



**OPCW**

**Conference of the States Parties**

Nineteenth Session  
1 – 5 December 2014

C-19/NAT.13  
1 December 2014  
ENGLISH only

**ITALY**

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION DELIVERED BY  
MR JACEK BYLICA PRINCIPAL ADVISOR AND SPECIAL ENVOY FOR  
NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT AT THE  
NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Ms Chairperson,  
Mr Director-General,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The candidate countries Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Montenegro and Serbia, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; the EFTA country Norway, as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

Let me express the appreciation of the European Union (EU) for the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Sa'ad Abdul Majeed Ibrahim Al-Ali, Permanent Representative of Iraq to the OPCW, for the most efficient and effective manner in which he has handled the work of the Conference during the last year. Let me also welcome you, Ambassador Vesela Mrđen Korać, Permanent Representative of Croatia to the OPCW, as the new Chair of the Conference and assure you of the European Union's full cooperation and support throughout your tenure. We would also wish to express thanks to the former Chair of the Executive Council Ambassador Olexander Horin of Ukraine and the present Chair Ambassador Álvaro Moerzinger of Uruguay, as well as to the Vice-Chairs and Facilitators for their valuable contribution to the work of the Organisation and to the achievement of the goals of the Chemical Weapons Convention for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

2015 will remind us that 100 years have elapsed since chemical weapons were used, on a massive scale, in combat during the First World War. The effect of these weapons was so horrific that states moved quickly towards banning them. But, unfortunately they are still being used today. The entry into force of the Convention has been the most successful international disarmament instrument so far, having eradicated, almost universally and within short time, an entire category of declared weapons of mass destruction. This resounding success has been best illustrated by the awarding of the 2013 Nobel Peace prize to the OPCW.



The OPCW is currently facing the biggest challenge since its creation: the Syrian chemical weapons crisis. The horrific chemical attack in Ghouta on 21 August 2013 constituted a blatant violation of international law and amounted to a crime against humanity and a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The EU condemned this crime in the strongest terms and stressed that those responsible must be held accountable. Following the adoption of the 27 September 2013 Executive Council decision and the United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), the international community has directed substantial resources to ensuring the declared chemical stockpile was removed from Syria and subsequently destroyed along with the infrastructure associated with its production and the declared munitions developed for its delivery. Achieving this daunting task on tight timelines has tested the capabilities of all involved, in an unprecedented example of multilateral disarmament cooperation through the OPCW and the United Nations.

I would like to pay tribute to the dedication of the Director-General and all the OPCW Technical Secretariat staff, as well as to the Special Coordinator of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission and her staff, for the exemplary way they have carried out this operation in very challenging circumstances. Equal tribute should be paid to all parties having contributed financially or in kind to this unprecedented task, especially those that have made available land and maritime facilities and maritime escorts. The EU has contributed with around 17 million EURO.

While considerable progress has been achieved with the successful removal of the declared chemicals from the country and their near destruction, important tasks remain to be done. And this is why we welcome the appointment of Ambassador Denot Medeiros as the Director-General's Special Adviser on Syria.

During recent Executive Council meetings a great number of States Parties, including the EU Member States, have voiced grave concerns over the findings of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) set up by the Director-General to establish the facts concerning allegations of the use of chlorine gas as a chemical weapon against the civilian population in Syria. Indeed, in its second report the FFM stated that "it has found information constituting 'compelling confirmation' that a toxic chemical was used "systematically and repeatedly", "as a weapon", and witnesses reference the "invariable" presence of helicopters during the attacks, an asset that only the Syrian Government possesses. The report also references a number of more recent allegations of chemical attacks.

The EU reiterates its fundamental position that the use of chlorine gas as a chemical weapon constitutes a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the United Nations Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), and that those responsible for these horrific acts must be held accountable. The EU fully supports the decision of the Director-General that the FFM continue its work and is looking forward to the Mission's third report, and further investigations and reporting on the more recent allegations.

The EU also considers it of utmost importance that the Technical Secretariat retain the samples taken during the removal and destruction process, as well as those samples taken in Syria from the so called abandoned chemical weapons' in order to fulfil its obligations under the Convention, facilitating the actions by the Secretariat in the joint efforts to eliminate the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

In the same vein, we call on the Syrian Arab Republic to take the necessary measures to ensure that its chemical weapons programme is completely and irreversibly eliminated. This includes the destruction of the remaining production facilities and the provision of sufficient information to answer any questions arising from the discrepancies in the Syrian declarations. The Syrian Arab Republic must provide conclusive and credible evidence to support the assurances that it has fully abandoned its chemical weapons programme and ensure sufficient confidence. For example, it is simply not credible to maintain that there is no available documentation associated with the programme. In this regard, we commend the Declaration Assessment Team of the Technical Secretariat for its work on this important issue and we look forward to future reports on its activities and any progress made. Given the open issues, the EU expects that the Executive Council will continue to monitor the situation in Syria, as well as, to meet at the established frequency, remaining seized of the matter.

The EU considers that the Syrian Arab Republic, as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, is responsible for meeting the costs arising in connection with the elimination of its chemicals weapons programme and the verification thereof. Syria must fully meet these obligations.

