

SWEDEN

Statement by H.E. Annika Markovic, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OPCW on the release of the first report of the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team on the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic

Sweden welcomes the issuance of the first report by the Investigation and Identification Team (“the IIT”) on the 8th of April 2020. The investigative work presented in the report manifests the proficiency and professionalism possessed by the IIT’s experts. Sweden reiterates its full support for the IIT’s mandate, as decided by the States Parties on 27th of June 2018, and will continue to support the efforts of the IIT in its remaining investigations.

Sweden notes with great concern the conclusions of the report, which are clear and irrefutable. The IIT concludes in its first report that there are reasonable grounds to believe that units of the Air Force of the Syrian Arab Republic used chemical weapons at three separate occasions in Ltamenah on the 24th, 25th and 30th of March 2017.

Sweden condemns in the strongest possible terms the repeated use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. We deeply regret the suffering of the victims affected by the attacks.

The conclusions of the IIT’s first report, adding to previous conclusions of the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, confirm that the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons on no less than seven occasions since 2014. Furthermore, we recall that the Syrian Arab Republic has been unable to provide a complete declaration of its chemical stockpiles, as concluded by the Declaration Assessment Team.

These findings confirm that the Syrian Arab Republic is in breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the CWC”). In order to preserve the strength of the CWC, and the non-use norm which it embodies, we must react when it is violated. The Syrian regime must be held accountable for using chemical weapons.

Sweden has repeatedly reiterated the urgent need to prevent impunity for chemical weapons use and has consistently supported the OPCW in its mission. These horrible weapons should never be used under any circumstances – not by anyone, in any place, at any time.

Thanks to the professional work carried out by the IIT, we have the facts. It is now up to all of us, as States Parties to the CWC and members of the international community, to take action in order to establish accountability for the use of chemical weapons. Sweden stands ready to cooperate in the criminal investigation and prosecution of chemical weapons use to the greatest extent possible. We urge all 193 States Parties to the CWC to do the same.