



Latvian Presidency  
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**Statement on behalf of the European Union  
delivered by H.E. Maris Klisans  
Permanent Representative of Latvia to the OPCW  
at the Seventy-eighth session of the Executive Council  
(The Hague, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015)**

Mr Chairperson,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The EU candidate countries Albania, former Yugoslavia republic of Macedonia Serbia, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate country Bosnia and Herzegovina; the EFTA country Norway, as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Director-General for his comprehensive statement, which provides useful guidance for our work. I would also like to reiterate our appreciation to him and to the OPCW staff for their commitment to the work of the organisation and the Syria CW operation in particular. We are looking forward to participating actively in the deliberations during this week.

I seize this opportunity to inform that on 17 February, the new EU Council decision for the years 2015-16 was adopted, making available to the OPCW some 2.5 million EUR to support activities such as promoting universality, national implementation, international cooperation, the Africa Programme and implementing lessons learned from the Syrian operation. This Council Decision is the sixth voluntary contribution of the EU to OPCW activities since 2005 as a token of continuous support and in recognition of the important work carried out by the organisation

Mr Chairperson,

During the inter-sessional period, we have noted that considerable progress has been achieved towards the complete destruction of the few remaining declared chemicals and the effluent from the hydrolysis of the Syrian chemical weapon programme. We wish to reiterate our appreciation to all the State Parties that have and are contributing to the success of this endeavour. After several months of delay, we have also noted the relative progress achieved for the destruction of the 12 remaining CW Production facilities and we seize this opportunity to urge the acceleration of the destruction process according to the relevant EC decisions. However, we remain deeply concerned by the too many uncertainties regarding the accuracy and completeness of the Syrian initial declaration and the fact that allegations of use of chlorine continue to be made. It is a tragic irony that, as we are preparing to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first large scale use of chemical weapons, we are confronted with the alleged use of the same chemical agent that was first used during the battle of Ieper.

During the recent 48<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Executive Council has adopted a historic Decision voicing grave concern over the findings of the Fact Finding Mission – FFM - set up by the OPCW Director-General to establish the facts around allegations on the use of chlorine on the civilian population in Syria. Indeed, in its reports the FFM stated that “it has found information constituting ‘compelling confirmation’ that a toxic chemical was used “systematically and repeatedly” “as a weapon”, while it refers to testimonies that these chemicals have been dropped from helicopters, an asset that only the Syrian government possesses. The report also refers to new allegations that chlorine has been used as a weapon. We note with satisfaction that in the same context and on the basis of the EC Decision, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2209 condemning the use of chlorine as a chemical weapon in Syria. The Resolution makes it clear that the use of chlorine is a violation of both resolution 2118 and of the Chemical Weapons Convention and reaffirms that the UNSC will impose sanctions under Chapter VII in case of new uses of chemical weapons.

The EU reiterates its fundamental position that the use of chlorine as a weapon constitutes a breach of the CWC and the UN Security Council Resolution 2118 and that those responsible for these horrific acts must be held accountable. In this respect, the EU fully supports the decision of the Director-General to have the FFM continue its work. While lauding the professionalism and commitment of the members of the FFM, we call on all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic to extend



their full cooperation to the FFM to ensure that it can complete its work safely and effectively.

We cannot but reiterate our concern with the insufficient information provided by the Syrian authorities regarding questions arising from the discrepancies and inconsistencies in their initial declaration and explanations to the Technical Secretariat. The list is long. Lack of original documentation, the fate of the 2000 bombs that Syria claims to have converted, the fate of ricin, the actual role of the SSRC in the Syrian chemical programme. The EU is in particular concerned that, due to all the above, Syria may still hold chemical weapons materials or undeclared chemical weapons agents. The Syrian Arab Republic must provide cooperation, credible answers and conclusive and credible evidence to support its assurances that it does not retain chemical capabilities, it has fully abandoned its chemical weapons programme and in this way ensure sufficient confidence. At this juncture, we commend the Declaration Assessment Team of the Technical Secretariat for its work on this important issue and we underscore that the Executive Council needs to continue to monitor the situation in Syria as well as to remain seized of the matter.

