



OPCW

Executive Council

Eighty-Fourth Session
7 – 9 March 2017

EC-84/NAT.14
7 March 2017
ENGLISH only

SWEDEN

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR PER HOLMSTRÖM
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWEDEN TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Madam Chairperson,

Sweden aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add the following points in my national capacity.

Let me first of all thank the Director-General for his comprehensive statement.

Much to our regret, chemical weapons continue to be a common theme in global security, with continued allegations of use.

Let me begin with the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. Accountability for international crimes committed in connection with the Syria crisis is an important priority for Sweden and for the international community. We must take action on United Nations confirmed cases of non-compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (hereinafter “the Convention”) and blatant disregard for successive Security Council resolutions adopted pursuant to Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. This is a matter of credibility for the Convention and the international community, whether the perpetrator is the Syrian Armed Forces or Da’esh. Moreover, we owe it to the victims of chemical weapons not to sit idle when such serious international crimes are committed. It was deeply regrettable that the Security Council last week was unable to act due to the use of veto power by two of its permanent members.

Sweden very much hopes that the Security Council will soon return to a united front against the proliferation and use of chemical weapons, as these constitute recognised threats to international peace and security. The OPCW and the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) must continue their important investigations. We call upon the Syrian regime to cooperate fully and pro-actively with both the JIM and the OPCW Fact-Finding Missions and Declaration Assessment Team. Naturally, this also applies to verification pursuant to decision EC-83/DEC.5 (dated 11 November 2016). We welcome the Council's agreement to extend the mandate of the JIM, and look forward to its future reports. In response to the appeal contained in the JIM's fifth report, Sweden has decided to make a further contribution of SEK 2 million to the United Nations trust fund for the JIM.

Turning now to the allegation of an assassination at Kuala Lumpur International; Airport by means of the nerve agent VX, Sweden would like to make the following points:



Firstly, we are extremely concerned with allegations that VX has been used to commit homicide for the first time since the Japanese doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo did so more than 20 years ago. If confirmed, this horrific act must be condemned by the OPCW in no uncertain terms.

Secondly, we express our support to the Government of Malaysia in its efforts to deal with the aftermath of the attack. We join others in welcoming the Director-General's offer of support and in inviting the Malaysian authorities to keep the States Parties apprised of its investigation.

Thirdly, the incident underlines the need for universalisation of the Convention, to ensure the global reach of the chemical weapons ban and the participation of all States in dealing with such allegations. Sweden reiterates its call on all remaining States to become parties to the Convention without further delay. Meanwhile, depending on the outcome of its investigation, Malaysia may have the option to consider requesting an investigation pursuant to the United Nations Secretary-General's mechanism.

Chemical weapons use by non-State actors continues to constitute a grave risk and a major concern to my Government. The Director-General has warned about Da'esh' possible indigenous production capabilities for sulfur mustard and in the past few months we have continued to see such allegations.

Most recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) referred last week to signs of exposure to a blistering agent in Mosul. Sweden condemns all use of chemical weapons, and will continue to promote accountability for all the horrific and barbarous crimes perpetrated by Da'esh. We welcome the Director-General's continuing readiness to support the Iraqi authorities and assist the WHO, and hope that the States Parties will be kept informed of these developments.

Sweden welcomes the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and its sub-working group, and the appointment of His Excellency Ambassador Momar Diop as its new Chairperson. As a co-sponsor of the draft resolution on the role of the OPCW vis-à-vis non-State actors, Sweden reiterates its call to all parties to refrain from making demands that takes us further from consensus, so that we may take action on that important issue without further delay.

In conclusion, let me refer to the important future-looking elements on our agenda. Sweden looks forward to considering nominations for Director-General, for the term that starts next year. We welcome the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Future Priorities of the OPCW and look forward to the preparations for the Fourth Review Conference and the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Convention.

In this regard, I am pleased to confirm that Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden has consented to be a speaker at the commemorative ceremony on 26 April at the Dutch Parliament. The Crown Princess wrote Her university thesis on chemical weapons issues at Yale University, and as a United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Advocate, She has continued Her active engagement for peace, development and a chemical weapons free world.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.