

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR KAILI TERRAS
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ESTONIA
TO THE OPCW
AT THE 56TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
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Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The candidate countries Albania, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, as well as Norway, Ukraine and Georgia align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

At the outset I would like to express the EU's appreciation to the Director-General for his informative presentation as well as to the OPCW staff for their ongoing commitment in the face of recent tragic events in Syria.

The EU has expressed its concern on multiple occasions about chemical weapons use in Syria. Most recently, on 7 November, the High Representative made a Declaration on behalf of the EU which set out our grave concern in response to the Joint Investigative Mechanism's (JIM's) latest findings. The use of chemical weapons by anyone, be it a State or non-State actor, anywhere and under any circumstances is a violation to International law and must be rigorously condemned and those who use chemical weapons must be held accountable. On October 26, 2017, the JIM published its 7th report which determined that the Syrian Arab Republic used chemical weapons (sarin) on April 4, 2017 in Khan Shaykhoun, Syria. This use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime is reprehensible. It violates the CWC and UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. This incident which constitutes the fourth case of use of chemical weapons by Syria as recorded by JIM's previous reporting makes clear that Syria has failed to fully dismantle its chemical weapons programme and is willing to continue using chemical weapons.

We also condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons (sulfur mustard) by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) on September 15 and 16, 2016 in Um-Housh, Syria, in flagrant disregard of well-established international standards and norms. This is the second case of use of chemical weapons by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as recorded by JIM's previous reporting.

The use of chemical weapons by a State or non-state actor is inexcusable; and we demand that the Syrian government and ISIL immediately desist from any further use of chemical weapons.

The EU reiterates that as a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Syrian Arab Republic is explicitly obliged not to possess, develop or use chemical weapons. The JIM investigators have confirmed that sarin has been used by the Syrian government in the Khan Shaykhun attack. Syria has declared the production of sarin precursors - but is not able, among many other issues, to credibly and scientifically explain the loss of tons of these chemicals – enough, with the addition of a readily-available industrial chemical, to produce many more chemical weapons. The continued use of chemical weapons in Syria makes it all more important that Syria finally hands over the chemical weapons and munitions that it still retains, and permits OPCW verification of its remaining storage and production facilities and associated mixing /filling/ production equipment, so that – finally - they can be destroyed. Syria must also provide without any further delay a comprehensive and complete declaration of its chemical weapons programme. Syria needs to provide clear, accurate and technically credible explanations of the gaps and inconsistencies identified by the Technical Secretariat to enable confirmation that all chemical weapons stockpiles have been fully declared and destroyed.

The EU is deeply troubled that the Khan Sheikhoun attack was not the only one involving the use of sarin in recent months. The Fact Finding Mission (FFM) report published just last week states that "the FFM is able to conclude that sarin was more than likely used as a chemical weapon on 30 March 2017 in the south of Ltamenah". The victims of this and other chemical weapons attacks deserve justice, and that requires the perpetrators to be identified and brought to account.

It is all the more important therefore that we fully support the urgent renewal of the OPCW-UN JIM mandate to send a strong signal against impunity, and for it to continue investigating additional cases of confirmed use or likely use as determined by the FFM. Their professionalism and independence is held in the highest regard and trust. In the same vein the EU strongly supports the ongoing work of the FFM considering other allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria and asks all parties involved to ensure its unfettered and safe access to all locations the FFM deems necessary. The OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) must also continue its work to verify Syria's chemical weapons declaration. We note that just in October, the Director General confirmed that "gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies" remained in Syria's declaration, and it could not be verified as accurate and complete. We call on Syria to engage meaningfully with the OPCW to resolve all outstanding concerns expeditiously.

Mr. Chairman,

The numerous reports on the use of chemical weapons in Syria since 2012 are deeply disturbing. The global norm against chemical weapons must be continually reinforced if we are to achieve their full and lasting eradication, and so ensure tragedies like those in Khan Shaykhun and Ltamaneh will not be repeated. Any attempt to ignore these aforementioned serious violations undermines the extraordinary efforts undertaken by the OPCW and the UN which must be supported

in order to uphold the CWC and the entire international legal framework. We must continue to collectively condemn in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons by any State or non-State actor, and hold all those responsible for the use of such weapons accountable.

Thank you Mr.Chairperson