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SWITZERLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR HEINZ WALKER-NEDERKOORN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION TO THE
OPCW AT THE NINETY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,

The two latest reports of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) regarding the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria once again draw disturbing conclusions. After a thorough, impartial, and professional investigation, the FFM confirmed that the evaluation and analysis of all information available provides reasonable grounds to believe that toxic chemicals were used as a weapon, both in Marea on 1 September 2015 as well as in Kafr Zeita on 1 October 2016.

The Swiss Government is gravely concerned about these findings. Switzerland condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons by anyone, under any circumstances. Such acts constitute a serious violation of international law and a war crime in the context of armed conflict. The international community needs to take resolute action to ensure accountability and bring those responsible on all sides of the conflict to justice. Impunity for these crimes is simply not acceptable.

With regard to the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) assesses that it still cannot be considered accurate and complete, as gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies identified by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) still remain unresolved. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate fully with the OPCW, including the DAT and the FFM, and to grant the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) unrestricted access to its territory and to all relevant information. Complying with the decisions of the OPCW is not optional.

Switzerland thanks the FFM for its hard work under difficult conditions and wishes to express its highest esteem. We reiterate our full confidence in the work and findings of the Secretariat, which has consistently conducted its missions in the context of the FFM, the DAT, and the IIT in a professional and impartial way, and in full respect of its mandate.

The use of a novichok nerve agent in the attack against Alexei Navalny, as confirmed by the OPCW on the basis of the analytical results of its designated laboratories, remains unresolved and continues to be of grave concern. Switzerland once again calls on the Russian Federation to launch an independent investigation to hold those responsible to account, and to fully cooperate with the OPCW. The absence of a transparent and impartial investigation, in addition to the lack of cooperation with the international community, only undermines further the credibility of the Russian narrative.



Switzerland condemns the Russian military attack on Ukraine in the strongest possible terms and calls on Russia to de-escalate the situation immediately, to cease all combat operations, and to immediately withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory. Russia's large-scale military attack against Ukraine poses a massive security risk for the entire continent, which is a cause of deep concern for us. Russia's actions constitute a serious violation of international law. They violate in particular the prohibition of the use of force and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine as enshrined in international law. Switzerland calls on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and their human rights obligations.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

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