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ENGLISH and FRENCH only

FRANCE

**RESPONSE TO THE STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE OPCW
ON THE MATTER OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS IN SYRIA**

Mr Director-General,

I thank you for your statement and should like to take this opportunity to report to you as follows with regard to the matter of chemical weapons in Syria.

Ever since the start of the Syrian conflict, France has repeatedly condemned the acts of violence committed by Bashar Al-Assad's government forces and, in this context, has urgently called upon Damascus to renounce the use of chemical weapons. Within the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, we have, during each session of the Executive Council, noted our concern through the European Union. Indeed, France considers that an organisation which is on a mission to completely eliminate the possibility of using chemical weapons cannot maintain silence, while France and other countries believe that today there is evidence relating to the use of chemical substances in Syria.

If I take the floor today in a national capacity, it is, in fact, because France is now convinced that sarin has been used on several occasions. On 4 June, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs actually publicised the results of analysis which demonstrated the presence of sarin in a number of samples in our possession, collected, namely, following attacks in Jobar between 12 and 14 April and in Saraqeb on 29 April.

This information was given to Mr Åke Sellström, who is leading the fact-finding mission initiated by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to shed light on the allegations of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. France will continue to keep this mission informed of any new information.

It is the responsibility of this mission to find irrefutable evidence of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. It is on the basis of this evidence that the international community will be able to take action. France has written to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to ask that the mandate of the mission be broadened to include the incidents in Jobar and Saraqeb, and that a report be made as soon as possible.

In the same vein, France deplores the obstruction of the Damascus regime, which continues to hinder the deployment of the mission on its territory by seeking to impose unacceptable conditions upon it. Nevertheless, the Secretariat of the United Nations, in all its contact with the Damascus government, namely with regard to the mission referred to by the



Director-General, continues, with good reason, to demand access to the sites of the allegations without delay and unconditionally. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations has emphasised, the fact-finding mission must be granted free and unhampered access to the whole of the territory of Syria in order to resolve all credible allegations of the use of chemical weapons. We must all act collectively against Bashar Al-Assad in this regard.

I should like this statement to be distributed as an official document of the Seventy-Third Session of the Executive Council.

Thank you.

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