



OPCW

Conference of the States Parties

Twenty-Second Session
27 November – 1 December 2017

C-22/NAT.21
27 November 2017
ENGLISH only

PORTUGAL

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR ROSA BATORÉU
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PORTUGAL TO THE OPCW AT THE
TWENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES**

Thank you very much Mr Chairperson,

Let me start by congratulating you, Ambassador Abdelouahab Bellouki, of Morocco, for your election as Chairperson of the Conference of the States Parties and by commending your predecessor, Ambassador Christoph Israng, of Germany, for his very efficient tenure of the job.

Mr Chairperson, we are confident that with your abilities you will also lead us successfully in the coming year. Let me assure you that you can count on all our support and cooperation.

I would like also to express our appreciation for the leadership shown by Ambassador Sheikh Mohammed Belal, of Bangladesh, in the discharge of his duties as Chairperson of the Executive Council in the challenging times that the Organisation is going through.

Let me also commend the Director-General, Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü, and the Technical Secretariat staff, for the outstanding work done on the many fronts of the OPCW mandate.

I also take the opportunity to extend Portugal's warm welcome and support to the consensual recommendation by the Executive Council, in its Eighty-Sixth Session, that Ambassador Fernando Arias, of Spain, be appointed Director-General of the OPCW.

Portugal fully aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union by the Special Envoy for Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, of the EEAS, Mr Jacek Bylica.

Last year, in this very same venue, like many others, we condemned the reiterated use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic, pointed out in the reports of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). Sadly, today we have to recognise that, despite the outrage and all the efforts of the international community, the most fundamental values of the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons are still being infringed.

In its seventh report, the JIM concludes 'that it is confident' ISIL is responsible for the use of sulfur mustard at Um-Housh on 15 and 16 September 2016 and the Syrian Arab Republic for the release of sarin at Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017.



Moreover, the most recent report of the OPCW Fact-Find Mission in Syria (FFM) states that sarin was ‘more than likely used in ‘the Syrian Arab Republic once again, this time in Ltamenah, on 30 March 2017.

Portugal expresses grave concern about these findings and condemns in the strongest possible terms the continued use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. It is imperative to put an immediate end to this situation and to hold accountable those responsible.

With that in mind, we reiterate our support for the FFM, the OPCW Declaration Assessment Team and the JIM, and we commend them for their professionalism and commitment.

The Syrian Arab Republic, in particular, must fully comply with its obligations as a State Party of the Chemical Weapons Convention and give solid and final evidence that it has totally and irrevocably eliminated its chemical weapons programme, which includes solving all outstanding issues regarding its initial declaration and related disclosures.

Turning now to other matters, I’d like to commend the valuable work done by the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities, under the able guidance of its Co-Chairs, the distinguished Ambassadors of Canada and South Africa, in view of the Fourth Review Conference.

In this regard, Portugal maintains that, as the OPCW gradually evolves to respond to new challenges, it must remain focused on the core objectives of the Convention.

It is paramount that the OPCW, while seeking to develop the potential of the Convention in its several aspects and to preserve a sense of ownership among all States Parties, avoids dispersing its limited resources in activities of relatively less return for the fulfilment of its essential mission, which is to promote international security through chemical disarmament and the prevention of proliferation.

It’s important that the OPCW remains a relevant actor in the international security architecture and the leading one in the field of chemical weapons. In this light, we encourage the OPCW to enhance its cooperation with other specialised entities and to explore the best ways to maximise its added value and avoid overlaps.

The challenge posed by the terrorist threat, in particular by non-State actors, demands a coherent approach, where the different entities concerned should strive to explore complementarities and to avoid duplicating efforts.

In this context, Portugal values the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and its Sub-Working Group on Non-State Actors, under the capable leadership of its respective Chairpersons, the distinguished Ambassadors of Senegal and Chile, and welcomes the adoption by the Executive Council, on 13 October 2017, of the important decision on “Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors”, of which Portugal is one of the co-sponsors.

With regard to the future of the Organisation, keeping pace with the new scientific developments and associated challenges should remain a priority. In this context, the Scientific Advisory Body has a central role and deserves adequate support.

At the same time, it is essential to ensure the permanent updating and optimisation of the inspection and verification regime, not only in relation to ordinary activities, but also for the purpose of conducting challenge inspections or investigations of alleged use. This is an area where the operation in the Syrian Arab Republic should provide valuable teachings on more agile and results-oriented methods and techniques. It also supposes the preservation of the OPCW's high standards of expertise and operational capability. In fact, this Organisation cannot afford lacking the proper technical, financial and human resources. That being said, its funding must remain a joint, equitable and timely effort on the part of all States Parties.

Finally, Mr. Chairperson,

In the context of the OPCW's future areas of activity, we welcome the growing number of States Parties that have subscribed to the joint paper on the central nervous system acting chemicals. We look forward to the continuation of the discussion on the best ways to tackle this issue.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Twenty-Second Session of the Conference of the States Parties and be posted on the OPCW's website and extranet.

Thank you very much Mr Chairperson.

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