

THE NETHERLANDS

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PAUL van den IJSSEL

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE OPCW

Statement on the publication of the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team on the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on the attribution of responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic has confirmed the continuing and grave concern of the Netherlands about the (possession and) use of chemical weapons in Syria. Not only has the Syrian Arab Republic six years after its' accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention still not fully declared its' chemical weapon programme, but even more disturbing, numerous incidents of the use of chemical weapons, notably against civilians have been reported, four of which so far have been attributed to the Syrian regime.

In addition to this, the first IIT-report states that there are reasonable grounds to believe that yet another three attacks, namely the chemical attacks in Ltamenah, which took place on 24, 25 and 30 March 2017, were carried out by the Syrian Arab Republic armed forces.

Until now, the international community, including the Member States of the OPCW, have been unable to take action against Syria, in spite of all the evidence that shows Syria is in non-compliance of the CWC. For The Netherlands that strongly believes in the international, universal rule of law that is unacceptable.

We, States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, have the obligation to take our commitment to the CWC seriously. Now more than ever is the moment to shake off complacency. If we do not, we jeopardize the integrity and credibility of the global system of chemical non-proliferation and of the global norm against the use of Chemical weapons. This would have devastating consequences in a time where all States have to be extra vigilant against the re-emergence of chemical weapon threats.

We join other nations in efforts to promote accountability for the Syrian regime and uphold the international norm against chemical weapons use. The use of chemical weapons by any State presents an unacceptable security threat to all States. Perpetrators must be held accountable. Impunity can not and should not be an option.

We therefore think it is important that the EC convenes as soon as is feasible to discuss our response to the conclusions of this report. The crimes reflected in the IIT report cannot be without consequence. We owe it to the victims.

The Netherlands is grateful to the Investigation and Identification Team and highly values its important work. We express full confidence in the thorough investigations and expert work that are laid down in the report.