



Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden

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

**Ambassador Per Holmström
Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OPCW**

13 April 2017

Madame Chairperson,

Sweden aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Ambassador of Malta on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add the following in my national capacity.

The recent attack in Khan Sheykoun, in which many victims displayed symptoms of chemical weapons exposure, was abhorrent and unacceptable. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere at any time constitutes an international crime, and may constitute a war crime or crime against humanity, and if allegations are proven correct, this attack will add to other confirmed cases of international crimes committed by the Syrian regime.

Sweden applauds the Director-General's decision promptly to dispatch a Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to investigate the events at Khan Sheykoun and, much like the rest of the Council, looks forward to the up-coming FFM report.

In the course of the past week, Sweden – currently a non-permanent Security Council member -has worked tirelessly to ensure the urgent adoption by the Security Council of a strong resolution that would condemn the reported chemical attack, support a prompt and thorough investigation into this outrage and hold those responsible for any use of chemical weapons to account, whomever they may be. Unity in the Security Council would have strengthened the hand of the on-going investigation and sent a clear message about the Security Council's rejection of the chemical weapons. We are deeply disappointed that it was not possible to find such unity, and will continue our efforts in this regard.

Sweden has full confidence in the ability of the OPCW FFM and the JIM to discharge their missions pursuant to the Convention and to Security Council resolutions 2118, 2335 and 2319 with professionalism, technical expertise and impartiality. We cannot accept any attempt to put into question the integrity of either the OPCW or the JIM, nor to micro-manage their work. We therefore do

not support the proposal to set up a new mechanism, the composition or technical operations of which would be subject to approval by the Security Council.

Sweden remains convinced that this Council – like the Security Council – is united in its support of the on-going OPCW FFM and any future investigation by the JIM, as well as in its condemnation of any chemical weapons use at Khan Seykhoun and elsewhere. We look forward to continuing these deliberations once the report of the FFM has been received. Chemical weapons use in the Syrian conflict must end here.

Thank you Madame Chairperson,