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FRANCE

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR LUIS VASSY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FRANCE TO THE OPCW
ON THE FIRST REPORT OF THE OPCW INVESTIGATION AND
IDENTIFICATION TEAM**

Mr Director-General,
Mr Chairperson,
Excellencies and distinguished colleagues,

We are considering today the first report issued by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), the mechanism established to identify the perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks as a result of a decision by the Special Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) of June 2018, voted by a majority of States Parties in compliance with the rules of this multilateral body.

We welcome the publication of this first report, the result of remarkable, precise, impartial, and independent work. This report is the first of its kind for the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The Technical Secretariat has now, regarding the incident of Ltamenah, fulfilled the task, which we, the States Parties, entrusted to it. It will continue its investigations into the six remaining incidents, listed in the document circulated to all States Parties in July 2019.

The conclusions of this first report are clear and irrevocable. We are now certain that the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Ltamenah belong to units of the Air Force of the Syrian regime.

It is now up to us, **States Parties** to this the Chemical Weapons Convention, to take **action**.

Allow me to insist on this word, **prohibition**, as this Convention is about prohibition. Prohibition of the development, production, stockpiling and, above all, use of chemical weapons.

If we are considering this IIT report today, it is because **these weapons**, for which we had committed, for the sake of all humankind, and here I am quoting the preamble of the Convention, to exclude completely the possibility of use, **have been used**.



If we are considering this IIT report today, it is because there have been **victims, dead, and injured**. We have a duty to act collectively for these victims. They come in addition to all the countless others of this dreadful conflict, for which we lament the most serious violations of international humanitarian law.

If we are considering this IIT report today, it is because **one State Party has lied**. If the Syrian regime has continued to use toxic chemicals for military purposes, it is because it has maintained the capability to produce and use them, in contravention of its international obligations. We all know it by now: Syria has maintained a secret chemical programme since 2013.

Those crimes and those lies cannot be without consequence. We owe it to the victims. The Syrian regime must be held accountable for its actions, including in the framework of the Convention, to the other States Parties.

If we are considering this IIT report today, it is because **perpetrators have been identified**. The perpetrators of the abhorrent acts of the use of chemical weapons must not go unpunished. The OPCW is not a court. Legal prosecution will take place elsewhere, and is necessary to deter anyone from continuing to use these weapons. One cannot violate an international convention without consequences. It would encourage others to violate it.

As you know, fighting impunity is a political priority for France. We took the initiative in January 2018 in proposing an International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which now includes 40 States and the European Union. We also support the international mechanisms against impunity established under the auspices of the United Nations.

We must act. I hope that all States Parties will consider this first report of the IIT with seriousness and responsibility and that they will be ready to act, collectively, when the time comes, in order to take the necessary measures to definitively put an end to the use of chemical weapons and to the impunity of the perpetrators. The end of impunity is one of the conditions of a just peace. We reiterate our call for initiating at last a political settlement, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2254, in order to find an honourable and fair way out of the crisis, which the Syrian people deserve.

Thank you.

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