

Norwegian statement to the Executive Council
In response to the IIT-report of 8 April 2020
Delivered by Ambassador Martin Sørby, on 20 April 2020

The first report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) of the OPCW was released on 8 April. The report concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that units from the Syrian Arab Air Force is responsible for chemical weapons attack on three different occasions in the Syrian village of Ltamenhah in March 2017. The report concludes that these attacks occur only pursuant to orders from the highest levels of the Syrian Arab Armed Forces.

Norway condemns in the strongest possible terms the use of chemical weapons, which is an abhorrent violation of the Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC) and in breach of international law. Those responsible for such atrocities must be held to account.

The IIT is established in accordance with the provisions of the CWC. Norway has full confidence in the integrity and impartiality of its work led by IIT-Coordinator Mr. Santiago Onate-Laborde. We commend the Director General Fernando Arias and the Technical Secretariat for their professionalism and capacity to implement the CWC and tasks assigned by the States Parties.

Syria has consistently failed to declare its chemical weapons stockpile to the Declaration and Assessment Team of the OPCW. Both toxic chemicals and munitions remain unaccounted for. As a State Party to the CWC, the Syrian Arab Republic is obliged to eliminate its chemical weapons program. We demand Syria to declare the full extent of its entire chemical weapons stockpile without delay so that it may be verifiably destroyed.

The IIT-report is a crucial step to hold perpetrators of chemical weapons use accountable and to deter future ones. Norway, together with partners in the international community, remains determined to uphold the international norm against chemical weapons use.