



# Press Conference

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

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## **PRESS CONFERENCE BY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AUSTRALIA**

### **ON SECURITY COUNCIL PRESIDENCY IN SEPTEMBER**

The Security Council resolution on dismantling and eliminating Syria's chemical weapons capabilities established a new norm ensuring that the use of such weapons by anyone anywhere constituted a threat to international peace and security, the 15-member body's President for September said today.

Speaking with unity and firmness — all 15 members having co-sponsored the resolution adopted on Friday — the international community had laid a firm, enforceable basis for eliminating Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles, Gary Quinlan (Australia) said at a Headquarters press conference to conclude his country's presidency. They had also proposed punitive measures under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter in case of non-compliance, he added.

Following the resolution's adoption, he continued, Australia and Luxembourg had drafted and circulated for initial consultations a product on addressing the humanitarian crisis in Syria, which was likely to emerge as a presidential statement on Wednesday or Thursday.

Another highlight of Australia's presidency was the adoption of the first-ever Council resolution on small arms and light weapons, he said, noting that it had received a favourable response, including from parts of the United Nations System. "We think that is a good contribution to the [United Nations] agenda," he added.

The Council's high-level meeting on Yemen had come at a critical phase of that country's national reconciliation effort, during which the parties were setting the stage for a new constitution and fresh elections. Although dialogue had been a few weeks behind, and questions persisted on the future of the south and the nature of the new Government's structure, the Council was determined to keep "a close eye" on the situation.

On mandate renewals, he said things were going "pretty well" in Liberia and Sierra Leone, but elections in Guinea-Bissau might have to be "slightly" delayed. Despite persistent criminality and drug running, things looked better. As for Somalia, there was a new window of opportunity, although the gains made were easily reversible. The attack in Kenya showed that Al-Shabaab, which still occupied significant territory in Somalia, were "not out", he said, adding that the Council was awaiting further information.

The security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was better, but still tenuous, he continued. The recent upsurge in attacks was a cause for serious worry, he said, calling for a real shift in political and diplomatic gears towards a unified response to the threat from rebel groups. On Sudan and South Sudan, the Council held discussions on two occasions. The humanitarian situation was bleak and the undetermined status of the Abyei region was a source of concern, he said, adding that unilateral actions aimed at influencing the outcome of a scheduled referendum could engender a major conflict.

The security situation in Libya was difficult and serious, he said, emphasizing the urgent need for progress on a new electoral law and a new national dialogue. A briefing on Afghanistan had underlined the fact that credible and transparent presidential elections in 2014 would be "quite fundamental" to the country's future outlook. While things were moving in the right direction, the Council

had expressed great concern over the spurt in deliberate and targeted killings, including those against women holding office.

On the Middle East, he said the Quartet had met last week, and the Council was leveraging what support it could towards advancing the resumed negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

He said the Council had not discussed the situation in the Central African Republic, but it might do so in October.

Asked whether the proposed presidential statement on Syria would address cross-border operations, he said the language contained much of what had already been agreed in April on cross-border assistance as appropriate under United Nations humanitarian guidelines.

When asked whether the resolution on Syria was legally binding on the parties, he said the text was "quite explicit" on the question of non-compliance. "It has already been decided that we will take measures," he added. Compliance was a test that all sides must pass.

Asked why the Council had contemplated a presidential statement rather than a resolution on Syria's humanitarian crisis, and whether the Russian Federation was fully involved in the process, he said that a statement would send an immediate and unified message, building on the momentum already created, whereas another resolution would take time. One of the main problems cited by humanitarian agencies was the Council's disunity, he pointed out. "Our ambition is to keep up the momentum to send a strong and unified message through a presidential statement," he said, adding that discussions with the Russian Federation had been constructive. Conceding that a presidential statement lacked enforceability, he said the Council's unity would nevertheless goad all sides to positive action.

Responding to another question, he said the process set forth in the chemical weapons resolution was clear and time-bound, and that the task was expected to be completed by the middle of 2014.

On whether Iran would participate in the proposed Geneva II conference, he said the Council had not discussed that specific subject, although regional consultations were under way.

Turning to Yemen, he said the Council had given a strong message of support for national dialogue and reconciliation, and was prepared for further action should there be spoilers. "Once we have greater clarity on the outcome of the [National] Dialogue [Conference], the Security Council might make statement."

He declined to comment on whether the Council had plans for members to visit the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On the Central African Republic, he emphasized the urgent need to address that country's major humanitarian crises, as well as its bigger human rights crisis. Key actors must galvanize themselves with a renewed sense of action, he said.

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