

# *Russia says US blocking UN Security Council Resolution on independent Syria chemical attacks probe*

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United Nations, Feb 12 (RHC)-- Russian Ambassador to the United Nations Vasily Nebenzia says he does not see chances the UN Security Council could adopt any time soon a Russian-drafted resolution on a probe into the use of chemical weapons in Syria, blaming the U.S. for hindering the progress over the issue. Nebenzia said recently that the main obstacle to the adoption of the resolution had been the nonconstructive position of U.S. diplomats at the Council.

"We have never doubted we need an independent mechanism of probing into the chemical incidents in Syria, and this is why we have suggested the new resolution, which the experts study now, but, honestly speaking, due to the US position I cannot hope it may be adopted any time soon," Russia's TASS news agency quoted the senior diplomat as saying.

By now, Nebenzia continued, the Security Council members have had two rounds of expert consultations, "and everything has stopped" at that stage. During the talks, the American side called the resolution "defective" and insisted that the UN Joint Investigative Mechanism and Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) resume work on the investigation into the chemical attacks. The U.S. blamed Moscow for having "killed" the probe. "Correct, formally they have not used the right to veto, but they simply dumped the resolution," the ambassador said. Thus it is "their, not our responsibility for the Joint Mechanism's death."

Last month, the United States rejected the Russian-drafted Security Council resolution aimed at establishing an investigative mechanism into all allegations of chemical attacks in Syria, with both sides discrediting each other's data on the issue. The Council meeting was called by Moscow to discuss the crisis in Syria, especially recent accusations against Damascus over an alleged chemical attack.

The mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) of the UN and the OPCW expired in November after several failed attempts by the Security Council to extend its authority. Nebenzia earlier said the probes collapsed because they were full of "systemic deficiencies" and had become a mechanism for political manipulation.

Nebenzia said he could not understand "why the Americans want an independent mechanism for investigation into the chemical incidents in Syria, since they not only prior to the investigation, but prior to a confirmation the chemical weapons have been used" start blaming immediately the Syrian authorities.

"To my simple question what political and military dividends the Syrian government receives from use of chemical weapons, they would not give response and shamefully look away," the diplomat said. The United States and its allies have repeatedly accused Syrian government forces of carrying out chemical attacks in civilian areas without providing any substantial evidence.

Damascus has handed over its entire stockpile of chemical weapons under a 2013 deal negotiated by Russia and the United States. The operation was overseen by the OPCW.

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