

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY AMBASSADOR KRASSIMIR KOSTOV
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE 57TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
4 APRIL 2018**

Mr Chairperson,

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

The European Union made clear its position on the Salisbury incident during the 87th session of the OPCW Executive Council – official document EC-87/NAT.21 of 15 March 2018.

The Heads of State and Government of the European Union gathered in the European Council on 22 March 2018 condemned in the strongest possible terms the attack in Salisbury and confirmed our agreement with the United Kingdom Government's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible and that there is no plausible alternative explanation.

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Union expressed our shock at the offensive use of any military-grade nerve agent, of a type developed by Russia, for the first time on European soil in over 70 years. The EU welcomed the UK's request for technical assistance from the OPCW Technical Secretariat. The EU supports the UK decision to call on Russia to address urgently the questions raised by the UK and the international community and to provide immediate, full and complete disclosure of its Novichok programme to the OPCW.

Today we confirm once again this position and reiterate our solidarity with the people and the Government of the United Kingdom and those fighting for their lives after the attack.

The use of chemical weapons, including the use of any toxic chemicals as weapons, by anyone, be it a State or a non-State actor, anywhere, and under any circumstances is abhorrent, illegal, and must be systematically and rigorously condemned.

We have full confidence in the UK investigation and laud UK's collaboration with the OPCW Technical Secretariat, in full compliance with the Convention.

We are grateful to the Director-General H.E.Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü for the information that he provided to the Executive Council. We look forward to continue to be kept informed of further developments.

On the other hand, it is regrettable that the Russian Federation did not give a positive reaction to the initial invitation of the United Kingdom to provide relevant information.

Instead, we witnessed a flood of insinuations targeting also a number of Member States of the European Union. This was done namely, in the statement of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OPCW before the 87th session of the Executive Council on 15 March 2018, in the statement of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OSCE on that same day, during the briefing by Director of the Department for Non-Proliferation and Arms Control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on 21 March 2018 and in the Aide-Mémoire that was distributed there, and most recently - during the briefing by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on 29 March 2018 where the insinuations were repeated.

This is completely unacceptable.

We are also very concerned by what was said by the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation with regard to the assistance provided by OPCW Technical Secretariat to the United Kingdom setting the stage for rejecting the results of the OPCW work on the Salisbury incident.

It is imperative that the Russian Federation responds to the British Government's legitimate questions, begins to co-operate with the OPCW Secretariat, and provides full and complete disclosure to the OPCW of any programme with relevance to the case.

In light of the above, Mr Chairperson, the European Union does not accept the proposed draft decision.

I would kindly ask that this statement be issued as an official document and placed on the OPCW public website.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.