



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

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ENGLISH and RUSSIAN only

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A.V. SHULGIN  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE OPCW  
ON THE RESULTS OF THE VOTE  
AT THE FIFTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madame Chairperson,

I would like to begin by thanking the delegations of Algeria, China, South Africa and Sudan for supporting the Russo-Iranian draft decision of the Executive Council.

The results of the vote that has just been conducted have saddened us. The proposal we jointly put forward with Iran for the immediate commencement of a full investigation into the circumstances of the chemical incident in the Syrian province of Idlib on 4 April 2017 did not receive the necessary number of votes. One must state quite bluntly that it was, first and foremost, States from the Western group that opposed the draft. This is all the more disappointing for us because the Russian delegation, mindful of the injunctions of a whole host of representatives from other regional groups, sought a possible compromise right up to the very last moment. With the agreement of our Iranian partners, the co-sponsors of the draft, we introduced an updated version of it that took account of virtually all the remarks made in the course of yesterday's meeting. It seemed as though no one would raise their hand to reject such a document. Nevertheless, that is what has happened. We view this as having been done on contrived and unconvincing pretexts. We would request our Western colleagues, however, rather than celebrating, to think long and hard about the deleterious nature of their actions. They have blocked a decision that sought the earliest possible commencement of an elucidation of what actually happened in Khan Sheikhun on 4 April and of whether there were chemical weapons at the Shayrat airbase. They suggest we wait patiently while the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on chemical weapons use in Syria, working remotely and without visiting the site, processes a welter of unspecified information.

Now they tell us that the FFM has already taken various unspecified biomedical samples and that they have supposedly already been analysed and shown the presence of sarin. Moreover, it is being stated that the findings of this investigation are conclusive and incontrovertible. But may I ask where, when and how these samples were taken? Was the sequence of steps, established by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons itself, to guarantee the chain of custody complied with? It would be appropriate to receive answers to these questions, especially since, as we know, the mission itself has not actually visited Syria. I do not ask these questions by happenstance. On 13 April, I already referred in my statement to how the Russian military, having collected materials that evidenced the use of chemical weapons in Aleppo, were literally turned inside out with demands that they explain how they



had found the munition fragments and whom they had reported to - to the extent of it being suggested that they should show some form of log book. They are asked about this at a special video conference, with a proliferation of questions as well in the course of a meeting held on the margins of the Council. And all of this, when the overall picture of what had actually happened there was already in principle clear to our own experts. And where has all this got us? Four months on, the FFM has still not produced any findings at all. I stress: they have been analysing away for four whole months and they cannot come to any conclusion. And yet *here* there is such speed, with findings to boot that are incontrovertible. So think about it: about why we make this point that the results of a full and comprehensive investigation must inspire confidence not only among the Western group of countries but for all other States as well.

The very fact that the delegations of a number of countries, first and foremost those in the Western group, are refusing at every turn to adopt the decision we and the Iranians have proposed leads us to think that they are not actually interested in establishing the truth.

It is our belief that these irresponsible manoeuvres – for that is precisely how one should view the Western countries' initiative hastily to convene Council, in the light of events in Idlib, and then their embarrassed and not terribly cogent explanations as to why there is no need for a decision at all – will not have escaped the attention of the more thoughtful delegations. This is borne out by the large number of delegations who today abstained in the vote. Of course, we were counting on them to vote alongside us. Doubtless the right thing to do, at this critical time, would have been boldly to state their position and determinedly tap the full potential of the Organization. But the very absence of an endorsement of the view presented by the United States and its closest partners bears eloquent witness to the fact that the Western vision of the situation they are trying to impose is beginning to be critically received instead of enjoying automatic, unquestioning support. I wholeheartedly subscribe to the statement of the distinguished Permanent Representative of Algeria, who, in explaining why his country had supported the Russo-Iranian draft decision, appealed to everyone to learn from the lessons of the past. He said there used to be a time when people on the African continent were fed the notion that certain things were the absolute truth, but that with the passage of time, those so-called absolute truths turned out to be absolute lies. Very well said. And in my own statement to Council – and some of my Western colleagues got upset with me at the time for saying so – I recalled the false premise used by the United Kingdom and the United States for their invasion of Iraq, from whose consequences that country is still suffering to this day.

In short, it is gratifying that many countries are beginning to analyse the situation seriously. I think this is a sure sign that the imposition of politicised, selfish and narrowly self-serving approaches will ultimately be thwarted.

Committed to the goals and objectives of the Convention, Russia reserves the right, acting strictly within the framework of the Convention, to take any measures that it considers appropriate in order to shed light on what happened in Khan Sheikhun as well as to verify the United States assertions that the Shayrat airbase was used to carry out airstrikes from it using chemical weapons.

Thank you for your attention.

I request this statement be circulated as an official document of the Fifty-Fourth Meeting of the Executive Council.