



REGERINGSKANSLIET

## Ministry for Foreign Affairs Sweden

### Statement by Sweden 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Conference of State Parties of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

H.E. Mr. Per Holmström  
Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OPCW

**29 November 2017**

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation for the outgoing Chairperson, Ambassador Israng of Germany for the excellent work during the last year. I welcome you Ambassador Bellouki of Morocco as the new Chair of the Conference and assure you of my country's full support.

Sweden is aligned with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. However, let me make a few remarks in my national capacity.

The year of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OPCW has been a turbulent one. On the one hand, important progress has been made both in terms of destruction and the work of the Executive Council. On the other, sadly, we have witnessed the worst year since the entry into force of the Convention with regard to attacks with chemical weapons in Syria and Iraq.

Let me start by reiterating Sweden's principled position: We condemn in the strongest terms all use of chemical weapons in Syria. Chemical weapons use is illegal, constitutes a threat to international peace and security and can amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. There must be no impunity for chemical weapons attacks.

Against this background, the Joint Investigative Mechanism has played an invaluable role, by pursuing objective, impartial and independent investigations aimed at identifying to the greatest extent feasible individuals, entities, groups, or governments who were perpetrators, organizers, sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Sweden has full confidence in the professionalism and technical expertise represented in the JIM and the thorough forensic analysis they perform. We have provided financial support and technical expertise in order to help them carry out this important work. The crucial work performed by the JIM must continue. We thank Mr. Mulet and his team for their efforts and for

their report on the chemical weapons attack in Umm-Housh and Khan Sheikhoun. These were abhorrent and unacceptable attacks adding to the number of cases of international crimes committed in this conflict by Da'esh and by the Syrian regime.

Particularly repugnant is the sarin attack in Khan Sheikhoun, which caused large numbers of casualties, including children and aid workers. We note with the greatest concern the conclusion of the JIM that the only possible scenario for the attack that could sustain detailed technical scrutiny, using scientific and forensic techniques, is that of an air bomb delivered by the Syrian Arab Armed Forces. Moreover, the presence of military grade sarin indicates that all stockpiles of sarin precursors in Syria have not been shipped out or destroyed, as was foreseen.

Sweden and other members of the UN Security Council made serious efforts to bridge the divide between the positions of the Permanent Members and to find a way to retain the JIM. We regret that two draft resolutions were vetoed by the Russian Federation. We remain ready to engage in efforts to develop a successor mechanism for attribution that is able to investigate new cases of confirmed use of chemical weapons in the future.

We also regret that it has so far not been possible to agree on a decision in the Executive Council that considers the findings of the JIM report as far as the work of the OPCW is concerned.

The Fact-Finding Missions and the Declarations Assessment Team of the OPCW have equally important roles in ensuring implementation of the Convention, UN Security Council resolution 2118 and related decisions of the OPCW, and enabling accountability for chemical weapons use. Last week, Sweden pledges a further contribution of one million Swedish Kronor to the Trust Fund for Syria Missions.

We reiterate that no one should try to micromanage the work of the FFM, the DAT or the JIM or question their integrity and professionalism for political gain.

Other troubling developments in the past year include the following:

- ✓ The findings of the latest FFM report regarding another sarin attack in the Idlib province, this time in Latamineh on 30 March 2017 is a matter of deepest concern. The responsible must be identified and brought to justice.
- ✓ We understand that there have been numerous instances of chemical weapons use in Iraq over the past year by Da'esh, following the case in Umm-Housh in September 2016 reported by the JIM. While we welcome the success of the coalition against Da'esh and the reported seizure of chemical weapons production facilities, we would once again call upon Iraq to keep this organization informed of such events which are of the highest relevance to the Chemical Weapons Convention. All persons suspected of using chemical weapons must be investigated and held accountable.
- ✓ The use of VX in an apparent assassination perpetrated by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea adds a new dimension to the chemical weapons threat. We appreciate Malaysia's transparency and reporting in line with the relevant EC decision.

Despite all these negative development over the past year, there is also some considerable success to take into account. First and foremost, Sweden warmly welcomes the completion of destruction of all declared chemical weapons stockpiles in the Russian Federation. Sweden is pleased to count itself among those members of the Global Partnership that have provided technical and financial support to the Russian Federation to achieve this major milestone, both nationally and through the European Union.

On the positive side Sweden welcomes the four important decisions taken by the Executive Council at its most recent regular session in October 2017:

- ✓ Having once again spearheaded the negotiations on a decision providing for the limited rehiring of experienced OPCW inspectors – together with Chile – we were pleased that the decision was taken to extend this important decision. Experienced inspectors are a key strategic resource for the OPCW. We will continue to rely on the OPCW as the competent authority to deal with contingencies involving chemical weapons, often at short notice. For this, it is indispensable that the OPCW retains access to experienced inspectors.
- ✓ Sweden continues to contribute technical data for the development of the OPCW Central Analytical Database OCAD. Against that background, we very much welcome the historic decision after many years of delay, to include signatures of unscheduled chemicals of high importance to the Convention in OCAD.
- ✓ Sweden was a co-sponsor of the draft decision on the role of the OPCW in preventing proliferation of chemical weapons to non-state actors. We were pleased that the consensus could finally be found so that this important document could be adopted.
- ✓ Last but not least, we very warmly welcome the consensus recommendation of the Executive Council to recommend the appointment of H.E. Mr. Fernando Arias of Spain to serve as Director-General of the OPCW from 1 July 2018 to 30 July 2022. We look forward to the Conference of States Parties confirming his appointment at this session. Since this is the last session of the CSP of the current Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü, let me express Sweden's sincere thanks for the excellent way in which he has steered the work of OPCW over the past eight years.

In conclusion, let me quote Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Victoria at the commemorative ceremony marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OPCW in April this year:

“I am humbled by the accomplishments achieved, but there is much more work to be done. On this 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OPCW – let us all resolve to continue working together towards a world free of chemical weapons, having those affected in mind. The world needs our continued and tireless work for a safer world.”

I thank you and ask that this statement be issued as an official document of the conference and posted in the OPCW external website.