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NOTE BY THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT

**CIRCULATION OF NOTE VERBALE NO. NV/ODG-809/26 ADDRESSED
TO THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
TO THE OPCW DATED 30 MARCH 2026**

The Technical Secretariat of the OPCW hereby circulates Note Verbale No. NV/ODG/-809/26 (dated 30 March 2026) as an official document of the 112th Session of the Executive Council in response to Note Verbale No. 29 from the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation addressed to the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW dated 18 March 2026.

- Annex 1: Note Verbale No. NV/ODG-809/26 Addressed to the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW Dated 30 March 2026
- Annex 2: Note Verbale No. 29 from the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation Addressed to the Technical Secretariat of the OPCW Dated 18 March 2026



Annex 1

**NOTE VERBALE NO. NV/ODG-809/26 ADDRESSED TO THE PERMANENT
REPRESENTATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE OPCW
DATED 30 MARCH 2026**



NV/ODG-809/26

The Technical Secretariat (the “Secretariat”) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (“OPCW”) presents its compliments to the Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW and hereby refers to the latter’s Note Verbale No 29, dated 18 March, transmitting an analysis prepared by Russian experts of the Fifth Reprot by the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team pursuant to Paragraph 10 of decision C-SS-4/Dec.3 “Addressing The Threat from Chemical Weapons Use” - Kafr Zeita, (Syrian Arab Republic)- 1 October 2016.

The Secretariat recalls that its reports contain detailed explanations on how facts and evidence are collected and analysed, and of the related methodologies applied. These methodologies follow investigative standards and best practices widely applied in international organisations. All activities including under the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) and the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) mandates are undertaken in accordance with the relevant procedures of the Secretariat in accordance with the relevant procedures of the Secretariat related contingency operations, including investigations of alleged use of chemical weapons. The FFM and the IIT apply the highest international standards in their investigations of chemical weapons use related incidents in the Syrian Arab Republic. One of the underlying principles of this methodology is to ensure chain of custody when collecting evidence.

The processes that lead the Secretariat to reaching its conclusions have been presented repeatedly and in details to the Executive Council and the Conference of the States Parties. Conclusions are reached as a result of thorough assessment of all the information gathered and analysed, using corroboration and combination of all evidence collected.

Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation
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While the Secretariat always attempts in its investigations to visit locations of interest, it is recalled that this is neither a necessity nor an obligation in relation to the quality of the conclusions. In the case of Kafr Zita, it is recalled that the Secretariat attempted, together with the then Syrian authorities, to go the incident location site in March 2021. It is to be noted further that this attempt was prevented by a publicly documented airstrike of the location by the Russian Armed Forces that resulted in the destruction of physical evidence closely linked to the incident.

With regard to the IIT report on this incident, the Secretariat notes that the current authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic supported the conduct of the investigation by the IIT by, inter alia, providing access to the Syrian territory and by making witnesses available. In addition, and while never a pre-condition the independent work of the Secretariat, it is noted that the current Syrian authorities have welcomed the independent work and praised the quality of the investigations and endorsed its conclusions.

In line with the above, the Secretariat notes that all the comments and questions regarding the IIT report raised by the Russian Federation have already been addressed and exhaustively elaborated in the report itself.

The Secretariat further notes the baseless accusation by the Russian Federation levelled against the Director-General and staff members of the Secretariat, claiming that the Director-General and “pro-Western” officials of the Secretariat are biased, unprofessional, and politicised.

In this context, the Secretariat further recalls that it does not accept any instruction or influence from any certain State Party or a group of States Parties. It solely implements the Convention and the decisions of the Policy-Making Organs for the sake of all 193 States Parties, independently, impartially with the highest standards of the professionalism.

The Secretariat reports only on facts that were established through its impartial and independent work, and no facts can be bent to accommodate a State Party’s perception of reality.

The Secretariat wish to seize this opportunity to reemphasise that it will continue to implement the Convention and the decisions of the Policy-Making Organs of the OPCW thoroughly and impartially, with the highest standards of expertise, professionalism, and due respect to all States Parties.



The Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons avails itself of this opportunity to renew to Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW the assurances of its highest consideration.

The Hague, 30 March 2026



Annex 2

**NOTE VERBALE NO. 29 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATION
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ADDRESSED
TO THE TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT OF THE OPCW
DATED 18 MARCH 2026**

Unofficial translation



ПОСТОЯННОЕ ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛЬСТВО
РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ
ПРИ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ПО ЗАПРЕЩЕНИЮ
ХИМИЧЕСКОГО ОРУЖИЯ

PERMANENT REPRESENTATION
OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
TO THE ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

№ 29

Encl. 3 pp.

The Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) presents its compliments to the OPCW Technical Secretariat and has the honour to transmit to the Technical Secretariat and States Parties of the OPCW prepared by the Russian experts analysis of the Fifth Report of the Investigation and Identification Team of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Kafr Zeita, the Syrian Arab Republic, that took place almost ten years ago – 1 October 2016.

The Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW requests the Technical Secretariat that a copy of this Note Verbale with annex be distributed among States Parties as an official-series national document of the 112th Session of the OPCW Executive Council and made available on the OPCW website and “Catalyst” platform.

The Permanent Representation of the Russian Federation to the OPCW avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Technical Secretariat assurances of its highest consideration

The Hague, 18 March, 2026



TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT OF THE
ORGANISATION FOR THE PROHIBITION
OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS

The Hague

Unofficial translation

**Regarding the OPCW quasi-investigation into the incident of the alleged use
of chemical weapons in Kafr Zeita, the Syrian Arab Republic,
on 1 October 2016
(the fifth report of the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT),
S/2478/2026 dated 21 January 2026)**

The bias shown by the leadership of the OPCW Technical Secretariat continues to raise plenty of questions as the Euro-Atlantic allies led by the United States as well as their satellites keep seeking to advance their geopolitical interests through this international body, which initially had a purely technical mandate. Since 2013, when Syria was in the focus of the agenda, the countries of the "collective West" have persisted in their attempts to impute to the former Syrian authorities through staging numerous "chemical incidents" the alleged use of toxic chemicals against armed opposition groups and civilians. As has now become absolutely clear, those incidents were staged with the direct involvement of the pro-Western officials from the OPCW Technical Secretariat, which has been amply exemplified by the unprofessional, biased and politicized reports released by the "attribution" mechanisms such as the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT), the Fact-Finding Mission in Syria (FFM) and, later, the clearly anti-Syrian Investigation and Identification Team (IIT). The IIT's fifth report is just another glaring example.

The findings presented by the IIT, an illegitimate mechanism imposed on the OPCW by the Western countries, draw on the data that require further fact-checking. The IIT's technical assessment of the chlorine cylinder allegedly found at the site in Kafr Zeita was based on the investigation previously conducted by the FFM with violations of the chain-of-custody procedures. The FFM engaged unnamed third-party "experts", whose professionalism and expertise are highly questionable.

FFM members never visited the location and conducted a remote investigation, looking into circumstantial evidence. The report affirms that metadata from the photographs and videos provide compelling evidence that those were taken at the site where the cylinder landed. IIT specialists also never deployed to Kafr Zeita out of "safety concerns" even though the new Syrian authorities granted them unrestricted access to all relevant sites and areas.

The FFM obtained the "chemical munition" (chlorine cylinder), as referred to in the report, under unclear circumstances only six months after the reported incident (on 12 April 2017). The report fails to specify in what conditions and in whose custody the cylinder had been stored during those six months. Besides, it cannot be reliably determined whether the photographs of the cylinder from the site of the incident and those of the cylinder in the custody of the OPCW, as provided in the report, show the same object.

In the same vein, the report links the chemical incident in Kafr Zeita in October 2016 to the one in Ltamenah in March 2017, which is referred to as "evidence" against Syrian government forces (para. 6.157 of the IIT report). The IIT report on the events in Ltamenah based on the FFM's analysis also fails to comply with the chain-of-custody procedures since it does not provide data as to where the samples and other physical evidence were stored from March 2017 to February 2018.

Having conducted this quasi-investigation, IIT experts acknowledge that it posed a challenge for some of the "witnesses" interviewed in 2025 to recollect specific details from the day of the incident nine years ago and it was hardly possible to retrieve new supporting documentation. The IIT refrained from interviewing some of the key witnesses under the pretext of avoiding to put their lives in danger.

The IIT's approach to establishing individuals responsible for the alleged chemical incident in Kafr Zeita seems to lack common sense. The accusations are based on the assumption that the damage observed on the cylinder indicates that it was dropped from a height with an almost vertical trajectory. On these grounds, the

IIT conclusively determines that it was dropped by a helicopter of the Syrian Arab Air Force. The report further points to the nearest airbase in Hama and its commanders as those allegedly responsible for the operation. At the same time, neither the FFM nor the IIT, when interviewing the witnesses, could find individuals who had actually seen a helicopter (some of the witnesses only reported hearing a sound of a rotary-wing aircraft). The report does not contain data as to the crew, aircraft identification number, copies of combat orders or flight logs confirming that there were flight missions in the area at the time in which the incident occurred. Therefore, the allegations that the cylinder was dropped from a helicopter have no grounds.

Noteworthy is that the gas cylinder might as well have been delivered to the site in question by a rotary-wing UAV with sufficient payload capacity. As of 2016, a number of countries involved in the conflict in Syria operated such aircraft, including the United States (MQ-8 Fire Scout, UAVOS R-22-UV) and Israel (Tactical Robotics Cormorant).

In light of the above, based on the same witness testimonies, IIT's methodology and technical findings provided by the FFM, "there are reasonable grounds to believe" that in October 2016 special services of the anti-Assad coalition states staged an incident on the outskirts of Kafr Zeita, aiming to spread propaganda and put the blame for the alleged use of toxic chemicals against civilians on the Syrian armed forces.