In this respect, I would like to reiterate our statement at the Seventy-Seventh Session of Executive Council, where we drew the attention to the decision of the Council of the European Union, dated 10 February 2014. This decision introduced a derogation to the restrictive measures against the Syrian Arab Republic, so that, if Syria chooses, frozen assets belonging to the Syrian Central Bank or to Syrian public entities can be paid on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons and related verification activities. This includes destruction of the remaining production facilities and activities connected to the verification missions of the Technical Secretariat. The EU has addressed a letter to the Director-General informing him of the aforementioned possibility and requested him to *démarche* the Syrian authorities to this effect.

Turning to the other points of the agenda, we firstly underline that achieving the goal of universality remains one of our principal challenges. We encourage the Technical Secretariat to continue its efforts towards achieving universality in a targeted and tailor-made manner. The European Union calls upon the few States not Party to the Convention to ratify or accede without delay and will continue its active support for reaching this common objective with concrete actions.

Secondly, we must also recall that the destruction of existing stockpiles of chemical weapons remains a core objective of the Convention. The EU congratulates those States which have completed their destruction processes, but we are concerned that some were unable to meet the destruction deadlines. We regret that the Russian Federation has had to delay its own planned completion date by five years. We urge the possessor States to continue their efforts to complete destruction in the shortest time possible in accordance with the provisions of the decision of the Sixteenth Session of the Conference of States Parties on the final extended deadlines.

Thirdly, for States Parties to the Convention a main concern is to ensure its effective implementation in accordance with the provisions of Article VII. It is a serious matter that only half of the States Parties to the Convention have comprehensive implementing legislation in place. We recognise that this poses a legislative and administrative challenge.

The EU encourages the Technical Secretariat to continue assisting States Parties to meet their obligations.

Looking beyond these challenges, Ms Chairperson, we must also reflect on how the mechanisms of the Convention can prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons and enhance the trust and confidence which forms the basis for our shared commitment to a world free of chemical weapons. We need to think about how the Convention can be strengthened to ensure that no chemical weapons are developed or produced under the guise of purposes not prohibited under the Convention.

In this respect, we take note with interest of the report of the Twenty First Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Board and the recommendations contained therein. As the OPCW needs to strengthen its effectiveness, it will need to adapt to the changing security environment as well as to developments in science and technology. The report of the SAB provides valuable guidance for the path to follow. And we know that this is one of the main tasks of the Director-General in the near future.

We also recognise that the implementation of all articles of the Convention constitutes a tangible contribution to preventing the re-emergence of chemical weapons in the hands of non-state actors such as terrorists. Considering recent developments in different parts of the world, relevant action regarding promotion of chemical safety and security has acquired even more importance.

Likewise, we need to ensure that the Article VI verification regime is as effective as possible, also by directing inspections to the sites that are most relevant. Other means of enhancing the capabilities in this area, by reducing discrepancies, should be considered. Declarations must be complete, accurate and timely submitted. Information received from the States Parties shows that logistical difficulties in regard to transmission of declarations is one of the most frequently cited reasons for late submissions. The recent introduction of the SIX system for the secure electronic transmission of Article VI declarations has been a remarkable improvement, a follow-up to the Third Review Conference recommendations of April 2013.

The European Union attaches great importance to the work carried out under Article X and looks forward to taking a decision at this session which will allow the OPCW to rehire a limited number of experienced inspectors, in order to deal with future contingencies, facilitating capacity-building inside the inspectorate.

The EU stands ready to discuss concrete proposals put forward under Article XI, in accordance with the relevant Decision taken by the Third Review Conference. The EU actively supports the OPCW activities regarding assistance, protection and international cooperation directed to States Parties of all regional groups. Particular emphasis is placed on supporting the Programme for Africa. We encourage States Parties to take advantage of the assistance provided through the funded activities, by participating in them according to their own needs. We also attach importance to the cooperation with other international organisations. The recent OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria is a significant example. The EU considers it essential to identify and implement lessons learned.

The follow-up process to the Third Review Conference, which takes place under the supervision of the Executive Council, in cooperation with the Technical Secretariat, is a priority for the EU. It is important, however, that we strengthen the involvement of other

stakeholders such as chemical industry associations, private sector, academia and civil society. This is necessary to ensure an effective, universal approach to adapting the CWC to today's world. Incorporating existing knowledge and competencies, developing synergies, avoiding duplication of efforts and improving transparency must be a priority.

The Member States of the EU express appreciation to all participants having contributed constructively to the consultations on the Draft Programme and Budget for 2015, with a view to consensual adoption during the current Conference.

The assessed contributions of the EU Member States account for 40% of the overall budget annually, and in addition the EU has so far contributed close to EUR 10 million through a number of EU Council decisions and joint actions since 2004. A new Council decision concerning an amount of over EUR 2.5 million for the years 2015-2017 is in the final stages of approval.

Finally, we underline that the implementation of the Convention requires an organisation which is capable of undertaking its duties effectively. It is in our collective interest that the Technical Secretariat is well equipped with the necessary tools and has the capacity to fully implement the verification regime. This includes maintaining and developing its capabilities, expertise and preparedness to conduct challenge inspections and investigations of alleged use. The EU welcomes initiatives taken by the Director-General and within the policy-making organs to enhance the management and work practices of the OPCW. We encourage the continuation and systematisation of these initiatives.

We are looking forward to working with all delegations in a constructive and open manner at this Conference and we trust that it will be a success.

I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Conference and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank you Ms Chairperson.

- - - 0 - - -