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Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Syrian Arab Republic

Report by the Director General

1. On 28 August 2009, the Director General reported to the Board of Governors on the implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) (GOV/2009/56). This report covers relevant developments since that date.
2. On 2 June 2008, the Director General informed the Board of Governors that in May of that year the Agency had been provided with information alleging that an installation at the Dair Alzour site in Syria, destroyed by Israel in September 2007, had been a nuclear reactor (GOV/2009/56, para. 2). Syria has maintained that the building was a military non-nuclear installation.
3. The Agency has repeatedly requested to have substantive discussions with Syria on the nature of the destroyed building, and to discuss with Syria relevant satellite imagery and other information available to the Agency. Syria has declined to have such discussions. In a letter dated 23 October 2009, the Agency repeated its requests for information concerning the Dair Alzour site, the infrastructure observed at the site, and certain procurement efforts which Syria has stated were related to civilian activities (GOV/2009/36, para. 14). The Agency also reiterated its request for access to technical documentation and any other information related to the construction of the destroyed building. The Agency also requested access to locations where the debris from the destroyed building, the remains of munitions, the debris from equipment and any salvaged equipment had been and/or are located. In that letter, the Agency also offered to engage with Syria to establish the necessary modalities for managed access to sensitive information and locations, including the Dair Alzour site and three other locations allegedly functionally-related to the Dair Alzour site, to enable the Agency to establish the facts and make progress in its verification, while protecting military and other information which Syria considers to be sensitive.
4. Analysis of the samples taken in June 2008 at the Dair Alzour site indicated the presence of particles of anthropogenic¹ natural uranium of a type not included in Syria's declared inventory of nuclear material. Syria has stated that the origin of the anthropogenic natural uranium particles was the

¹ "Anthropogenic" refers to material that has been produced as a result of chemical processing.

missiles used to destroy the building. The Agency has assessed, based on the isotopic and chemical composition and the morphology of the particles, that there is a low probability that the source of the anthropogenic natural uranium particles was the use of missiles (GOV/2009/9, para. 7). In its 23 October 2009 letter, the Agency once more reiterated its request that Syria share any information it may have to support its statement. To date, Syria has not provided any information to this effect. In this context, Israel has not responded to the Agency's request of 20 May 2009 for specific information on the contents of the munitions used to destroy the building (GOV/2009/36, para. 7).

5. In its 23 October 2009 letter, the Agency also responded to Syria's assertions² that, due to the military and non-nuclear nature of the Dair Alzour site and the other three locations, it had no obligation to provide more information under its Safeguards Agreement, and that the anthropogenic natural uranium particles found at the Dair Alzour site do not constitute undeclared nuclear material. The Agency indicated that the Safeguards Agreement between Syria and the Agency places no limitation on Agency access to information, activities or locations simply because they may be military related. The Agency also indicated that the presence at the Dair Alzour site of particles of anthropogenic natural uranium of a type not included in Syria's declared inventory gives rise to questions about the correctness and completeness of Syria's declaration, which the Agency is obliged to pursue.

6. In relation to the presence of anthropogenic natural uranium particles at the Miniature Neutron Source Reactor (MNSR) in samples taken there in August 2008 (GOV/2009/36, para. 17), Syria has stated that the presence of natural uranium particles resulted from the accumulation of samples and reference materials used in neutron activation analysis (GOV/2009/56, para. 10). In a letter dated 13 October 2009, the Agency provided Syria with the results from additional samples it had taken during the July 2009 physical inventory verification at the MNSR. The results also showed the presence of anthropogenic natural uranium particles at a number of locations and on certain equipment. However, the results did not indicate the presence of anthropogenic natural uranium particles in either the standard reference materials or on the shielded transport container which Syria had indicated as possible sources of the uranium particles. In light of these results, the Agency requested to meet with Syria to discuss the matter further.

7. In a meeting held on 2 November 2009 in Vienna, Syria was provided with further detailed information concerning the results of the analysis of the environmental samples from the MNSR. At that meeting, Syria identified other possible sources of the anthropogenic natural uranium particles, including domestically produced yellowcake and small quantities of imported, but previously undeclared, commercial uranyl nitrate. Syria also provided a document to support its explanation for the presence of the uranyl nitrate at the MNSR.

8. In a letter to Syria dated 5 November 2009, the Agency announced its intention to carry out an inspection at the MNSR on 17 November 2009 for the purposes of taking samples of the yellowcake and the uranyl nitrate and taking environmental samples at the locations where the materials are stored and where they were used. The Agency also requested that Syria provide information concerning the yellowcake, the uranyl nitrate and any other uranium-containing materials which may have been the source of the anthropogenic natural uranium particles.

² Communicated in Syria's letter to the Agency dated 13 August 2009, see GOV/2009/56, paras 8, 9.

Summary

9. Essentially, no progress has been made since the last report to clarify any of the outstanding issues relevant to the implementation of safeguards.

10. Syria has not yet provided the cooperation necessary to permit the Agency to determine the origin of the anthropogenic natural uranium particles found in samples taken at the Dair Alzour site. Syria has also not provided information or access that would allow the Agency to confirm Syria's statements regarding the non-nuclear nature of the destroyed building on the Dair Alzour site, or to determine if, as alleged, any functional relationship existed between that site and three other locations. Nor has Syria substantiated its claims regarding certain procurement efforts that, in the Agency's view, could support the construction of a reactor. The Agency will continue its verification activities to confirm Syria's statements within the authority available to it and subject to the cooperation provided by Syria.

11. The results of the environmental sampling at the MNSR confirm the presence of particles of anthropogenic natural uranium of a type not in Syria's declared inventory. The results do not support Syria's earlier explanation for the origin and presence of the particles. The Agency is investigating Syria's explanation discussed at the 2 November 2009 meeting for the presence of the particles and has announced its intention to carry out an inspection at the MNSR on 17 November 2009.

12. The Director General urges Syria to cooperate with the Agency in its verification activities so that, in accordance with its mandate under Syria's Safeguards Agreement, the Agency is able to ensure that safeguards are applied to all source and special fissionable material subject to that Agreement. Recognizing Syria's concerns about the sensitivity of certain information and locations, the Director General also urges Syria to engage with the Agency to establish the necessary modalities for managed access to such information and locations that will enable the Agency to establish the facts and make progress in its verification, while protecting military and other information considered by Syria as sensitive. The Director General also calls on other States, including Israel, which may possess information relevant to the Agency's verification, including information which may have led them to conclude that the installation in question at the Dair Alzour site had been a nuclear reactor, to make such information available to the Agency.

13. The Director General will continue to report as appropriate.