

Secretary-General's remarks on Syria

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Seoul, Republic of Korea

26 August 2013

Following is a transcript of remarks on Syria made by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at a press conference in Seoul:

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, It is a great pleasure to see you.

Let me begin by addressing the alarming crisis in Syria.

The United Nations team on the ground, led by Dr. Sellstrom, has been working intensively around the clock to respond to the latest reports of alleged use of chemical weapons.

I have been in constant contact with many world leaders as well as my senior staff at New York Headquarters and in Damascus.

The UN Investigation Mission was in Syria before this most recent horrific attack. Now, following talks in the country between my High Representative for Disarmament, Ms. Angela Kane, and top Syrian officials, the Mission is expected to begin conducting on-site fact-finding activities today, 26th of August, in just a matter of hours.

And every hour counts. We cannot afford any more delays. We have all seen the horrifying images on our television screens and through social media. Clearly this was a major and terrible incident.

We owe it to the families of the victims to act.

All those in Syria have a stake in finding out the truth. The whole world should be concerned about any threat or use of chemical weapons. And that is why the world is watching Syria.

I demand that all parties allow this mission to get on with the job so that we can begin to establish the facts. The team must be able to conduct a full, thorough and unimpeded investigation. I have total confidence in their expertise, professionalism and integrity.

Their success is in everyone's interest – all parties in Syria and all concerned States. It will address the recent allegations in the Damascus area and its success can have a deterrent effect on possible further use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere.

We are determined to answer the call of our Member States, fulfill our mandate and resolve deeply disturbing unanswered questions.

If proven, any use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances is a serious violation of international law and an outrageous crime. We cannot allow impunity in what appears to be a grave crime against humanity.

At the same time, it remains essential to achieve a complete cessation of hostilities, so that humanitarian assistance can urgently be delivered. All parties to this conflict should agree on an indefinite ceasefire.