



OPCW

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Eighty-Third Session
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ENGLISH and RUSSIAN only

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A.V. SHULGIN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
(ON REASONS FOR ITS VOTE ON THE DRAFT DECISION ON SYRIA)**

Madam Chairperson,

Due to the upcoming vote on the draft decision of the Executive Council prepared by Spain, we would like to state the following.

The Russian delegation has indicated to our Spanish colleagues the provisions of their draft decision with which we cannot agree in principle; we have provided an in-depth explanation of our reasons and proposed a number of corrections. We do hope that these were shared with other delegations. Regretfully, our opinion was not taken into account. Only a handful of changes were made to the text.

It is unacceptable to us that the Executive Council must express “serious concern” about the results of the third and fourth reports by the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism in the Syrian Arab Republic (JIM). These reports point to the involvement of Syrian armed forces in the use of chemical weapons in three known incidents. In other words, we are being asked to admit that the Syrian Government is in violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We have provided an in-depth assessment of the conclusions set out in the JIM: they are superficial, unconvincing, and based on weak evidence. This, unfortunately, applies to the fourth instance of the use of mustard gas by ISIL in Marea, although we are firmly of the belief that the fighters involved with that and other terrorist groups possess and are using chemical weapons in Syria and Iraq.

Demands to conduct inspections, without any grounds, of all Syrian facilities in Bazrah and Jamrayah, contradict the provisions of the Convention. In this case, the Convention stipulates the organisation of challenge inspections, and special procedures are prescribed for such. But for some reason, these have been forgotten. To put it lightly, the proposal to send OPCW inspectors to restricted-access military facilities in Syria in conditions of war looks odd. These visits would be associated with an unprecedented threat to the lives and health of Technical Secretariat staff. Who will guarantee their safety? The wording added to the draft decision at the last minute stating that these types of inspections can be conducted when “the security situation allows” changes nothing. Clearly this can be done if the war in Syria ends—but that means it cannot be done today, or in the foreseeable future.



In light of the above, the Russian delegation intends to vote against this draft decision of the Executive Council.

I request that this statement be considered an official document of the Eighty-Third Session of the Executive Council.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

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