



Fifty-Fifth Meeting
5 July 2017

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ENGLISH and FRENCH only

BELGIUM

STATEMENT BY MR CHRISTIAN G. LEPAGE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BELGIUM TO THE OPCW AT THE FIFTY-FIFTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr Chairperson,

Thank you for giving me the floor. Before conveying Belgium's position on the report of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) (S/1510/2017, dated 29 June 2017), I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairperson of the Executive Council and to wish you every success in fulfilling your mission.

Belgium fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union by the Ambassador of Estonia, but wishes to add, in a national capacity, that Belgium reiterates its full confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the existing mechanisms, namely the FFM, the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), and the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) established by the United Nations Security Council.

Belgium would like to thank the Director-General of the OPCW and the Technical Secretariat for sharing with us the final result of the FFM's investigation into the deadly incident at Khan Shaykhun, south of Idlib, on 4 April 2017.

The report^{*} confirms the preliminary assessment made of this incident, namely that a large number of people have been exposed to the neurotoxic agent sarin and that, subsequently, several of them have died.

Reading from the neutral and balanced FFM report, Belgium noted that Syria has provided samples to the OPCW, as shown in Table 8 of the report, and that the results of the analysis carried out on these samples by the Scientific Studies and Research Centre at Barzah in the Syrian Arab Republic, the OPCW Laboratory and designated laboratories are broadly consistent, as is clearly stated in paragraph 5.106 of the FFM report.

This sign of cooperation between the Syrian authorities and the OPCW is perhaps encouraging but still insufficient. The report,^{**} for example, indicates that several notes verbales from the Syrian Arab Republic relating to the Khan Shaykhun incident do not

* Paragraphs 5.82, 5.85, 5.86 and 5.88, samples 1 and 2 in Table 8, and paragraphs 6.7 to 6.9, 6.11, 6.18 and 6.25.

** Paragraph 5.100.



provide any evidential information. On the other hand, as already mentioned in the statement made on behalf of the European Union, there are still many unresolved issues; several inconsistencies reported to us by the DAT several months ago.

More generally, Belgium again urges Syria to cooperate fully and in good faith with the Technical Secretariat in order to explain the inconsistencies in its declaration and to fill in the gaps. The weakening of the standard against the use of chemical weapons in a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention is intolerable.

Each State Party has a duty to defend the Convention and to ensure that it is properly and fully implemented. Anyone who violates the Convention is subject to sanctions under its Article XII.

Let us unite to ensure that those responsible for the criminal acts of these horrific attacks committed with chemical weapons are held accountable for their actions.

It is up to the JIM to determine who is responsible for both the Khan Shaykhun incident of 4 April 2017 and the Um-Housh incident of 16 September 2016.

Thank you.

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