

Syrian Arab Republic

As a follow-up to earlier initiatives presented by the Syrian Arab Republic to the international community with a view to strengthening and upholding the concept of international peace and security, in April 2003 Syria submitted to the Security Council, in New York, on behalf of the Arab Group, an initiative for ridding the Middle East region of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons.

Syria declared before the international community that it would contribute effectively, together with its Arab brothers and the world's other peace-loving countries, towards making the Middle East a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. Unfortunately, however, international conditions at the time and the positions of certain influential States in the Security Council did not favour the success of that initiative. In December 2003 the Syrian Arab Republic again proposed before the Security Council the same initiative, which but it was met with threats of the use of the veto against it and remained before the Security Council "in blue," awaiting more favourable international conditions for its adoption.

Shortly before the adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic proceeded to adopt a number of measures for regulating the handling of chemical and biological materials employed in various peaceful applications with a view to preventing their falling into the hands of non-governmental bodies.

The competent Syrian authorities established national legislation on the sound management of chemicals and strove to develop all national standards relating to the permissible maximum limits for the concentration of chemical substances in the environment. They also established a timetable for reducing the release of chemicals and hazardous wastes into the environment, work on which is expected to be completed by the end of 2005.

As early as 1994 a national centre was established for the purpose of furnishing needed information regarding preventive measures required in connection with the handling of chemical and biological substances used in medicine, industry and agriculture. It should be mentioned that the Syrian Arab Republic signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction in 1972, in addition to being a party to most of the conventions on the management of chemicals and hazardous waste, including the Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal (since 1992), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (since 2002) and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (since 2003). All these instruments relate to the prohibition of the production of and trade in chemical substances and hazardous wastes known for their toxic properties, their resistance to decomposition, their biological accumulation, and their trans-boundary movements over considerable distances via the air and water and by various kinds of migration. They form an integrated legal framework for the integral management of chemicals and hazardous wastes. In 2002 the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic implemented the national chemical safety plan, which involved the adoption of an action plan for improving the management of chemical substances in Syria by means of a number of measures, including the following:

- Adoption of a uniform definition and classification of chemicals in common use in Syria for the years 2003 and 2004;

- Establishment of a schedule of chemicals prohibited and restricted in Syria;
- Issuance of a technical guide for the sound management of chemical waste at the beginning of 2003;
- Preparation of inventory lists of hazardous wastes resulting from various activities in mid-2003 to 2006;
- Establishment of a national database on the management of chemicals and a network for information exchange among the relevant organizations, to permit the exchange of data and information.