

## **Lord Owen's proposals regarding Syria as at 27 August 2013**

A diplomatic war should be waged first in the Security Council in New York before the House of Commons endorses any British Tomahawk cruise missiles being launched against targets in Syria.

Chemical weapons are classified as Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and there is an International Convention on Chemical Weapons which came into effect in 1997. Today 189 countries are signatories to the Convention; unfortunately seven UN member states have not signed. Importantly they include Syria and Israel as well as Egypt, South Sudan , Burma, North Korea and Angola.

An Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) operates out of The Hague in the Netherlands and claims that over the years they have been instrumental in destroying 78% of the world's chemical weapons. So the prospect of getting to grips with chemical weapons in Syria is not hopeless. It has been done, for example, in Iraq as part of the UN Resolutions after Saddam Hussein's forces had been thrown out of Kuwait in 1991.

The first aim now of President Obama should be to persuade China and Russia to join in supporting a UN Resolution consisting of three interlocking

elements. The first element of which would be:

- (i) to re-establish a UN-led Inspection team with a mandate across the whole of Syria charged with systematically destroying all chemical weapons in Syria regardless of which of the fighting forces has them.

This neutral formula would apply unless the present inspection team had pinpointed Assad's forces as being responsible, or the US, UK and France had been able to provide the Council with convincing evidence that the responsible party was Syrian Government forces and in which case they would be named and the geographical mandate adjusted.

The second element in the Resolution should be another non-discriminatory demand on the fighting forces in Syria that they should accept:

- (ii) A demand from the Security Council to accept an immediate ceasefire policed on the ground by UN forces.

The third element to the Resolution would be:

- (iii) the setting of a date for an immediate start to the proposed meeting in Geneva previously agreed between the US and Russian Foreign Ministers, Kerry and Lavrov to which all countries in the affected region should be

invited to negotiate a peace settlement for Syria.

If there was no agreement on who should be asked to attend, a compromise should be put to the Security Council by the Secretary General for including Israel and Iran.