



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

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ENGLISH and FRENCH only

**SWITZERLAND**

**STATEMENT BY H.E. HEINZ WALKER-NEDERKOORN  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION TO THE  
OPCW AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL  
UNDER AGENDA ITEM 5**

Mr Chairperson,

In its second report, the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) convincingly concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Force, under the control of the Tiger Forces, used at least one chemical weapon in eastern Saraqib on 4 February 2018. Switzerland condemns in the strongest possible terms any use of chemical weapons and underlines once again that their use is reprehensible, violates international law, and is prohibited to all actors at all times and under all circumstances. Those responsible must be brought to justice.

My Government highly welcomes the steps that were taken by the Conference of the States Parties (“the Conference”) at its Twenty-Fifth Session in response to the IIT’s findings, and fully endorses the decision on “Addressing the Possession and Use of Chemical Weapons by the Syrian Arab Republic” (C-25/DEC/CRP.10). For the first time in the history of the OPCW, sanctions were imposed for non-compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (“the Convention”) by a clear majority of States Parties. Taking action was absolutely necessary to respond to the violation of Article I of the Convention by the Syrian Arab Republic and to uphold the international norm against chemical weapons.

Furthermore, the Technical Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) assesses that the declaration submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic still cannot be considered accurate and complete, as gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies identified by the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) remain unresolved. We call on the Syrian Arab Republic to fully cooperate with the OPCW, including the DAT and the Fact-Finding Mission, and to grant the IIT unrestricted access to its territory as well as to all relevant information.

Likewise, the use of a nerve agent of a novichok group in the attack against Alexei Navalny, as confirmed by the OPCW on the basis of the analytical results of its designated laboratories, continues to be of grave concern. Switzerland once again calls on the Russian Federation to launch a criminal investigation to hold those responsible to account, and to fully cooperate with the OPCW. The absence of a transparent and impartial investigation, in addition to the lack of cooperation with the international community, only further undermines the credibility of the Russian narrative.

Switzerland maintains high respect and confidence in the work of the Organisation, the Secretariat, and the Director-General.



Switzerland is convinced that affirming States Parties' understanding that the aerosolised use of chemicals acting on the central nervous system (CNS) is inconsistent with law enforcement as a "purpose not prohibited" as defined by the Convention is necessary in order to safeguard its integrity and uphold the norm against chemical weapons. My Government welcomes the decision taken by the Executive Council in this regard (EC-96/DEC.7) and calls on all States Parties to support the draft decision of the Twenty-Sixth Session of the Conference that addresses the risks posed by the aerosolised use of CNS-acting chemicals for law enforcement purposes. Over 30 States Parties have joined us as co-sponsors and many more support our endeavour.

Thank you.

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