



OPCW

Executive Council

Eighty-Sixth Session
10 – 13 October 2017

EC-86/NAT.5
10 October 2017
ENGLISH only

ESTONIA

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR KAILI TERRAS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr 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 and Turkey, as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Norway, Ukraine and Georgia align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

We thank the Director-General for his introductory statement and reiterate our appreciation to him and to the OPCW staff for their commitment to the goals and work of the Organisation often in particularly challenging circumstances.

The EU welcomes the emerging consensus around Ambassador Fernando Arias of Spain for the post of the Director-General. The EU is committed to support the new Director-General in his endeavours aiming at creating a world free of chemical weapons.

The EU is gravely concerned about the continued use of chemical weapons, including toxic industrial chemicals, in the Syrian Arab Republic. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, be it State or non-State actors, anywhere and under any circumstances is contrary to international law and must be rigorously condemned, and those responsible for such acts must be held accountable.

The EU looks forward to the publication of the Joint Investigative Mechanism's (JIM) report to identify those responsible for the use of sarin in the attack of 4 April 2017 in Khan Shaykhun, and those responsible for the exposure to sulfur mustard in Um Housh in September 2016, both heinous crimes confirmed by the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) reports. It is deeply disturbing to learn that sarin has been found in samples from Al-Lataminah, close to Khan Shaykhun, following reports of an attack there on 30 March 2017. All these cases constitute clear violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and the decisions of this Executive Council.



The European Union stresses the necessity of an immediate renewal of the JIM's mandate. Not renewing the JIM would send an irresponsible signal of impunity, particularly to those responsible for the use of chemical weapons. All members of the United Nations Security Council have a special responsibility in this regard and should clearly demonstrate that they have an interest in ensuring accountability for those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The EU fully supports the FFM's work to investigate allegations of use of chemical weapons. We call on all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic to extend their full cooperation to the FFM staff, and to ensure that it can carry out its work in a safe, independent and effective manner.

The EU expresses concern that Syria has not engaged substantively with the Technical Secretariat's ongoing investigations regarding the numerous gaps and discrepancies of the Syrian chemical weapons declarations. The Director-General reported last week that there is evidence of potential undeclared chemical weapons-related activities involving production and/or weaponisation of chemical warfare agents in Syria. The EU strongly supports the work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). It is unacceptable that Syria has failed to provide to date the cooperation necessary to address serious outstanding concerns. Even today, four years after Syria's accession to the Convention, the list of outstanding unresolved issues, questions and ambiguities remains long and has increased over time. To date, the Syrian Arab Republic has failed to provide clear evidence that it has irreversibly dismantled its chemical weapons programme and put its chemical weapons beyond use. The use of toxic chemicals by the Syrian Armed Forces as documented by the August and October 2016 JIM reports confirm that Syria has maintained at least the capacities that were used on those days. The EU is deeply concerned that the Syrian Arab Republic might still possess chemical weapons and that these weapons could be used or fall into the hands of terrorist groups.

OPCW inspectors must be given further access to the SSRCs Barzah and Jamrayah at short notice to continue conducting their work in compliance with decision EC-83/DEC.5. The EU deplores the fact that the competent Syrian authorities have not demonstrated the required level of cooperation with the Technical Secretariat and urges them to take more decisive steps to fully implement this decision.

The EU regrets to note again that Syria has to date rejected the option to use its "frozen assets" to fully meet its obligations as specified in Article IV, paragraph 16 of the Convention regarding the costs arising in connection with the elimination of its chemical weapons programme.

The EU remains deeply concerned about the use of the nerve agent VX at an airport in Malaysia on 13 February 2017. The EU invites Malaysia to keep the Executive Council informed of its investigations into this matter in accordance with decision EC-84/DEC.8 of 9 March 2017.

Universal adherence to the Convention remains a top priority for the EU. We once again call upon the United Nations members not yet Party to the Convention, namely, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Egypt, Israel and South Sudan, to ratify or accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention without delay or reservations, thus contributing to the goal of a world free of chemical weapons. Equally important remains the full implementation of the Convention as stipulated in Article VII. The EU, through its voluntary financial contributions and relevant action, will continue its active support to the Technical Secretariat's efforts and

stresses its willingness to assist all States Parties to meet their obligations and implement initial measures under the Convention using tailor-made projects.

