



OPCW

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ROMANIA

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BRANDUSA PREDESCU
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ROMANIA TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETYETH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

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

The candidate countries Albania, the Republic of North Macedonia, and Turkey, the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Iceland and Norway, members of the EEA (European Economic Area), as well as Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine align themselves with this statement. Andorra and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

The European Union pays tribute to H.E. Ambassador Jana Reinišová from the Czech Republic for her leadership as Chairperson in guiding the meetings of the Executive Council (“the Council”) during her tenure. We thank the Director-General, Ambassador Fernando Arias, for his comprehensive report to the Council and express our full confidence in the professionalism, capacity, and expertise of the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”). The EU looks forward to continuing its close cooperation with the Secretariat and the Director-General as the Organisation plays a crucial role in upholding the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”).

Madam Chairperson,

The European Union reiterates that any use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time, by anyone, under any circumstances is unacceptable. We express the strong conviction that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons should be held accountable. Impunity for the use of chemical weapons can never be tolerated.

We express our grave concern at the findings of the FFM regarding the Incident of Alleged Use of Toxic Chemicals as a Weapon in Douma, Syrian Arab Republic, on 7 April 2018. The FFM report (S/1731/2019, dated 1 March 2019) concludes that the evaluation and analysis of all information gathered by the FFM provide reasonable grounds that the use of toxic chemical as a weapon took place. We commend the work and professionalism of the FFM.



This work is essential for paving the way for further steps to identify the perpetrators of these reprehensible attacks.

The European Union reiterates its strong support for the work of the FFM and it also recognises the importance of the work of the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT). The Director-General's Note on "Progress in the Elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme", dated 25 February 2019, concludes that during the reporting period, the Secretariat did not receive any additional information from the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the outstanding issues. The Secretariat therefore remains unable to resolve all of the identified gaps, inconsistencies, or discrepancies in the declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic, and therefore cannot fully verify that the Syrian Arab Republic has submitted a declaration that can be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Convention and Council decision EC-M-33/DEC.1 (dated 27 September 2013). It is a matter of serious concern to the EU that five years after acceding to the Convention, the Syrian Arab Republic has still not provided an adequate Declaration.

Further to the findings of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism in 2016 and 2017, and as noted in Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 (dated 27 June 2018), the EU underlines its concern that the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic, by direct implication, establishes that the Syrian Arab Republic failed to declare and destroy all of its chemical weapons and chemical weapons production facilities (CWPFs) and demands that the Syrian Arab Republic immediately cease all use of chemical weapons and declare all of the chemical weapons it possesses, including sarin and its precursors, as well as CWPFs.

On 28 May 2018, the Council of the EU renewed the restrictive measures against the Syrian regime until 1 June 2019. As of 4 March 2019, the sanctions list includes 277 persons and 72 entities. Some of the measures in question are meant to counter chemical weapons proliferation and use as well as to sanction those responsible for chemical attacks and chemical weapons development.

We take this occasion also to recall that in October 2018 the EU Council established autonomous and horizontal sanctions against the use and proliferation of chemical weapons. On 21 January this year, the EU Council imposed sanctions on four persons responsible for possession, transport and use in Salisbury, United Kingdom, of a toxic nerve agent, and one entity responsible for the development and production of chemical weapons in Syria, as well as five persons involved in the entity's activities.

Madam Chairperson,

The European Union strongly supports reinforcing the global norm prohibiting chemical weapons taking into account that it has repeatedly been violated, including just a year ago on European soil.

To this end, the EU welcomed in June 2018 the adoption by the Fourth Special Session of the Conference of States Parties of Decision C-SS-4/DEC.3 entitled "Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use". It is a crucial step to further deter the use of chemical weapons. The adoption of the Programme and Budget for 2019 by the States Parties in November 2018 at the Twenty-Third Conference of the States Parties was a clear and concrete expression of support to the implementation of the Decision.

We thank the Director-General for his report to the Council on the progress made in the implementation of Decision and welcome the establishment of the Investigation and

Identification Team as a notable step in this in this regard. We would like to assure the Secretariat of the continued commitment of the European Union to the full implementation of the Decision. We look forward to hearing from the Head of the Team about the planned activities in the coming weeks and stand ready to support the Secretariat's efforts, inter alia, through an EU Council Decision, including voluntary contributions.

The European Union welcomes the Council Decision EC-M-62/DEC.1* (dated 14 January 2019) recommending to all States Parties the adoption of the proposal jointly submitted by Canada, the Netherlands, and the United States of America to add two families of toxic chemicals to Schedule I of the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention. We regret that it was not possible to reach consensus on the separate proposal tabled by the Russian Federation on 25 February, noting that the EU could have supported the proposal had it been amended in line with the comprehensive evaluation conducted by the Secretariat.

Madam Chairperson,

The European Union will continue to support the universalisation and effective implementation of the Convention. The EU is considering a further and major financial contribution in support of the OPCW core activities in the context of preparations for a new EU Council Decision. We believe that the capacity building is essential to assist States Parties in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention. The EU stands ready to continue and expand its support to the capacity-building efforts at national and regional level. We will continue to support outreach activities to engage all relevant stakeholders such as chemical industry, think tanks, academia, civil society organisations, and NGOs for cooperation, synergies and awareness-raising purposes.

The transformation of the OPCW Laboratory into a Centre for Chemistry and Technology will provide a qualitative leap in the Organisation's capacity to perform its core tasks in verification, inspection and capacity-building. The unique size and importance of the project also represents a significant project management challenge for the OPCW which will require sustained Secretariat commitment to deliver. We call on all States Parties to support the project. We commend the initiative of the Ambassadors of Canada and of Indonesia in helping to express and channel this support through the establishment of an informal group "Friends of the Centre for Chemistry and Technology". The European Union is considering a major financial contribution to support the establishment of the Centre.

The European Union recognises that the Director-General needs to have flexibility to retain special expertise and capabilities for its effective functioning. We therefore encourage the setting-up of facilitation with a view to an update report to be delivered to the Ninety-First and Ninety-Second Meetings of the Council. The report should inform on discussions and provide elements for a way-forward on an OPCW tenure policy and related human resources issues such as staff recruitment, geographical and gender balance of staff, JPO, and internship programmes.

I would kindly ask you, Madam Chairperson, to distribute this statement as an official document of the Ninetieth Session of the Council and to post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.