

STATEMENT BY CANADA AT THE 45th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE OPCW

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Canada expresses grave concern with the unequivocal conclusion of the "Second Report of the Fact-Finding Mission – Key Findings" that "a toxic chemical was used as a weapon, systematically and repeatedly", in attacks on three villages in northern Syria earlier this year. The report also concludes, "with a high degree of confidence, that chlorine, either pure or in mixture, is the toxic chemical in question".

This second interim report is based on a large body of evidence, including thirty seven testimonies of primary witnesses, medical doctors and a "significant amount of supporting data and documentation", including medical reports and other relevant information. We consider it authoritative. The methodology of the investigation is beyond question.

Of particular note is the fact that witnesses invariably connected the use of devices, commonly referred to as "barrel bombs", with helicopters flying overhead. This leaves Canada in no doubt that the Syrian government is the perpetrator of these attacks as they are the only party to the conflict to have airborne capability. These attacks represent a clear violation of Article I of the Convention provision to never, under any circumstances, use chemicals weapons, and of paragraphs 4 and 5 of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2118.

We condemn unreservedly these barbaric and illegal attacks. The fact that Syria continues to blatantly use toxic chemicals as a weapon shows callous disregard for both the principles and obligations of the Convention.

Despite all that has been accomplished in the last year to eliminate Syria's arsenal in accordance with the CWC, EC decisions and UNSCR 2118, there is still some work to be done. Syria must continue to work with the OPCW to clarify all ambiguities in its initial declaration if it is to meet all of its CWC obligations and those under UNSCR 2118. It must proceed without any further delays with the destruction of all remaining chemical weapons production facilities. But most of all, it must cease, immediately and forever, to use chemical weapons, the use of which is a war crime. It is essential that the perpetrators of these crimes, and other atrocities committed in Syria, are held to account. Canada calls on the Council to remain seized of the issue of Syria's chemical weapons. We also call on the Council to take further measures at the upcoming 77th Session to ensure that Syria complies with all its obligations under the Convention and that its chemical weapons programme is completely eliminated.

We request that Syria cooperates with the Declaration Assessment Team and answer all the remaining questions identified by the Technical Secretariat regarding the accuracy and completeness of Syria's declaration and subsequent amendments. We also urge the

Director-General to have the Fact-Finding Mission continue with its investigation to get to the bottom of these barbaric attacks.

I would like to request that this statement be circulated as an official document of this session of the Executive Council.

Thank you Mr. Chairman