We welcome the announcement by the Russian Federation of the completion of destruction of its remaining declared chemical weapons stockpiles in Kizner. This is indeed a historical step to delivering a world free from chemical weapons to which the EU and many EU Member States have contributed considerably.

The EU welcomes the progress of destruction of the remaining Libyan Category 2 chemical weapons at the GEKA mbH facility in Germany. The EU and its Member States confirm their readiness to contribute to the decontamination of the former storage site at Al-Ruwagha.

We remain concerned by continuing reports of the use of chemical weapons by non-State actors on the territory of Iraq. We once again invite Iraq to keep the Executive Council informed about its investigations into these alleged attacks and welcome the support that the Technical Secretariat has provided to Iraq through its technical assistance visit. The EU is looking forward to verification by the Technical Secretariat of the destruction of the remaining chemicals at Al Muthana.

As we advance towards the Fourth Review Conference and having marked 20 years of the existence of the OPCW, the EU believes that the Organisation plays an essential role as a global security and disarmament institution. It needs to be able to address new challenges, in particular in the struggle against any form of re-emergence of chemical weapons. The EU Member States contribute constructively to the relevant discussions of the dedicated Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities of the OPCW, guided under the able leadership of its Co-Chairs (the Permanent Representatives of South Africa and Canada). The Organisation must continue recruiting and training staff with the necessary skills, expertise and experience to meet both operational requirements and contingencies, including verification pursuant to Article VI, as well as possible challenge inspections or investigations of alleged use. Regarding recruitment issues, the EU also wishes to underline that gender balance should further be paid attention to throughout the entire Organisation.

We commend the work of the Secretariat in assisting States Parties in their declaration process and encourage States Parties to make full use of the SIX submission system. The EU supports the work carried out by the members of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) in order to respond effectively to advances in science and technology, including the convergence of chemistry and biology. We encourage continued substantive discussion on the implementation of the SAB Technical Working Group's recommendations for enhancing the Convention's verification regime. The EU encourages the efforts made by the Advisory Board on Education and Outreach (ABEO) in the form of recommendations and welcomes the steps taken by the Secretariat to respond to them. The recommendations will make an important contribution to understanding and raising awareness of the Convention among scientists and the wider public.

Dialogue and cooperation with other relevant international organisations and mechanisms, such as the CTBTO, the IAEA, the WCO and the BWC ISU have proven fruitful and we are looking forward to it developing further. An example in point is the close cooperation between the United Nations, the WHO and the OPCW in the Syrian operation, which has produced many valuable lessons learned that should guide our work in the future. Regular

engagement and cooperation with all stakeholders, including the chemical industry, academia and civil society, ought to be further and fully utilised.

The EU encourages all States Parties to submit adequate and timely declarations under Article X and to increase offers of assistance. The European Union will continue to support activities related to protection, assistance and international cooperation. We believe that cooperation with the regional EU Centres of Excellence can be of particular importance in this direction and we are looking into the relevant proposal by the Technical Secretariat. The European Union stands ready to discuss concrete proposals put forward under Article XI, in accordance with the relevant decision taken by the Third Review Conference in April 2013.

We believe that the OPCW has an important role to play when it comes to prevention of and response to chemical terrorism in cooperation with other regional and global actors. The implementation of all Articles of the Convention, and Article VII in particular, constitutes a tangible contribution to global security and to the effort to prevent and respond to acts of chemical terrorism by non-State actors. The European Union is gravely concerned about the risk of non-State actors acquiring and using toxic chemicals, which has already become a dark reality in Syria and Iraq.

In the same vein, we support the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and of the Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors and we look forward to States Parties and the Technical Secretariat working together to help those groups produce useful relevant and practicable recommendations. The EU, therefore, supports a draft decision on this issue to be adopted by this Executive Council as soon as possible.

Finally, we wish to thank the two facilitators from Iran and Austria and all the States Parties involved in the relevant consultations for agreeing on a draft Programme and Budget for 2018, which will allow the Organisation to discharge its core tasks and activities and remain relevant amidst emerging challenges. The Member States of the European Union, whose assessed contributions amount to more than 40% of the OPCW budget, have contributed actively in the relevant consultations. Once again, we seize this opportunity to call on States Parties that are in arrears of payment of their annual contribution to pay what they owe to the OPCW immediately. By not paying what they owe, they are hampering the effective functioning of the Organisation and are reducing the resources available to support States Parties in need of assistance.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.

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