



### **UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

#### **STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE OPCW AT THE NINETY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL UNDER AGENDA ITEM 6(F) ADDRESSING THE THREAT FROM CHEMICAL WEAPONS USE**

Mr Chair,

This is the first chance this Executive Council (“the Council”) has had to consider the second report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). As we all know, it was published on 12 April 2021 and concluded, in no uncertain terms, that at least one cylinder containing chlorine was dropped on Saraqib on 4 February 2018. The IIT found that there were reasonable grounds to believe that a military helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force, under the control of the Tiger Forces, was responsible. The IIT has also made available to States Parties the names of those Syrians in command positions at the time of the attack.

The United Kingdom is very grateful for the exhaustive efforts of the OPCW investigators to examine all the available evidence, conduct fresh sample analysis and commission expert studies to enable them to reach their conclusions.

As the report explains clearly, the IIT examined the scenario put forward by the Syrian Arab Republic that the attack had been staged but these assertions could not be corroborated. There was no evidence to support them.

The Syrian Arab Republic is a country that by its own admission had an extensive chemical weapons programme, with production sites spread right across the country. Whilst large quantities of chemical weapons have been destroyed, thanks to OPCW efforts, it is clear that the Syrian regime has retained a chemical weapons production capability. And meticulous and professional investigations have found that it used those retained chemical weapons on numerous occasions.

In late April, as we all know, the Twenty-Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties considered the findings of the first report of the IIT and condemned the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime. The Conference of the States Parties acted on the recommendation of the Council in response to the Syrian Arab Republic’s failure to redress the situation. What happens next is in the Syrian Arab Republic’s hands. The Conference of the States Parties confirmed that the Syrian Arab Republic’s rights and privileges would be reinstated once the Director-General has reported that the Syrian Arab Republic has taken the steps required and come into compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention.



Only the Syrian Arab Republic can take the necessary steps to comply with decisions of the Council, the Conference of the States Parties, and the United Nations Security Council. An essential first step is to respond to the Technical Secretariat's requests for visas for staff to visit the Syrian Arab Republic. We have heard that the Director-General has offered high-level discussions. The Syrian Arab Republic would be well advised to take up that offer, and then to fully declare and give up all of its chemical weapons.

Thank you.

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