



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JOŽEF DROFENIK, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SLOVENIA TO THE OPCW AT THE 102ND SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Agenda Item 6f: Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use

Mr. Chairperson,

Slovenia fully subscribes to the statements made on behalf of the European Union, and would like to make the following additional remarks under this agenda item:

This year will mark the 10th anniversary since the much celebrated accession of Syria to the Chemical Weapons Convention. A most welcome event, which resulted in the destruction of declared Syrian chemical weapons production facilities, weapons and chemicals. And yet, 10 years on, it is increasingly evident that Syria has retained a part of its chemical weapons programme and, worse, has used it in at least nine independently confirmed incidents.

Most recently, the Investigation and Identification Team confirmed that Syrian Arab Armed Forces used chlorine gas against civilians in Douma on 7 April 2018. 43 people, including children, died as a result. Many more were injured.

Such actions are morally abhorrent and legally prohibited – they constitute a clear breach of international law and may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Slovenia unequivocally condemns any and all uses of chemical weapons and reiterates that there can be no impunity for these serious violations of international law.

We commend the rigorous, impartial and independent analysis carried out by OPCW teams in order to ascertain what really happened in Douma. Having explored all possible scenarios, the IIT concluded that only one explanation was plausible, and it is now clear with whom lies the responsibility for these crimes.

We have heard Syrian representatives state in this room, again and again, that Syria rejects the use of chemical weapons and is open to cooperation to resolve matters related to its chemical weapons dossier. We ask Syria to prove their stated good will by granting OPCW designated personnel meaningful access, providing the required documents and access to witnesses, and – most importantly – by ensuring the complete dismantling and destruction of any yet undeclared elements of its chemical weapons programme, and its verification by the OPCW.

Finally, Mr. Chairperson, I wish to express our solidarity with all victims of chemical weapons attacks and their families. I also offer my deepest sympathies to all aggrieved by the devastating earthquake of 6th February in Syria and Türkiye. Slovenia has extended material and financial support to both affected countries.

I ask that this statement be considered as an official document, and posted on Catalyst and the OPCW public website.

Thank you.