

THE NETHERLANDS

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PAUL van den IJSSEL PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

AT THE EIGHTY-SEVEN SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 13 -16 MARCH 2018

Mr Chairperson,

[All protocol observed]

The delegation of the Netherlands thanks the Director-General for his opening statement and the Vice-Chairpersons for their reports.

Further to the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Bulgaria on behalf of the European Union, with which the Netherlands fully associates itself, my delegation wishes to make the following remarks.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Netherlands is shocked by the attack with a chemical weapon on British soil, not only on the life of Mr. Sergej Skripal and his daughter but on a society, a neighbouring country, and a friend and ally. We support the declaration made by the UK government that a nerve agent was used.

The Netherlands strongly condemns this attack with which the perpetrators have exposed innocent civilians to a great risk for their health and well-being.

It is essential that the truth comes to light and the perpetrators can be prosecuted. Impunity is not an option. We support the UK authorities in their investigations to shed full light on the details of this horrible crime.

Mr Chairperson

In a few weeks, a year will have passed after the terrible cw-attack on Khan Sheikhoun on April 4th of 2017. And in spite of the very clear conclusions in the JIM report of October last year, which provided overwhelming evidence that the Syrian Arab Republic was responsible for the attack, the international community, including this august body, has not been able to take any action against those responsible. This is outrageous and can't be explained to the victims and the public. We call upon all countries to take their responsibility as parties to the CWC (and if appropriate as members of the UNSC) and act accordingly.

Mr Chairman,

Last week the TS also issued a new report on the work of the Declaration Assessment Team (EC-87/HP/DG.1, dated 2 March 2018). This document gives us a disturbing insight in the way the Syrian Arab Republic has been trying to hide its'

chemical weapons programme. It confirms that Syria did not make a full and transparent declaration at the time of its accession to the CWC and still not has provided full disclosure.

My delegation has made this remark before and sadly it has not lost any of its relevance: We are convinced that the members of the Council, like us, see the true character of the Syrian submissions: they are obvious attempts to hide the truth about its chemical weapons programme. Gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies remain and need without any delay to be clarified.

Mr. Chairperson,

We reiterate our trust in the concept and the members of the FFM, whose unrelenting dedication, professionalism and courage in performing their important work deserve our unconditional support.

To underline our dedication to uphold the norm against all use of chemical weapons, the Netherlands has joined the International Partnership against impunity of the use of chemical weapons. This Partnership that is complementary to our work here, will support existing mechanisms, like the I.I.I.M (Triple I-M), will collect and share information on use of chemical weapons anywhere in the world and by doing so, send a strong signal that impunity is not an option. We encourage all member states of the OPCW to join the Partnership to make that signal as strong as possible

Mr Chairperson,

Given the time constraints, I will limit myself to these remarks and not go into detail about the other important issues on the agenda. However before ending I wish to express again my delegation's support for the work of Fact Finding Mission.

We stand ready to discuss the issue of attribution, since the JIM or similar mechanisms no longer exist. In our view the lack of attribution, let alone accountability, is unacceptable and undermines gravely the credibility of the Convention.

Thank you very much, Mr Chairperson.