

## **The 94th Session of the Executive Council of the OPCW**

### **General Debate**

#### **Statement by H.E. Ambassador Martin Sørby**

#### **Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Norway**

Mr. Chair,

Mr. Director-General,

Distinguished Colleagues,

Norway fully aligns with the statement made by Ambassador Gudrun Lingner of Germany on behalf of the European Union. I wish to add the following in my own national capacity.

I would like to start by congratulating you, Ambassador Vasquez Gomez, on your new role as Chair of the Executive Council, and assure you of Norway's full support and cooperation under your leadership.

Norway remains a staunch supporter of the OPCW- We are determined – together with partners in the international community – to uphold the international norm against chemical weapons use. We are honored to serve on the Executive Council at a very critical juncture for the organization.

Today, the main challenge facing the organization – and all defenders of the Chemical Weapon Convention (CWC) – is the renewed use of chemical weapons, in Syria and elsewhere. We condemn vigorously all such use, which is an abhorrent violation of the Convention and in breach of international law. We demand an end to impunity for the perpetrators of these horrific crimes.

The decision “Addressing the Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” adopted during the fourth Special Conference of the States Parties in June 2018 is essential in the international community's work against the use of chemical weapons. The OPCW has an essential role in the implementation of this decision. The establishment of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) for chemical weapons use in Syria is a crucial step in this regard. We welcome the first report of the IIT, issued on 8 April.

The report concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that units from the Syrian Arab Air Force are responsible for chemical weapons attack on three separate occasions in Syria in March 2017. Norway condemns this use in the strongest possible terms. We urge Syria, as a state party to the CWC, to take all necessary measures to hold those responsible for such atrocities to account.

Chair,

Action is required, and we fully support and sponsor the draft EC decision addressing the conclusion of the IIT report. We believe it is necessary for the Conference of State Parties to react on this matter and to agree on a set of actions.

Norway reiterates its support to the technical secretariat and to the director general in particular. We have full confidence in their impartial and diligent work, including the IIT report. We also reject all efforts to discredit the secretariat and its staff.

Norway would also like to highlight key efforts being taken to make clear that the aerosolized use of CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes is prohibited under the CWC. We thank Australia, Switzerland and the United States of America for their timely initiative in this regard. We look forward to possible adoption of the proposed decision at the Conference of States Parties in 2020.

In conclusion, we want to commend both the Technical Secretariat and the Bureau for ensuring that this meeting could take place in a safe and responsible manner. Norway would also like to thank all the other delegations, both Executive Council members and observers for their constructive approach and contributions in this regard.

Thank you, Mr Chair