obligations are quite clear, and we will continue to encourage Russia to advise the Asad regime about the wisdom of continued cooperation. The Security Council has already decided that, in the event of non-compliance with UNSCR 2118, it would impose Chapter VII measures.

Last week, in conjunction with its initial declaration required by the CWC, the Syrian government also submitted its required destruction plan to the OPCW. That plan was informed by technical-level conversations among U.S. and Russian experts and the OPCW Technical Secretariat in The Hague. While the CWC and OPCW require preserving confidentiality, I can say in this setting that the United States and Russia believe the destruction plan to be feasible and to conform to the terms outlined in the Framework. The plan also reflects our shared view that the removal and destruction of CW agent and precursor chemicals outside Syria, under OPCW verification, will be the most effective way to eliminate the vast majority of Syria's chemical weapons in the shortest possible time. With this in mind, UNSCR 2118 authorizes UN Member States to acquire, control, transport, transfer, and destroy Syrian chemical weapons identified by the OPCW.

The task before us remains considerable and the timelines ambitious; ongoing Syrian cooperation with the UN-OPCW Joint Mission remains the key factor in successfully eliminating these weapons by mid 2014, as envisioned by the U.S.-Russia Framework. We expect the Russian Federation to continue to press Damascus to comply with these obligations and to permit the UN-OPCW Joint Mission to complete its work. With the continuing cooperation of the Syrian Government, the support of the international community, and the dedicated

members of the UN-OPCW Joint Mission, we believe that this timeline is achievable. We have, of course, also been in close and continuous contact with Syrian opposition leaders, updating them throughout this process, and reiterating our expectation that they support and facilitate the activities of the UN-OPCW Joint Mission.

Let me say a word about the role of the United States and the international community in providing support to the UN-OPCW Joint Mission in Syria. We continue to encourage all countries to make whatever contribution they can to this important undertaking – whether that contribution is financial, technical, or in-kind – to enable the OPCW and UN to complete their missions. The United States has led by example in providing such support. U.S. assistance to the UN and OPCW already totals approximately \$6 million from the State Department’s Nonproliferation and Disarmament Fund, including direct financial assistance to both the UN and OPCW Trust Funds, as well as in-kind support for the inspection team. For example, as Secretary Kerry reported last week in London, the United States delivered ten armored vehicles to support the efforts of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria.

We continue to approach this process with our eyes wide open. We can expect that the path ahead will not be smooth, given the unprecedented scope and timelines for the mission. But the positive developments in the six weeks since we left Geneva confirm that its timely completion is achievable. We are resolute in addressing these challenges given what is at stake for the Syrian people, the region, and the world.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss this important security issue with you. I look forward to your questions and to continuing to consult with you closely in the days ahead.