

Statement by Norway
54th meeting of the Executive Council of the
Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

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Madam Chairperson
Director-General
Distinguished delegates

Norway is aligned with the statement delivered by the Ambassador of Malta on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add three brief points in my national capacity.

First, my Government reacted with horror to the reported use of chemical weapons in the Khan Shaykhun area of Idlib province in the Syrian Arab Republic on 4 April 2017, which killed and injured a large number of people, including many children. Our thoughts are with the victims' families and the affected communities in Syria.

The use of chemical weapons constitutes a serious violation of international law. The blatant disregard for humanitarian law is outrageous. Crimes against humanity and war crimes must not go unpunished.

Second, the recent attack deepens our concern with the way in which Syria gave up on its chemical weapons. Norway participated in the international operation in 2014 to remove all declared chemical weapons from Syria for subsequent destruction. However, Norway is deeply concerned that the OPCW's Technical Secretariat, after nearly three years, still has not been able to resolve all identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies in Syria's declaration, and therefore cannot fully verify that Syria has submitted a declaration that can be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention, the OPCW Executive decision and Security Council resolution 2118.

The repeated use of chemical weapons since 2014, by both the Syrian Armed Forces and ISIL, as shown by investigations led by the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission and the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the OPCW and the UN, casts serious doubt over the assumption that all chemical weapons were in fact relinquished in 2014.

Third, on the way forward, Norway is satisfied that the Fact-Finding Mission is in the process of gathering and analysing information on this incident from all available sources and will report to this Council. Norway has full confidence in its impartiality, independence and the professionalism of its members and calls on all parties to provide unfettered and safe access to all sites deemed relevant by the Fact-Finding Mission, as well as the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

Thank you Madam Chairperson.