



**OPCW**

**Executive Council**

Eighty-Fifth Session  
11 – 14 July 2017

EC-85/NAT.9  
11 July 2017  
ENGLISH only

**SWEDEN**

**STATEMENT BY DR CHRISTER AHLSTRÖM  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL, INSPECTORATE OF STRATEGIC PRODUCTS  
AT THE EIGHTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Thank you, Mr Chairperson,

Let me begin by welcoming you, Ambassador Sheikh Belal, to the Chair of the Executive Council, and thank Ambassador Melono for the able and charismatic way in which she has led our deliberations during the past year. I would also like to thank the Director-General for his informative opening statement. Sweden aligns itself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Peep Jahilo of Estonia on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add the following remarks in my national capacity.

Firstly, the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict is a serious violation of international law and must end. The determination by the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) that sarin or a sarin-like chemical was used at Khan Shaykhun on 4 April is extremely disquieting. All nerve agents were supposed to have been shipped out of the Syrian Arab Republic in 2014 according to the Syrian chemical weapons declarations. Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström recently issued a statement on the FFM report in which she condemned in the strongest terms the use of nerve gas and the deaths of numerous civilians, and welcomed the thorough and professional work conducted by the FFM, looked forward to the impending investigation by the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and called for accountability for those responsible. Sweden welcomes the fact that the United Nations Security Council last week stood united on key points of the report, as reflected by the statement to the media made by the Chinese Permanent Representative to the United Nations following last Thursday's meeting on the Syrian chemical weapons issue.

Secondly, chemical weapons verification remains a key priority. Sweden remains seriously preoccupied with the continued inability of the OPCW to verify that the declarations submitted by the Syrian Arab Republic in 2013 are accurate and complete. As noted by the European Union, the Syrian authorities must be more cooperative and proactive in solving the remaining unresolved issues, questions and ambiguities without delay.

Sweden notes that the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles in the Russian Federation is nearing completion. We encourage the United States of America to expedite destruction in line with the Convention and relevant decisions of the Conference of the States Parties.

Thirdly, Sweden remains highly concerned with the retention, production and use of chemical weapons of the Da'esh terrorist group, as determined by the JIM. The universal, full national



implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention is an important means to diminish the risks of such weapons falling into the wrong hands, and we welcome the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Terrorism and its sub-working group. In this regard, United Nations Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the Global Partnership are other important mechanisms to which Sweden contributes actively. Sweden is a co-sponsor of the draft decision entitled “Addressing the Threat Posed by the Use of Chemical Weapons by Non-State Actors”, which we hope will be adopted at this meeting. We welcome the defeat of Da'esh at Mosul and once more invite the Iraqi authorities to keep this Organisation advised on its findings regarding chemical weapons use by Da'esh, which clearly is highly relevant to our mandate. We welcome the Director-General's preparedness to assist in the investigation.

Fourthly, we have the important task ahead of us of appointing a Director-General to lead the Organisation in the years ahead. Sweden is looking forward to engaging in this process. We have full confidence in your ability, Mr Chairperson, in leading the work that should ideally result in a single candidate being recommended by the Executive Council, at its October session, who can be appointed by consensus by the Conference of the States Parties. As we do not have much time at our disposal, we are very much looking forward to the interactive hearings on Thursday. Sweden will favour a candidate who, in addition to having the necessary competence successfully to guide the work of the Organisation, will also have a plan for addressing the skewed gender balance of OPCW senior management and the top-heaviness of the Technical Secretariat.

Fifth and last, the future effectiveness of the OPCW is directly related to its ability to retain the competence of experienced inspectors. According to the Technical Secretariat, the decision in 2014 to allow for some level of rehiring of inspectors - co-sponsored by Sweden and South Africa - has proven successful and of strategic importance in a time of great verification challenges. As this decision is due to be extended this year, we hope that all Executive Council members will join us in drafting a strengthened decision which we hope will expand the contribution of rehired inspectors to the work of the Organisation.

In conclusion, I would kindly ask that this statement be issued as an official document and placed on the public website.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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