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FRANCE

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF FRANCE
REGARDING THE REPORTS OF CHLORINE GAS ATTACKS
IN THE REGION OF IDLIB, THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC ON 16 MARCH 2015**

Mr Chairperson,

On Monday, the day before we began the work of our Council session, there were reports of new chlorine gas attacks in several villages in the region of Idlib. The reports mention six or seven killed and 70 injured, with women and children among the victims. There is a question of the involvement of the Syrian Government in the attacks. These elements, which come from non-governmental organisations, but also from an agency of the United Nations, are extremely alarming. They must, of course, be verified as soon as possible.

In any case, they fully justify the continuation of the work of the Fact-Finding Mission, whose role must be to shed light on the allegations of use of chlorine gas, on all allegations without exception. This is fully in line with the spirit of the decision adopted by this Council on 4 February and with United Nations Security Council resolution 2209 (2015) of 6 March 2015.

For this to be possible, the Syrian Arab Republic must allow the Mission to continue, by giving it immediate and unfettered access to the sites of alleged use.

In this connection, the Director-General wrote to the Syrian Government in January to ensure that the Mission could go into the field. We urgently call upon the Syrian Government to respond immediately to that letter and to demonstrate its willingness to cooperate with the Organisation, unequivocally.

For this Council, which has condemned in the strongest terms the use of chlorine gas as a weapon in the Syrian Arab Republic, the ability of the Fact-Finding Mission to fulfil its mandate is a matter of credibility. It is therefore our collective responsibility to support the Technical Secretariat to enable the Mission to do its work.

I thank you, Mr Chairperson, and request that this statement be considered as an official document of the Seventy-Eighth Session of the Executive Council and that it be published on the OPCW website and extranet.

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