



OPCW

Executive Council

Ninety-First Session

9 – 12 July 2019

EC-91/NAT.29

9 July 2019

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 NINETY-FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chairperson,

Let me start by expressing our respect and gratitude to you Mr Chairperson for taking up this heavy responsibility. We look forward to work under your guidance. While fully endorsing the statement delivered by the Ambassador of Finland on behalf of the EU, allow me to make a few additional remarks.

One of the most important tasks, if not the most important, of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) is to uphold the global norm against the use of chemical weapons. Nobody in this room will say otherwise. Unfortunately, it has become more and more difficult for member states to find common ground and agree on proposals that will strengthen the Organisation – our Organisation – and increase its capability to act when necessary to achieve that objective. If we want the OPCW to remain as successful as it has been in the first decades of its existence, we have to work together.

My delegation fully supports the Director-General and the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”). We reject all attempts that try to shed doubt on the credibility and trustworthiness of the Organisation. In our view, the Secretariat is doing its work in a transparent matter, taking into account the necessary confidentiality of course. In this regard, I would like to underline that my delegation is satisfied with the explanation the Director-General gave when questions were raised about a dissenting report with regards to the recently circulated report on the attack on Douma in April last year.

The situation in Syria remains utterly worrisome. The Syrian regime still has not fully declared its chemical weapon program to the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) as we also heard recently during the DAT Briefing on 28 May. Crucial questions remain and apparently Syria is not making a genuine effort to answer those questions. On the contrary, recent findings in Syria give rise to even more, pressing questions as to the true extent of the chemical weapon program of the Syrian Arab Republic. Once again, we demand Syria to stop dragging its feet and answer all remaining questions fully and without delay.



Under the able guidance of two Co-Facilitators, Ambassadors Puja and Vásquez, the member states have been trying to agree on a way forward to discuss several important issues. My delegation fully supports the Co-Facilitators and we stand ready to engage in discussions on different topics where consensus seems to be achievable. However, a list should not be considered to be a 'package deal': we should not wait until there is agreement on all topics, we should make progress when and where possible. However, let us not forget that there are many fields where we can act already.

For example, my country has engaged in a twinning project between a laboratory in the Netherlands and in South Africa. The aim of this cooperation is to enable the South African Lab to become a designated lab of the OPCW. Like my Brazilian colleague before me, we think it is important to expand the network.

In June last year during the Special Session of the Conference of States Parties, member states adopted with an overwhelming majority a decision that, mandated the Director-General to attribute responsibility of attacks with chemical weapons in Syria. My delegations fully supported this decision in all its aspects. Especially we welcome the establishment of the Information and Investigation Team (IIT). We are looking forward to see the results of its work. We call upon Syria to honour its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and fully cooperate with the IIT.

The Executive Council - with consensus - endorsed a proposal by Canada, the US and the Netherlands to include two chemical families to Schedule 1. We hope and trust that member states will adopt this proposal at the upcoming Conference of States Parties later this year.

Mr Chairperson, to conclude: these are only a few of the challenges we, member states, face when preparing our Organisation for the future. If we want to retain and strengthen the crucial role the OPCW should play when it comes to chemical safety in all of its aspects, we need to work together and set aside our political differences. Only then we can achieve our goal of a world free of chemical weapons.

Thank you.

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