



OPCW

Executive Council

Eighty-Ninth Session
9 – 12 October 2018

EC-89/NAT.9
9 October 2018
ENGLISH only

NETHERLANDS

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PAUL VAN DEN IJSSEL
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS
TO THE OPCW AT THE EIGHTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,

The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Austrian Ambassador on behalf of the European Union. I take this opportunity to make a few observations in a national capacity.

My delegation would like to thank the Director-General for his opening statement, and as this is the first Executive Council with Director-General Arias at the helm of the Organisation, I take this opportunity to assure him and the Technical Secretariat of the continued full support of my delegation.

Madam Chairperson,

In April, the offices of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague were targeted by a hostile cyber operation.

I would like to refer to the statement made on 4 October by the President of the European Commission Juncker, the President of the European Council Tusk, and the High Representative of the EU Mogherini. They expressed serious concerns about the recent hostile cyber operation that attempted to undermine the integrity of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), a respected international organisation, hosted by the Netherlands. This aggressive act demonstrated contempt for the solemn purpose of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which works to eradicate chemical weapons worldwide under a United Nations mandate. The European Council deplors such actions, which undermine international law and international institutions. The EU will continue to strengthen the resilience of its institutions and those of its Member States, and international partners and organisations in the digital domain.

Madam Chairperson,

This incident underlines the importance to be vigilant and constantly monitor and improve the security of the information systems of the Organisation.



Madam Chairperson,

Last year, the United Nations Security Council did not reach agreement on extension of the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), virtually creating a state of impunity for any perpetrator of the prohibition to use chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. For my country, this was an unacceptable situation, and that is why we have actively promoted exploring other avenues.

As one of the many sponsors, we welcome and fully support the decision of the Special Conference of State Parties last June that expands the mandate of the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW to not only investigate if chemical weapons were used, but also to determine who was responsible for the use of those weapons. We also welcome the authority that was given to the Director-General to share information with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. The adoption of the decision by the Special Conference of the States Parties not only marks an important step towards accountability and justice, but will also deter both State and non-State actors from further use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Madam Chairperson,

My delegation has emphasised on many previous occasions that there is still critical work to be done with regards to the initial declaration of Syria. And for the most part, that work is the responsibility of the Syrian Arab Republic. Today, almost 5 years after its accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Syria still has not fully disclosed its chemical weapons programme. This is even more urgent, as over the past years there have been numerous incidents where attacks with chemical weapons were reported. Several of these attacks have decidedly been attributed to the Syrian regime, meaning the government is still withholding and hiding chemical weapons. This behaviour is outrageous and should be remedied without further delay. My government is actively working within the EU to strengthen sanctions against Syria to curb the criminal behaviour of the Syrian government.

The Netherlands stands in support of the United Kingdom and reiterates its strong condemnation of the attack in Salisbury on 4 March 2018. As stated before – and as mentioned in the EU statement – we agree with the assessment of the United Kingdom Government that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation is responsible and that there is no other plausible alternative. We reaffirm our solidarity with the United Kingdom in the face of this grave challenge to our collective security.

The Scientific Advisory Board concluded in its report that the type of chemical warfare agent used in Salisbury has no known use for purposes not prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention. In our view, it should, therefore, be listed as a Schedule 1 chemical. My country proposes that action be taken to ensure the credibility of the Convention.

Madam Chairperson,

To end on a positive note: my delegation is happy to announce that the Netherlands, as host country to the OPCW, intends to provide the plot necessary for the construction of the new OPCW laboratory. We hope this important project will proceed rapidly.

Madam Chairperson,

In closing, I request that this statement be issued as an official document of this Conference.

Thank you.

--- 0 ---