



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 (f): Addressing the threat from chemical weapons use – 3rd IIT report

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

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union welcomes the release of the third report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) to the Executive Council of OPCW and to the Secretary General of the United Nations on 27 January 2023. The report concludes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that on April 7, 2018 at least one Mi-8/17 helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force, operating under the control of the Tiger Forces, dropped two yellow cylinders which hit two residential buildings in a central area of the city releasing chlorine killing 43 named individuals and affecting dozens more.

This attack represents the ninth case of chemical weapons use that has been independently attributed to the Syrian regime by the UN and the OPCW. The European Union condemns in the strongest possible terms the Syrian regime's repeated use of these horrific weapons and remains steadfast in demanding that the Syrian regime immediately comply with its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Syria must fully declare and destroy its chemical weapons program and allow the deployment of OPCW staff to verify it has done so.

We also call on the Russian Federation to stop shielding the Syrian regime from accountability for its use of chemical weapons, including through campaigns of disinformation.

The use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, at any time and under any circumstances is a violation of international law and can amount to the most serious of international crimes - war crimes and crimes against humanity. Those identified as responsible for these reprehensible crimes must and will be held accountable. The Investigation and Identification Team's thorough investigations and substantial reporting constitute a crucial contribution to efforts to end impunity for the use of chemical weapons. We look forward to the continuation of the work of the IIT and the release of its next reports, and we are determined to ensure full follow up of all findings.

The European Union and its Member States will continue to work on national and international levels addressing chemical weapons attacks and other atrocity crimes committed by the Syrian regime, consistent with its commitment to the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons. The European Union has imposed restrictive measures on 36 high-level Syrian officials and scientists as well as three entities for their role in the development and use of chemical weapons and is ready to consider introducing further measures as appropriate.

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 and post it on the OPCW external server and public website.

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