



STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
BY H.E. AMBASSADOR JOHANNES OLJELUND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWEDEN TO THE OPCW
AT THE 102nd SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(The Hague, 14 - 17 March 2023)

Agenda item 6 (c): elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The failure of the Syrian Arab Republic to respect its international obligations under the Convention is substantiated through comprehensive and thorough investigations carried out by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigation Mechanism (JIM), the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT).

The Decision adopted by the 25th Conference of the States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention suspending the voting rights and privileges of the Syrian Arab Republic is a strong message against impunity for the use of chemical weapons, and in defence of International Law, including International Humanitarian Law, as well as the integrity of the Convention. It is an appropriate response by the Conference to the clear violation by the Syrian Arab Republic of the Convention and its core principles. In order for its voting rights and other privileges to be restored, Syria needs to resolve all pending issues, declare the full extent of its chemical weapons programme, and return to full compliance with the Convention. The European Union regrets that Syria has not returned to full compliance with the Convention and lacks willingness to cooperate with the OPCW, as stated by the latest report of the Director-General on the elimination of the Syrian Chemical weapons programme (Document EC-102 / DG.14, dated 24 February 2023).

The European Union commends the work of the Technical Secretariat (TS) on all aspects of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and appreciates the confidential briefings to States Parties on the ongoing work and working methods. We also commend the Director-General's continuous efforts to engage with the Syrian Arab Republic including at ministerial level, and urge Syria to act constructively and ensure that progress is achieved, including in regard to the timely issuance of visas for OPCW staff. There is no alternative to full and effective cooperation by the Syrian Arab Republic with the OPCW and all its established mechanisms. Refusal to issue visas for OPCW staff and preventing their deployment on the ground seriously hampers the work of the Technical Secretariat and its ability to fulfil its mandate. This also contravenes States Parties' obligations under paragraph 7 of Article VII of the Convention.

In January, the DAT deployed a reduced team to conduct limited in-country activities (LICAs) in Syria. We commend its efforts but we deplore this lack of cooperation from Syria despite all the measures taken by the DAT. We urge the Syrian Arab Republic to issue all necessary visas without delay for all OPCW personnel, including all the members of the DAT, in accordance with the Convention and United Nations Security Council resolution 2118. The European Union regrets that in the time since the 26th Conference there has been no progress in any of the open issues, and that almost ten years after the initial declaration by the Syrian Arab Republic, many important questions about the Syrian chemical weapons programme remain unanswered.

The European Union looks forward to the continuation of the work of the IIT and the release of its next reports, and is determined to ensure appropriate follow up of all its findings. The European Union has already imposed restrictive measures on 36 senior Syrian officials, scientists and businesspersons as well as three entities for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons. On 14 November 2022, our ministers decided to impose additional restrictive measures against two businesspersons and their company MHD Nazier Houranieh & Sons, which supplies the Syrian Studies and Research Centre (SSRC) with materials used to produce chemical weapons delivery systems.

The European Union is ready to consider introducing further measures as appropriate and will continue to work towards ensuring full accountability for those responsible for these heinous crimes. The fight against impunity and the total ban on the use of chemical weapons remain our priorities, including through the International Partnership Against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons.

The Candidate Countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro and Ukraine, the potential candidate country Georgia as well as the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the EEA (European Economic Area) align themselves with this statement. Andorra, Monaco and San Marino also associate themselves with this statement.

I would kindly ask you to consider this statement as an official document of the 102nd session of the Executive Council and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

Thank you.

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