Finally, the EU wishes to recall that in line with the Convention, it is the responsibility of the Government of Syria to pay the costs arising in connection with the destruction of its chemicals weapons programme and the verification thereof, as specified in Article IV paragraph 16 of the CWC. We call on Syria to respect the Convention and take full responsibility of all its obligations towards the OPCW. It is highly regrettable that Syria has so far chosen to employ fallacious arguments about the lack of relevant funds, as well as to turn down the EU proposal to use the Syrian "frozen assets" to this end. These acts constitute a flagrant lack of cooperation from the Syrian authorities in the discharge of their conventional obligations. In the same context, it is important to state that the EU will not accept that the Trust Fund is used to pay verification costs as requested by the Syrian authorities.

Mr Chairperson,

Turning to the other points of the agenda, we underline that achieving the goal of universality remains one of our principal challenges. The European Union has welcomed the information provided by OPCW that Myanmar is at the last stages of ratifying the Convention and thus becoming the 191<sup>st</sup> SP. We are looking forward to the swift completion of this process and call upon the few States not Party to the Convention to ratify or accede without delay. The EU will continue its active

support for reaching this common objective with concrete actions either through the TS or individually. The EU support to the Technical Secretariat in organizing recently a relevant seminar with the Israeli civil society and media, constitutes a significant example in point.

Destruction of declared stockpiles and verification thereof has made substantial progress since the Convention entered into force and both must remain a key priority for the Organisation until all declared Chemical Weapons have been destroyed. We call the possessor States to continue with their efforts to complete destruction in the shortest time possible in accordance with the provisions of relevant decisions of the Conference of States Parties on the final extended deadlines.

Mr. Chairperson,

We have read with interest the note by the Technical Secretariat dated 6 March, "OPCW in 2025: Ensuring a world free of Chemical weapons". In this note it is underscored that in the post destruction period and in order for the organization to stay relevant, the focus of its activities will progressively have to be shifted from disarmament of chemical weapons to preventing their re-emergence. We welcome the fact that, in this document, the Technical Secretariat stresses the importance of retaining specialist knowledge and expertise in order to maintain a robust regime of verification. We all wish for an effective OPCW. If it is to remain so, a series of actions should be considered closely. OPCW's cooperation with other relevant international organisations is of particular importance, as the close cooperation between the UN and the OPCW in the Syrian operation has clearly demonstrated. Identification and implementation of lessons learned thereof should be followed as soon as practicable. The EU also acknowledges that the added value of regular engagement and cooperation with all stakeholders, including the chemical industry and civil society, ought to be further and fully utilized. This will allow adaptation to the changing security environment as well as to developments in science and technology on which the reports of the SAB provide valuable guidance.

The European Union underlines the importance of full national implementation of the Convention and urges all States Parties to put in place and enforce all the necessary legislative and administrative measures in accordance with Article VII. It is regrettable that since the Convention entered into force in April 1997 a relatively high number of States Parties have yet to implement and enforce its provisions as required by Article VII. In recognition of the often very serious challenges and competing priorities some States Parties face, the European Union



stands ready to continue assistance in this area, not only through new voluntary contributions, but also through extensive outreach. We also welcome the Technical Secretariat's efforts to explore new ways of achieving progress in this area including education and outreach.

Verification under Article VI is of great importance. We need to ensure that the Article VI verification regime is as effective as possible by directing Article VI inspections to the sites that are most relevant to the object and purpose of the Convention. Challenge inspections and investigations of alleged use are key tools available to States Parties, to prevent the re-emergence of chemical weapons. In addition other means of enhancing the capabilities of the OPCW in this area should be considered. In the same context, the EU underlines the importance that the organisation must continue having staff with the necessary skills and expertise to meet its operational requirements.

The European Union attaches great importance to the work carried out under Article X and stands ready to discuss concrete proposals put forward under Article XI, in accordance with the relevant Decision taken by the Third Review Conference in April 2013. Ways to improve the implementation of this Decision should be explored. The work of the open-ended Working Group on terrorism needs to continue, while the recommendations contained in the report of the WG's Chair to the EC 72<sup>nd</sup> session and those contained in the Final Document of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Review Conference should be further considered by the Executive Council. In the light of recent developments in different parts of the world, relevant action regarding promotion of chemical safety and security has acquired even more importance.

Finally, the EU actively supports the OPCW activities regarding assistance, protection and international cooperation directed to States Parties from all regional groups with particular emphasis placed on support to the OPCW's Programme for Africa. We encourage States Parties to take advantage of the assistance provided through the funded activities, by participating in them according to their own needs.

In closing, I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Council and be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

Thank you Mr Chairperson.