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FRANCE

**STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION
OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC TO THE OPCW
AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(F)**

Mr Chairperson,

Today we are examining the second report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which was published on 12 April 2021.

The IIT once again identified the Air Force of the Syrian regime, under the control of the so-called Tiger Forces, as the perpetrator of the chemical weapons attack in Saraqib on 4 February 2018.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of any use of chemical weapons anywhere, anytime, by anyone, and under any circumstances.

We welcome the publication of this second report, which is the result of outstanding, meticulous, impartial, and independent work. The report is careful to rule out any irrelevant hypotheses in order to arrive at the only possible conclusion: that the Syrian regime bears responsibility.

The crimes and lies of the Syrian regime cannot go unpunished. That is why a great majority of the States Parties acted responsibly at the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties by adopting the decision “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic”, which had been put forward by my delegation on behalf of 46 States Parties. The conclusions of this new IIT report only bolster the rationale for that decision.

The decision is crucial to deterring anyone from continuing to use these weapons. An international Convention cannot be violated without consequence. The contrary would only encourage others to violate it. The measures taken are proportionate and justified. This is about preserving the Chemical Weapons Convention, which is a pillar of our collective security.

The perpetrators of these heinous acts constituted by the use of chemical weapons cannot and must not go unpunished. As we have already emphasised, the OPCW is not a tribunal. Prosecutions will take place elsewhere, and this is necessary. Such crimes cannot go unpunished. We owe it to the victims.



As you know, the fight against impunity is a political priority of France. As early as January 2018, we spearheaded this effort by proposing the establishment of the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, which now includes 40 States and the European Union, and which published a declaration in May in response to the conclusions of the second IIT report. We support the international mechanisms that have been set up under the aegis of the United Nations to fight against impunity. Cooperation between the OPCW and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism will be useful to fight impunity for the perpetrators of attacks involving chemical weapons.

We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with the Technical Secretariat and to comply with its international obligations. Failing this, the measures set out in the decision “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” will remain in force.

Beyond this, we would recall that the Syrian conflict can be brought to an end only through a credible, viable, and inclusive political solution that respects United Nations Security Council resolution 2254 (2015).

I would ask that this statement be considered as an official document of this session of the Executive Council and that it be posted on the OPCW’s internal and external servers.

Thank you.

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