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SWEDEN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ANNIKA MARKOVIC
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWEDEN TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Mr Chair,
Mr Director-General,
Distinguished Delegates,

Sweden associates itself with the statement delivered by Germany on behalf of the European Union. I wish to add a few comments in my national capacity.

I would like to start by welcoming Ambassador Agustín Vázquez Gómez as Chair of the Executive Council. I would also like to thank Director-General Fernando Arias for providing us with useful guidance through his statement to the Council. You can both rest assured that you have the full support of the Swedish delegation. We look forward to working together to achieve the important tasks of the OPCW, including those relating to gender.

Sweden is grateful for the efforts undertaken by the Chair, the Director-General and the staff of the OPCW in order to enable this session of the Executive Council to take place, albeit under challenging circumstances.

Sweden has welcomed the first report by the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), issued on 8 April 2020, and has noted with great concern the conclusions of the report, which are clear and irrefutable. The IIT concluded 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 on three separate occasions in Ltamenah on 24, 25, and 30 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 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 27 June 2018, and will continue to support the efforts of the IIT in its remaining investigations. I am pleased to announce that this year Sweden grants an extra-budgetary contribution of SEK 2.0 million to support the OPCW's missions in Syria, including activities of the IIT.



The conclusions of the IIT's first report, adding to previous conclusions of the OPCW-United Nations 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 Convention"). In order to preserve the strength of the Convention, 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 Convention, and members of the international community, to take action in order to establish accountability for the use of chemical weapons. In this regard, we fully support the draft decision "Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic". Sweden also 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 Convention to do the same.

I would kindly ask that this statement to be considered as an official document of the Ninety-Fourth Session of the Executive Council and to be posted on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.

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