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RUSSIAN FEDERATION

**STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR A.V.SHULGIN
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE OPCW
AT THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
ON AGENDA ITEM 7(F)**

Mr Chairperson,

We have heard another statement by the American delegation regarding new accusations alleging that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic continues to use chemical weapons, specifically chlorine, in Eastern Ghouta. As per usual, no facts confirming this have been provided. It is known that there are no conclusions on this matter from the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM). Again, there are references to the reports of certain non-government organisations such as the notorious “White Helmets”. We know all too well who holds the hand that feeds these “reputable” NGOs. The United States and Great Britain (a total of USD 23 million in aid provided since 2014, and a total of GBP 9 million is allocated through 2020, respectively) are among the key donors of the “White Helmets”. The total volume of foreign government financing in 2013 – 2016 is estimated at USD 150 million. It is completely obvious that he who pays the piper calls the tune. This pseudo-humanitarian organisation serves the interests of its financial sponsors.

The American side, clearly, follows the gospel of Niccolò Machiavelli, where all means to achieve a goal are good. In order to tarnish the reputation of as they call it the “Assad regime” - which they despise - the Americans are throwing around any and all accusations and subterfuge.

Moreover, the United States is exerting direct pressure on the Technical Secretariat at this session, practically forcing it to urgently prepare a special FFM report on the latest chemical incidents in Syria. This is absolutely unacceptable. We believe that the Secretariat will not fall for this finger-pointing and coercion from Washington, and that it will act as necessary in full compliance with the requirements of the Convention.

It is also important to note that the most recent FFM report on the incident in Ltamenah on 30 March 2017 gives rise to many questions. We have provided an analysis of it in an unofficial document that many delegations have already been able to review.

We will note but a few of them.



First. The conclusion on the use of sarin was made exclusively based on symptoms, rather than on the results of an analysis of biological samples from the casualties, on whom no traces pointing to exposure to this toxic agent were detected.

Second. An examination of the photographs of fragments of munitions makes it possible to conclude that these came from standard aerial bombs, not chemical munitions. Traces of strong corrosion of the metal on many of the fragments indicate that they are at least five years old, and there is no way that they were only made six months before the incident (i.e., there cannot be any connection between these fragments and the events in Ltamenah).

Those who have not yet read the Russian analysis of the report on this incident are welcome to do so. Copies of the report are available at the Technical Secretariat's document counter.

And last. The United States is once again attempting to persuade everyone that Russia allegedly "killed" the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and is currently hindering the establishment of a new structure to replace it. This is absolutely false.

It was the Americans that made it impossible to improve the JIM after blatant flaws were found in its work after two years of activity.

It was Russia that initiated the establishment of a new investigative mechanism for the incident in Syria, tabling a draft of the corresponding resolution at the United Nations Security Council. But once again, the Americans stood by the old mechanism and started to speak about the unacceptability of the Russian draft and the need to return to the prior mandate of the JIM. They basically blocked any work on the Russian document.

In the statement by Permanent Representative Ward, we hear criticism in the assertion that on 5 March, Russia rejected the US-proposed, so-called compromise text of a draft resolution at the United Nations Security Council. I venture to assure you that if many of you had seen that text, you would not have been hard-pressed to see a reincarnation of the JIM with some lightly polished elements.

We would like for the members of the Executive Council and all of the participants of today's session understand that it was not Russia but the United States that has essentially obstructed the work at the United Nations Security Council with regard to establishing a truly independent international body that could conduct an investigation in line with the high standards set by the Convention—and in such a way so as to ensure that its conclusions are irrefutable.

Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

We request that this statement be circulated as an official document of the Eighty-Seventh Session of the OPCW Executive Council and publish it on the Organisation's external webpage.