



OPCW

Executive Council

Fifty-Ninth Meeting
18 April 2018

EC-M-59/NAT.1
18 April 2018
ENGLISH and FRENCH only

FRANCE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PHILIPPE LALLIOT
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE OPCW
AT THE FIFTY-NINTH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Ambassadors,

France supports the statement by the European Union. Allow me to add a few supplementary observations, in my national capacity.

We find ourselves meeting again, two days after another Extraordinary Meeting summoned in the wake of another chemical weapons attack, the one perpetrated by the Syrian Government and its armed forces at Douma on 7 April.

The repetition of these attacks, one in the Levant, the other in Europe, in a field regulated by some of the oldest Conventions which international security depends on, is a cause of great concern for France, which does not accept the complete impunity with which the foundations of the non-proliferation regime are being undermined, and international peace and security, as well as, the security of our individual countries, are being gravely menaced, while the institutions normally charged with speaking out and upholding international law are hampered at every turn. Those who cheat with their commitments assume responsibility for a serious trivialisation of the use of chemical weapons and a multiplication of proliferation activities.

We are gathered again, this time in connection with the Salisbury attack and its most recent developments. Since the commission of this hostile act on British soil on 4 March, France has expressed complete solidarity with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. We put it on record, and still maintain today, that we unreservedly share the British analysis which shows, on the one hand, that the Russian Federation was responsible for the attack, and, on the other, that there is no other plausible explanation for the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal and his daughter.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland requested a technical assistance visit from the Technical Secretariat (hereinafter “the Secretariat”) allowing the latter to visit the site, take biomedical and environmental samples, and have these analysed by four independent laboratories approved by the OPCW. Here, I should like to pay tribute both to the commitment of the Director-General and to the professionalism of the Secretariat in the conduct of its mission.



Last week, the Secretariat shared the results of these analyses with the United Kingdom, and the latter immediately requested the Secretariat to share them with all the States Parties. Thereafter, the United Kingdom requested the convocation of this extraordinary meeting of the Executive Council.

I welcome here the United Kingdom's transparency and sense of responsibility, in complete accord with Article VII of the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter "the Convention"), which requires states to conduct their own investigation into an event which has taken place on their national territory, and in accord also with subparagraph 38(e) of Article VIII of the Convention, which ensures that the Secretariat of the OPCW can play an independent, impartial assistance role.

The results of these analyses leave no room for doubt. They confirm those of the United Kingdom laboratory: a high- quality chemical agent, thought to be of military manufacture, was identified beyond all possible doubt. This organophosphorous neurotoxic agent was revealed by each of the four laboratories to be of a high degree of purity, which bears witness to skills which only a State could possess, including during the purification stage. Production and handling of such an agent require material and expertise, and such expertise cannot be improvised.

In this context, the United Kingdom has legitimately asked the Russian Federation to respond to a number of questions, which have gone unanswered for over a month now. Instead, the Russian Federation has pretended to want to cooperate, asking in exchange to participate in the enquiry and have access to all the available information.

So, once more, we invite the Russian Federation, since it says it wants to cooperate, to answer the United Kingdom's questions without further delay. That is the only way to prove the good faith it invokes. We ask the Russian Federation to provide the necessary clarifications on the possible development of such a programme.

Every time a chemical weapon has been used, wherever and by whomsoever, France has demanded that a full investigation be made, that the parties responsible be called to account and that all measures are taken to avoid any repetition of such attacks. At stake is the credibility of the commitments that we all undertook when ratifying the Convention, the integrity of the non-proliferation regime and, finally, the security of each and every one of us.

Thank you.

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