



OPCW

Executive Council

Seventy-Ninth Session
7 – 9 July 2015

EC-79/NAT.23
7 July 2015
ENGLISH and FRENCH only

SWITZERLAND

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR URS BREITER
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWITZERLAND TO THE OPCW
AT THE SEVENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairman,

First of all, please let me welcome you as Chairperson of the Executive Council and convey to you the congratulations of the Swiss delegation for your election. I wish you very much success in the accomplishment of this task.

As regards the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons, Switzerland takes note of the information contained in the Director-General's report and welcomes the fact that the destruction of the twelve chemical weapons facilities is on the right track. The time has come to be able to put an end to this chapter in the Syrian Arab Republic. We would like once again to congratulate the Director-General as well as the OPCW and UN personnel involved in these operations for their efforts.

In the context of the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, Switzerland urges once again those responsible to definitively give up the use of chemical weapons and to finally respect their obligations under international law. In this respect the establishment of facts is of utmost importance. This is the reason why Switzerland supports the Fact-Finding Mission of the OPCW, which it considers as crucial in order to soon establish responsibilities and to put the international justice into motion. A serious crime such as the use of chlorine against a civilian population cannot remain unpunished. All accusations must be the subject of an investigation.

Moreover, my delegation commends the work of the Declaration Assessment Team which puts into light the discordances and irregularities of the Syrian initial declaration. These inconsistencies call for extreme vigilance from the OPCW organs and Member States.

Until now my delegation has been very patient throughout the progress of this unprecedented operation, keeping in mind the extreme difficulties in the field. However, Mr Chairman, in spite of all efforts deployed by the OPCW to fulfil its mandate within the framework of the Fact-Finding Mission and the Declaration Assessment Team, the conclusions are overdue. We therefore call on the Syrian authorities to intensify their cooperation with the OPCW in order to close this chapter.



The incapacitating chemical agent issue remains at the very heart of my delegation's concerns. I take note that on this topic the discussion has started in an irreversible manner and moves forward. Switzerland, in close cooperation with Australia notably, carries on its informal contacts aiming at informing delegations interested in this subject. We call on all States Parties who are able to clarify their position on the incapacitating chemical agent issue to do so, either by exposing their national policies or by supporting the idea of launching a discussion within the OPCW. I would like to thank the delegations which made a statement in this respect. To cope with this challenge, Switzerland will relentlessly pursue its engagement in collaboration with the organs of this Organisation and the delegations that are willing to move forward on this question.

Finally, Switzerland urges all States Parties to pay their contributions without delay and for those concerned, the verification costs. It is essential to avoid a situation where the Organisation finds itself in financial difficulty because of arrears accumulation.

At last, I would like to request this statement be circulated as an official document of this Seventy-Ninth Session of the Executive Council.

Thank you.

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