

STATEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
BY H.E. ULF MELGAARD
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AT THE 109th SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(The Hague, 8-11 July 2025)

Agenda item 6(c): Elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme

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

Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

The European Union commends the Syrian transitional authorities' cooperation with the OPCW. The close collaboration with the Secretariat will make it possible to locate and destroy remaining stocks of chemical weapons, removing a concrete threat to international peace and stability. In line with the European Union's broader engagement on Syria - including the recent lifting of economic sanctions and the pledges announced during the Ninth Brussels Conference - the EU and several of its Member States are preparing substantive voluntary financial contributions to support the OPCW's activities in Syria. This support aims to facilitate deployments, verify declarations, and enable the secure destruction of any remaining stocks. The EU underscores the importance of ensuring the OPCW has the necessary resources and operational flexibility to fulfil its mandate effectively, and encourages all States Parties to consider responding positively to the Secretariat's call for voluntary financial or in-kind contributions issued on 5 June 2025.

Mr. Chairperson,

Investigations by the UN and the OPCW have confirmed the use of chemical weapons in Syria and attributed several such attacks to the former Syrian regime. The European Union commends the work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which has been crucial to documenting these incidents and supporting accountability. While different mechanisms may be pursued for accountability, the shared objective must remain, notably ending impunity for the use of chemical weapons and rendering justice to the victims.

For its part, the European Union continues to support financially the transfer of evidence files to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), as well the transfer the knowledge and expertise acquired by the IIT to other units and offices of the Secretariat in line with the Decision of the 4th Special Session of the Conference of State Parties (C-SS-4/DEC.3., paragraphs 12 and 20). The transfer of knowledge will enhance the forensic and investigative capabilities of the Secretariat in providing States Parties with technical expertise to identify those who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors, or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons.

Mr Chairperson,

The new situation in the Syrian Arab Republic presents the Secretariat with an opportunity to adjust its structures with a view to delivering its mandated activities in a more rational and efficient manner. The European Union has taken note of the decision by the Director-General to set up a core team of staff to work on cases of use or threat of use of chemical weapons in Syria and beyond under an Office of Special Missions (OSM). Due to considerable proliferation risks, it is of utmost importance to swiftly establish the OSM and start working in Syria in order to seize the unique window of opportunity to secure and finally destroy what remains of the Assad regime's chemical weapons programme. The EU is aware of the operational challenges that the mission faces and has offered concrete measures of support to the OPCW. We look forward to the Secretariat keeping the Executive Council informed of adjustments to keep the Secretariat fit for purpose, including progress made in integrating the mandates, activities and expertise of the three Syria related teams, the DAT, FFM and IIT, into the new entity.

Thank you.

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